



**Preaching holiness 66**



**Cultivating a heart for holiness 82**

# enrichment

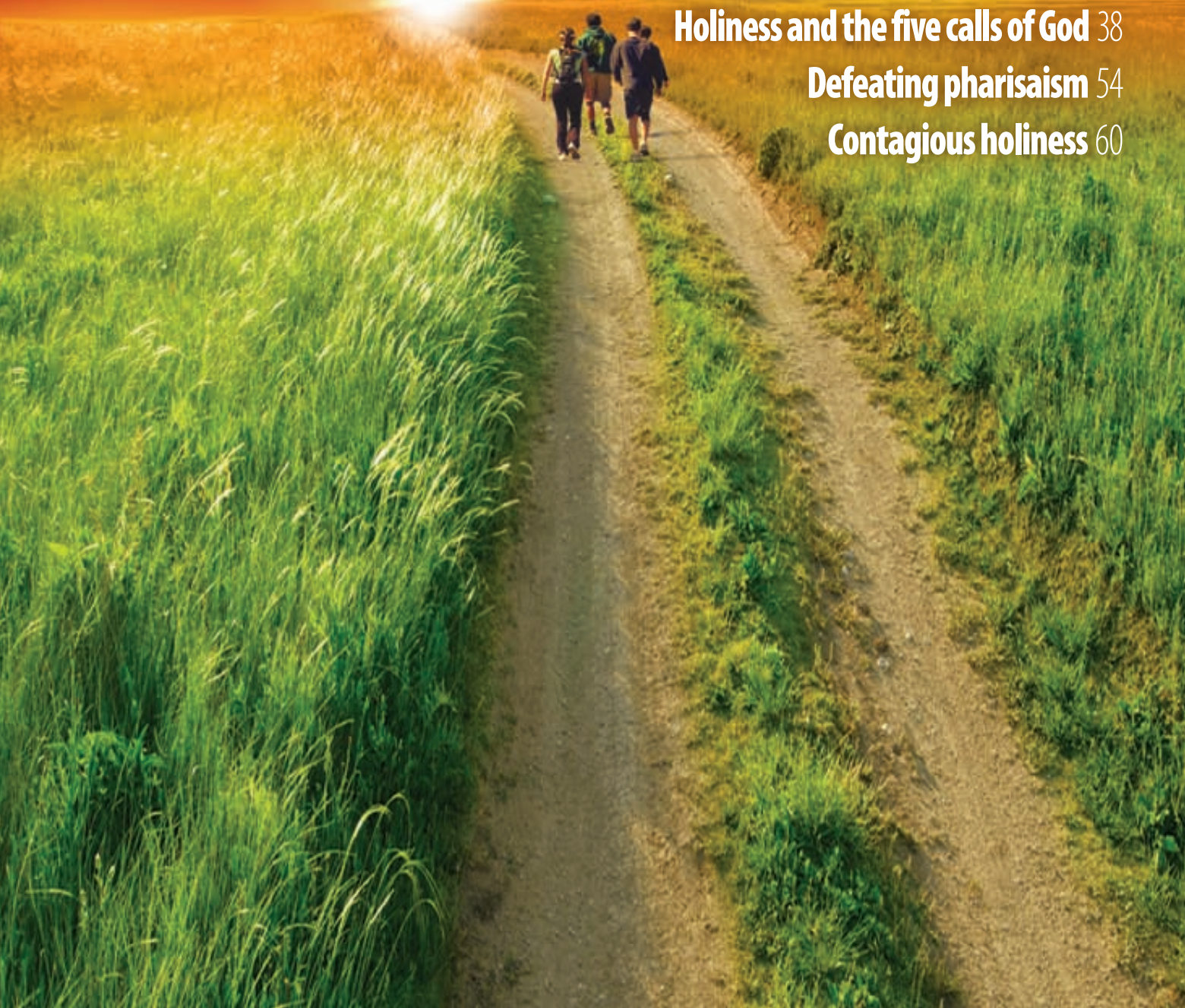
Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers ■ Fall 2011

## *The Way of* **HOLINESS**

**Holiness and the five calls of God 38**

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Goran Punda (left) works with Life Publishers to coordinate the production of *Duhovno Vrelo* in Croatian. With him is Croatian pastor and presbyter, Daniel Berkovic.

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**Next Time in enrichment:**

**Compassion Ministry: Expressing the Heart of God**

**Many churches are doing compassion ministry.** Others are wondering how to and what to do to start compassion ministry. But one thing is certain: compassion ministry expresses the heart of God. Psalm 146:7–9 reads: "He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked."

God wants your church to minister to the needy in your community. This issue of *Enrichment* provides practical resources for starting and maintaining an effective compassion ministry. Learn from experienced compassion-ministry leaders like Kent Anderson, JoAnn Butrin, Hal Donaldson, Steve Donaldson, Elizabeth Grant, Bob Michels, Samuel Rodriguez, Amy Sherman, Grant Standefer, Thomas Trask, and Scott Wilson.

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- Serve (compassion)
- Go (evangelism)
- Connect (community)
- Grow (discipleship)

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# THE ABCs OF BUILDING HEALTHY- CHURCH KIDS

**G**rowing up, every child has at least one person they look up to, act like, and want to be like. Girls may wear their mother's high heels and boys may borrow their dad's favorite baseball cap. Children are eager to learn and waiting for someone to show them the next step.

The same is true in the church. Children are eager to learn about God. That's why it's essential for the church to watch how they act around children, at all times.

"Typically what they have learned by age 8 or 9 is what they will carry with them for life," Mark Entzminger, senior director of Children's Ministries for the Assemblies of God, says. "If we do not become more intentional about how we are discipling children, then we are not helping to set up for future success. So many things ride on building that foundation and discipling those kids."

### Awareness

While there is no one solution to effectively disciple children, involvement of the family and church leaders is significant.





"We must be aware that every interaction we have with a child, whether positive, negative, verbal or nonverbal, impacts their development," Entzminger says. If a parent attends church, that is training the child. Similarly, if a teacher disciplines a child severely then immediately says, "God is a God of love," that kid learned something, but it wasn't that God is love.

### **Behavioral Approximations**

Currently, Children's Ministries is defining children's behavioral approximations. For example, if kids should be able to pray aloud between ages 4 and 6, and a 5-year-old does not pray aloud, it may not simply be that the child doesn't understand. Knowing behavioral approximations might encourage leaders to dialogue with families. Entzminger noted that behavioral approximations would be a test of growth but the real work comes down to communication between the leader and the parent.

Once behavioral approximations are determined, leaders can note where children need help. Entzminger says curriculum can pinpoint at what ages to teach essential truths. Leaders can then help children who have never been to church before get up to speed. "By not using a well-thought-out curriculum plan, churches and families will miss many more essential teachings

than if they use a curriculum that is well planned in the scope of the year.

### **Choosing Curriculum**

Entzminger feels curriculum must provide biblical truths, teaching, and principles. Helping kids connect with Bible truth is the focus of programs like Faith Case. The DVD-driven curriculum provides talking points that connect church to home. One pastor shared that Faith Case not only taught about the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but also helped him guide a child to her Baptism.

Faith Case takes pressure off the volunteer and maximizes teaching time. "The DVD does a lot of the teaching, which means kids get the same quality regardless of church size," Entzminger says.

Faith Case 3 (available in August) covers the Beatitudes. Developers chose the Beatitudes because Jesus used them to redefine how people should live for God. Kids today face a similar challenge in that living for God means living counter to culture. This latest Faith Case, like the first two, encourage kids to act like God, not the world.

JENNIFER TAYLOR is a freelance writer and also works for Assemblies of God national youth ministries.

**TURN PAGE TO SEE 2 SPIRIT-FILLED CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TOOLS...**

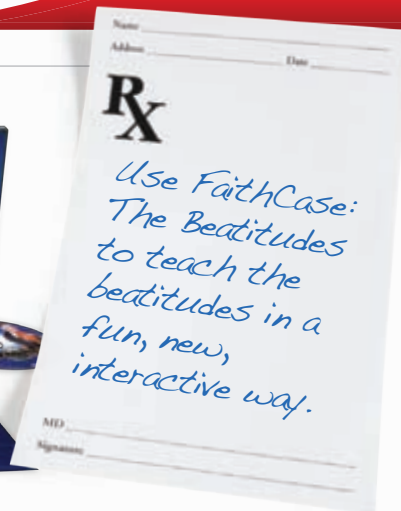




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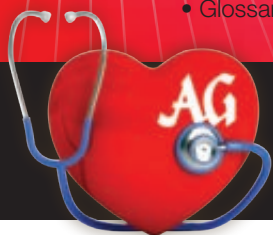
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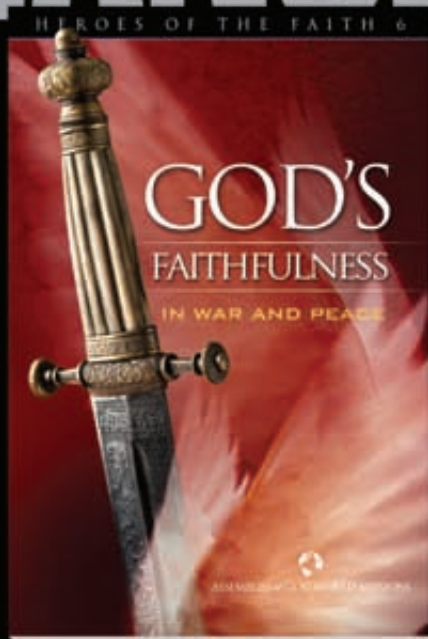


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## ■ ON THE HOME FRONT

# Connect With Parents

**You minister to children, but how do you connect with their parents?** Here is one way: Affirm parents.

Parenting is the hardest job anyone will ever do. Parents need to know someone appreciates their efforts. Every parent does something right — whether it's reading aloud with the child, bringing a child to church, consistent disciplining, or having regular family prayer. Find one strength in each parent you meet, then comment on it. Sometimes parents do not recognize their own qualities. A word of recognition from their pastor might make a difference in their feelings of competence and confidence.

When my kids were young and demanding chunks of my time, I often arrived at church emotionally exhausted. One such Sunday a teacher said, "Brenda, you always take time to explain things to your daughter." Her comment affirmed my attempts to be a patient mom, and fueled my spirit for many years.

**BRENDA NIXON**, Mount Vernon, Ohio



# Am I Lazy?

## ■ YOUNG LEADER

**Many of my mornings began with a tweet.** Early one morning a young pastor I follow tweeted, "I'm reading the biographies of great saints and finding that a common theme among them is that they are not lazy."

For some reason this tweet poked at the flabby sections of my mind. *Am I lazy?* I asked. My flesh immediately reared up with a retort: *Of course you're not lazy. You just spent half the night writing your fourth book. You spent time in the hospital this week, took a day off to take your wife to the hospital, and you prepared two messages. You're not lazy.*

But that tweet still bothered me. Not because I am work lazy. But perhaps, like many young, busy pastors, I am mind lazy. We neglect the hard work of nourishing our souls. We stop reading.

We hear about pastoral burnout and the need for relaxation and rest. But has this given us the excuse for slipping into patterns of soul starvation?

When we rest, we must Sabbath on the good stuff — spirit food that keeps ministry fresh. For me, this means less TV and more time with God and in the company of good books. It means intentional conversations with my wife and godly friends.

Ironically, we can be hard at work and still lazy. We can be still before God and yet active. This paradox is hard for pastors to digest, especially in an evangelical culture increasingly measured by the measurables. Soul care through books, conversations, and meditation seems such a waste of time and resources. So we sweat and labor physically, while our minds grow flabby.

My tweeting pastor friend was right. Impactful saints of old had an active spiritual life. We would be wise to follow regular maintenance of our souls, even when we rest.

**DANIEL DARLING** is author of *Teen People of the Bible: Celebrity Profiles of Real Faith and Tragic Failure*. Visit <http://www.danieldarling.com>.

## ONE NATION UNDER GOD

### Pledge of Allegiance Poster

**Gateways to Better Education**, an organization promoting appropriate ways public schools can teach about America's religious heritage, has developed a patriotic poster to help students understand each phrase of the Pledge of Allegiance.

To explain the phrase, "One nation under God," the poster quotes the preamble to The Declaration of Independence to emphasize that we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights.

Darrell Holmquist, high school teacher in New Lenox, Illinois, found the poster useful with his students. "Many questions have come up about the meaning of the various phrases in the Pledge," remarked Darrell. "I was able to confidently answer every question courtesy of the explanations on the poster."

After distributing over 500 posters to students, the Milltown, New Jersey, PTA received a thank-you note from a student that summed up the reason for their efforts. He wrote, "Mom and Dad really liked it because now I know what I'm saying."

Gateways to Better Education is encouraging churches to give the posters to their congregations on Sunday, September 11. Every morning when students recite the Pledge their new understanding will serve as a daily reminder of God's importance in their lives.

To view and order the poster, visit [www.gtbe.org/store](http://www.gtbe.org/store). Download a hi-res image of the poster at [https://www.gtbe.org/store/images/pledge\\_poster.jpg](https://www.gtbe.org/store/images/pledge_poster.jpg).



## BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS

**What is the logical name of the age group that follows Generation Y (often called Millennials)?** If you answered "Z," you are wrong — at least according to business and marketing consultants, Booz & Company. In a recent article,<sup>1</sup> B&C consultants Friedrich, Peterson, and Koster propose the best name for the newest generation — those born after 1990 — is *Generation C*. They describe them as "connected, communicating, content-centric, computerized, community-oriented, [and] always clicking." This is a generation for whom reality has always been "defined and enabled by the Internet, mobile devices, and social networking." Thus Gen C-ers expect immediate access to the people or information that are important to them — it's just a click away.

While this digital world may be a "foreign mission field" for church leaders, it is one to which they must acculturate if they hope to have any impact or influence on Generation C. Learning the digital languages of tweeting, posting, blogging, iMing, or any other native tongue opens a communication door into their lives. As with any other language that you do not speak well, find a native to translate for you until you become fluent.

**RANDY WALLS, D.Min.**, director of continuing education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

### NOTE

1. Roman Friedrich, Michael Peterson, and Alex Koster. "The Rise of Generation C," *Booz & Company, Strategy + Business*, February 22, 2011, <http://www.strategy-business.com/article/11110?gko=64e54>. Accessed March 18, 2011.

## FAITH & SPORTS

### Quarterbacking Faith

**Americans love football.** No player is more important to a football team than the quarterback. Thus, quarterbacks gain most of the spotlight, the highest salaries in the pros, and the blame for losses and credit for wins. Most often they take the podium to field post-game questions.

Recently, some of the best quarterbacks have used that platform to share their faith — some more aggressively than others. The top three college quarterbacks in 2009 were outspoken believers: Tim Tebow, Sam Bradford, and Colt McCoy (all now employed by professional teams). The quarterback of the 2010 Super Bowl Champion New Orleans Saints, Drew

Brees, has written a book (Tyndale House) in which he shares his faith. Aaron Rogers, quarterback of the Green Bay Packers — current reigning NFL Champions — has openly confessed his commitment to Christ.

What a tremendous encouragement for Christian sports fans . . . and a powerful opportunity to spread the gospel. But we must temper our enthusiasm with the reality that these men, like all of us, are vulnerable sinners and susceptible to fall. We need to pray they stay strong and clear. And let us warn congregations, especially our young people, not to put anyone on a pedestal. Only Christ is sinless and will never let them down.

**DAVE VEERMAN**, Naperville, Illinois







**PERSECUTED**

*but not abandoned*



“WE ARE HARD PRESSED ON EVERY SIDE,  
BUT NOT IN DESPAIR; PERSECUTED,  
BUT NOT CRUSHED; PERPLEXED,  
BUT NOT ABANDONED.”

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8,9, NIV

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## TIME-SAVING TIPS

### Timely Paper Management

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1. Handle each paper once. Give a prompt response, file it, or discard it.
2. When you cannot deal with a paper quickly, attach a sticky note with the next step to be done. This saves rereading the paper to recall what is needed. For future filing or receipts to hand in, write the category you will charge a receipt to (youth, curriculum, church supplies).
3. Use an upright file holder to organize papers you cannot quickly file or dispose of. Use colored folders or tabs as quick codes: green for receipts, blue for sermon notes, or black for funerals. This organizes the slush pile.
4. Remember the acronym FAST:
  - File documents and important information.
  - Act on bills and current information quickly.
  - Store, or schedule to-do papers in an easily retrievable manner.
  - Toss any paper not needed.
5. Schedule recurring, written tasks. These include handing in receipts, writing appreciation or sympathy notes, and paying bills.
6. Develop systems that work. For example, save sermon illustrations in a database with columns for Scriptures and topics for easy sorting. Also, carry a small journal and write illustrations with the appropriate Scripture in the top right corner. If the idea comes from another pastor, a movie, or a book, make sure you document the source.

KAREN H. WHITING, author and speaker

## TRICK OR TREAT EVANGELISM

### Halloween Handouts

Many Christians struggle with how to handle Halloween. But if we do not open our doors for trick-or-treaters, we might miss an opportunity for evangelism. When else do neighbors and strangers come to our door expecting something free?

Many families in your church may give out candy on Halloween. Why not give them something more to hand out? Here are some ideas:

**Invitations to your church.** Make these pumpkin-shaped or like a movie-ticket that says "Admit One Free." List the church's address, worship service times, and any special activities.

**Information about children's programs.** Half- or quarter-sheet flyers can inform trick-or-treaters about your church's children programs: Royal Rangers, Impact Girls Clubs, High Point, or other events for kids. Invite children to attend. Include a phone number, e-mail address, or website where parents can find more information or answers to their questions.

**Invite to Thanksgiving and Christmas events.** Let people know how they can get involved in a Thanksgiving event or if their children would like to be involved in the Christmas program.

**Create business cards with a picture of the church.** On the back, list the church address, phone number, times of worship, and website address. Leftovers can be used beyond Halloween.

Church members can drop these along with a sweet treat into a candy bag.

DIANNE E. BUTTS, Pueblo, Colorado



## HOLY LAUGHTER

### The Watkins' 2011 Church Dictionary

**Bored Meeting:** (No definition required.)

**Carnal nurture:** Replacing sermons with motivational talks.

**Church growth:** Side effect of too many carry-in dinners.

**'damentalist:** Believer who has lost the "fun" in his/her faith.

**Geek Orthodox:** A member of an online church.

**Guessin':** Sunday School lesson that leaves students wondering, *Now what was the teacher trying to say?*

**Helloship:** Shallow conversation in church foyers often mislabeled as "fellowship."

**Justavacation:** Excuses for skipping church

**Lite sin:** Antonym of "deep sin," having one-third less disapproval than other leading sins.

**McMessage:** Entertaining sermon with little nutritional value.

**Meology:** Self-centered doctrine.

**Messchatology:** Deriving theology from "last days" novels.

**Ministry:** Suffix, when applied to any activity, immediately spiritualizes it (i.e., beach ministry, mall ministry, softball ministry, etc.).

**Non-prophet organization:** Politically correct church that does not want to offend anyone.

**Pastornoia:** Overwhelming fear that the minister will: a) visit your home while you are watching *Jersey Shore*, b) see you on your way to the lake on Sunday morning, c) ask you to serve on a committee.

**Sinspiration:** Motivation to do something right for the wrong reason.

**Two-timers:** Parishioners who only attend at Christmas and Easter.

**Writeousness:** Self-righteous attitude of authors who see the speck of dust in their brother's eye, but have a . . . Uh, sorry, I'm out of room.

JAMES N. WATKINS, Upland, Indiana

Read more "Holy Laughter" at [www.jameswatkins.com](http://www.jameswatkins.com)



## ISSUES OF FAITH

# Sacred Space

**Planning commissions in large and small cities are increasingly applying limitations to the construction of churches.** The issue becomes even more complex when Muslims or other religious groups apply for building permits for their worship centers. With many new church-planting efforts using buildings they lease from public or business organizations, a larger question looms: Is there such a thing as *sacred space*?

Some Christian leaders appeal to Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4 and the focus away from the physical location where worship takes place, to the spiritual realm of the heart. Some Christian leaders, who have shared facilities with Muslim congregations, argue that the community is their parish and creating a peaceful, just community is a form of worship.

Ed Stetzer, from LifeWay Research, however, suggests that while Christians need to be strong advocates for religious freedom, they need not succumb to the temptation of religious pluralism. Rich Mouw, president at Fuller Theological Seminary, observes that evangelicals are notoriously vague about their definition of sacred space. Mouw believes pastoral leaders are at a critical teaching moment. They must answer: What does it mean to set apart a specific space for worshiping the one true God?

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



## UTHTRAX

# Teaching Tolerance

**Tolerance.** I began to fully understand this word when my children entered public school. The school taught tolerance for other religions, one's sexual orientation, and a woman's right to choose what to do with her body.

People often use this word to justify wrong or to turn a blind eye to immoral behavior. I began to despise this word. But I did not make the connection that my family was practicing tolerance.

One of my best friends is a woman of another race. Through our friendship, and consequently the friendships of our children, my children learned that friendships can cross races. For many years we demonstrated in practical ways the unconditional love of Jesus to a friend practicing a gay lifestyle. As a family, we celebrated when our friend chose to walk away from the gay culture and into a loving relationship with Jesus.

We encouraged our children to make friends with those at school who practiced other religions, looking for open doors to share Christ. By example, we taught it is more important to be known for what we are for — the revolutionary love of Christ — than for what we are against.

Every day teens bump into situations that oppose their biblical worldview. We need to teach our students biblical tolerance from the basis of unconditional love. The way to teach is to live; the best learning is more caught than taught.

Our students smell hypocrisy, no matter how small or even when spoken in jest — erasing any teaching we have attempted. If we want our students to be world changers, we must first teach them to be world lovers.

**LYNN COWELL**, Charlotte, North Carolina

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## WHAT IN THE WORLD

# Significance Over Success

Twelve years ago Don Schoendorfer was a 49-year-old husband and father who had achieved success. This mechanical engineer with a Ph.D. from MIT had a great marriage, three beautiful daughters, and lived in Orange County, California. In addition, Don had a number of patents with his name attached to them.

"I had tasted the flavors of worldly success, but I really wasn't satisfied," Don admits. "I had an inner hunger for more. I wanted a life that was marked by significance more than success."

About that time, the Lord reminded Don of something he had seen while on vacation in Morocco — a paraplegic woman dragging her lifeless legs across a dirt road. As the image of that woman kept coming to mind, Don determined to design a lightweight wheelchair that would be durable, yet inexpensive. He started with a white plastic lawn chair to which he attached two mountain bike tires. Don tinkered in his garage before creating a reproducible prototype.



Convinced his dream was from the Lord, Don quit his job, emptied his savings account, leased a warehouse, and established a 501(c)3. Since he would give the wheelchairs to those in need, he opted to call his new relief ministry Free Wheelchair Mission.

"I came to realize there are 100 million people in the world like that woman in Morocco," Don admits. "That's mindboggling. Our goal as an organization is to distribute 20 million wheelchairs. It is also our goal to keep the cost of manufacturing and distributing each chair to less than \$70. Although we haven't reached the first goal, we have the second." Check out [www.freewheelchairmission.org](http://www.freewheelchairmission.org).

GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington



## ON MISSION

# The Lost Are in America

**New and established churches in America are wrestling with:**

How do we balance our efforts to reach the lost close at hand with those thousands of miles away? A growing emphasis on treating North America as a mission field is reestablishing our efforts to more strategically reach our communities. But the question still remains: Do all churches have a responsibility to be part of global efforts to present the claims of Christ? Some pastors will argue that our international evangelistic efforts are a cover-up for our paltry efforts to win the lost in our communities.

Over 200 years ago, William Carey, the father of the modern missionary movement, faced a similar quandary. He observed that there were thousands of people in his nation (England) who were far from God. Cary did not believe, even though there were still unbelievers in England, that Christians should first reach England before they presented the gospel to the rest of the world. Carey argued that England's *unreached* had access to the gospel, while millions existed outside his nation who had no Bible, and no written language in which the gospel could be communicated. Carey concluded: In England, gospel efforts were *needed*, while globally, these efforts were *irreplaceable*. In short, disciples of Jesus have a view of God's glory going to the nations, because God is a sending God, and those who see Him live as those being sent.

BYRON KLAUS, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

## NOTABLE EVENTS IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

# Pope Urban II Launches the First Crusade

In 1095, Pope Urban II convened the Council of Clermont where he delivered a passionate sermon: "A horrible tale has gone forth . . . an accursed race utterly alienated from God . . . has invaded the lands of Christians and depopulated them by the sword, plundering, and fire. Tear from that land the wicked race and subject it to yourselves," he pleaded.

Those who heard, cried back: "Deus Vult! Deus Vult!" (God wills it!). This became the battle cry of the Crusaders.

The first crusade was somewhat successful in that the Crusaders took back Antioch and Jerusalem. The siege of those cities was violent and bloody. "Take no prisoners," was the tactic employed by Christian crusaders. However, the Crusades were ineffective in keeping Muslims out of the Holy Land.



VICTOR M. PARACHIN, Tulsa, Oklahoma



## BOOK IT

**The first line of the old spiritual exclaims, “Everybody talkin’ bout heav’n ain’t goin’ there.”** This is certainly true. Today we hear a lot of “heaven talk” if the best-seller lists are any indication.

In 2004, Tyndale House published Randy Alcorn’s *Heaven*, a serious and thoroughly biblical treatment. It continues to sell. About the same time, Don Piper told his dramatic eyewitness story in his book, *90 Minutes in Heaven*, (Revell/Baker). As word got out, sales took off and have remained strong. Recently, thousands have purchased *The Boy Who Came Back From Heaven* by Kevin and Alex Malarkey (Tyndale House), and *Heaven Is for Real*, by Todd Burpo with Lynn Vincent (Thomas Nelson). At the beginning of March 2011, Burpo’s book had sold over a million copies and was No. 1 on the *New York Times*’ paperback nonfiction list, the combined hardcover and paperback nonfiction list, and on the combined print and e-Book nonfiction list. It was No. 2 on the e-Book nonfiction list.

People are intrigued by death and the afterlife and want to be assured that, as the book title exclaims, heaven is for real. If these best-selling books can bring comfort to some and get people talking about the gospel, then let us hope they continue to sell.

But we must be careful that we do not encourage people to base their faith on others’ experiences. Instead, we must look to the Bible as our only rule for faith and practice. We believe in heaven because of what Scripture teaches, we know how to get there because Jesus tells us in the Word, we confidently “press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us” (Philippians 3:14, NLT)<sup>1</sup>.

The Burpo and Malarkey books can serve as great discussion starters, but, like Alcorn, they need to lead to the truth found in the Bible.

**DAVE VEERMAN**, Naperville, Illinois

## NOTE

1. Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

# Heaven Talk

## UTHTRAX

**The box sits on the stage just waiting to be filled.** Girls have opportunity to anonymously write any question. Later in the conference, I take the questions out of the box and attempt to answer them.

**“How far is too far?” is a sure question at every event. If you haven’t had this conversation with your students, know that they are asking it. The question is: *Who* are they asking?**

In Bryce Canyon, Utah, my family was coming to the end of a 7-mile hike. I walked to the front, turned around, and began walking backward, encouraging the weary ones with my hands and voice. “Keep going. Don’t give up.” Because I was not watching where I was walking, I slipped off the edge, and slid down the sandy precipice. Hooking my forearms on the edge of the path, I clung on, waiting for someone to rescue me.

Is this where teens are when they are dating? Hanging from a cliff, asking God to come to their rescue? They have been practicing purity for a long time. Have they grown weary and are now sliding off the edge?

“How far is too far?” is the wrong question. The real question is “How close can I get to God so I don’t fall off the edge?”

My advice: If you would not do it in front of your dad, why would you be comfortable doing it in front of Father God? If you keep it on the face — face-to-face — you will likely not go where you should not go.

**LYNN COWELL**, Charlotte, North Carolina

## How Far Is Too Far?



## UPWORDS

# Safe Path

**It was a cold, windy Alaskan Sunday morning.** After a brief warming period, the temperature dropped precipitously during the night. The roads were so slick I was having difficulty controlling my four-wheel drive vehicle if I left the narrow gravel strip the road crew had laid down.

As we crept down the road on our way to church, my wife and I passed two children walking to a neighbor's house. Although the icy conditions alone made walking difficult, the wind was so strong that staying on their feet was almost impossible.

Seeing their distress, my wife rolled down her window and said, "Hey, Guys, walk on the gravel; it's much easier."

They quickly scrambled to the nearby gravel strip. Grateful for their newfound stability, they waved, and over the roar of the wind, shouted, "Thank you."

In the worst conditions of life, God always has a safe path for us to walk. Sometimes, however, we are so focused on our destination we fail to notice a turn in the path God has laid out. At other times, worldly attractions distract our attention causing us to slip and slide. Under the buffeting of life's winds, regaining our spiritual footing seems impossible.

Thankfully, we are always under the watchful eye of our Lord. When we lose our way and find ourselves on unstable footing, not only does the Lord call out a warning, He comes alongside, puts a strong arm around us, and walks us back to the place of safety.

**JACK AIKEN**, Eagle River, Alaska

## LEADER LIFE

# Moving Forward With Reverse Mentoring

**Jack Welch realized that GE was falling behind other companies in its use of the Internet as a business tool.** Welch realized that understanding and embracing online technology was critical to GE's long-term success. To catch up, Welch instituted a "reverse mentoring" program at GE. He required 500 of his top executives (and himself) to find a younger, tech-savvy "Web mentor" to teach them how to use the Web and understand e-business.

What if seasoned ministry leaders followed this example and used reverse mentoring to learn from the younger generation who are more conversant with the emerging culture, technology, and social context? As postmodern thought continues to permeate our culture, we would be wise to become fluent in the technology and language of the emerging generations God has called us to reach. The best way to do this is to become a willing and intentional student of the culture, to become the humble protégé instead of the mentor. Seasoned leaders are themselves open to change and are continual learners. They recognize and accept when God is working through someone younger, less known.

Great mentors are extremely valuable, regardless of the age of either party. We all have something to learn and contribute from one another. Understanding the knowledge that all believers have and utilizing their diverse experiences is key to a forward-moving, successful team and strong leadership development for the future. Reverse mentoring is leading the way in innovative collaborations across the multigenerational church. God has His own way of filling in the gap.

**PATTI ANN THOMPSON**, Kansas City, Missouri

## BIBLICA

# Specialty Bibles

**Ever wish you had God's Word to give away, something a person you meet could keep, read, and ponder?** Wish you could add some stories or testimonies of real-life contemporary Christians? How about a Bible with the plan of salvation or study tools? What if you targeted this Bible to a particular group, such as police officers or bikers? BiblicaDirect.com has a variety of pocket-sized specialty New Testaments priced at \$3 each, or \$2.50 for a case of 50. Tucked between the biblical books of these NIV New Testaments are testimonies and other tools.

*Peacemakers* New Testament includes Psalms, Proverbs, and gospel-filled articles by policemen and chaplains. Why not give one to an officer who serves and protects?

*Answering the Call* New Testament is inspired by the events of 9/11/01. This Bible features real-life stories by firefighters and paramedics. It was published in partnership with the Fellowship of Christian Firefighters.

*Hope for the Highway* is for motorcycle enthusiasts and developed in conjunction with the Christian Motorcyclists Association. It includes four powerful stories of bikers who found Christ.

*Hope for the Future* is for a woman in a crisis pregnancy.

*The Way for Cowboys* includes the plan of salvation and testimonies from famous cowboys. It was created in partnership with the Fellowship of Christian Cowboys.

Order from BiblicaDirect.com (formerly the International Bible Society).

**DIANNE E. BUTTS**, Pueblo, Colorado



**"We've never lost an American in space and we're sure ... not gonna' lose one on my watch! Failure is not an option,"** is a famous line from the movie *Apollo 13*. Author Justin Dela Cruz, says, "the current generation embraces failure."

Christian leaders "tend to steer away from failure by overlooking, glossing over, ignoring, and making things look as best as they can. But when this happens, authenticity is at stake. And authenticity is not something we should sacrifice," says Dela Cruz. Using the acronym FAIL, he explains what happens in Christian leadership because of FAIL behaviors. He also provides practical ways to navigate away from these behaviors, and practice healthy authenticity in leadership.

## Authenticity **FAIL** BY JUSTIN DELA CRUZ



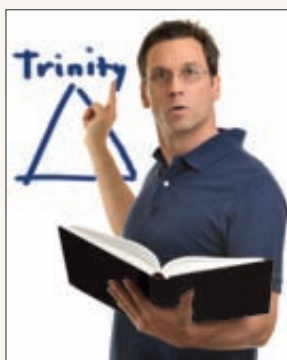
## The Art of Creating and Designing an Atmosphere for Congregants to Encounter and Respond to God

BY TOM MATRONE

"In conversations about corporate worship, people often discuss and debate worship at every possible level. Some have even surpassed scriptural references concerning worship. But it is important to note that when we make the art of worship the subject, we are at risk of altering the very thing for which God intended worship," states Tom Matrone, national director of music for The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

"What does Scripture tell us God is looking for? He is looking for those who are simply and honestly themselves before Him in worship," says Matrone.

We need to remember, "Regardless of your musical preferences, your age, or race, the idea of pleasing God with your worship is not built around you."



## The Trinity: Why We Should Teach It

BY FRANK D. MACCHIA

**How do you respond to someone who says, "The term Trinity is not in the Bible"?** This person then warns of the confusion that can occur when focusing on such a difficult doctrine in the church.

Frank D. Macchia, professor at Vanguard University, provides the answer to this dilemma. Macchia states, "The complexity of the doctrine of the Trinity should not prevent us from teaching it. Teaching about the Trinity not only enhances our faithfulness to the God depicted in the story of Jesus, it can enrich the church's view of the Christian life."



## Did the Upper Room Have an iPod?

BY DEAN MERRILL

**What is the role of music in helping people pray around the altar?** According to noted author Dean Merrill, "There is a wide range of Christian music, some of which helps the goal of prayer, and some that doesn't." Merrill believes: "Music can do at least three things in a worship/prayer context. It can facilitate. It can manipulate. It can also dominate."

Merrill has some poignant advice for music leaders. "We must never forget that prayer time is not showtime. The main point is not for Christians to experience great music. It is rather that they touch the face of God. Music is merely an adjunct."



## Open the Gates, Open the Book, Open the Altars: The Incredible Importance of Public Worship

BY STEVE PHIFER

Steve Phifer believes, "King Jesus walks among us while we are praising, preaching, and praying. He is in the room with us to preach the gospel to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are deeply bruised by the binding oppression of hell and to proclaim the wonders and opportunities of this day of amazing grace." Phifer's call is to let the whole service bring "the hope of mankind and of the community to which God has called us."



**P**astors may not need to be wary about parishioners who give a lot to other religious organizations. It turns out that those who are generous with various spiritual causes are the most likely to give to the local church, new research suggests.

Rather than being rivals for contributed funds, the study *Heart of the Donor* conducted by Grey Matter Research & Consulting of Phoenix contends that churches and charities complement each other in fundraising.

## Generous Church Donors Also Give to Charity



The study found the more money people give to a house of worship, the more likely they are to give to charitable organizations and to support a broader number of charities.

Among those who attend and financially support a house of worship regularly, 54 percent also give money to a charitable organization. Among those who do not attend church, only 28 percent donate to charity. Those who consistently contribute money to a church give an annual average of \$798 to a combined 5.5 charities. Nonat-

tendees characteristically contribute \$701 a year to an average 4.2 charities.

The study found generosity to be a way of life for those who give more, while those who give less to church are less likely to give to another nonprofit.

For example, only 23 percent of those who give \$100 to \$499 a year to church donate to another specific religious cause. The typical amount given to nonprofits by these donors is \$208 annually. But for churchgoers who contribute \$3,000 or more a year to their church, 51 percent likewise give to other religious causes, an average of \$1,440 a year.

"Four out of ten donors who gave to a place of worship also gave to specifically *religious* causes, such as evangelism or religious education, outside of their own place of worship," says Ron Sellers, president of Grey Matter Research. "Rather than being in competition for the donor dollar, it seems that giving fosters giving."

Sellers says the survey results confirm other recent studies showing other correlations with personal giving behavior, including the fact people who volunteer with nonprofits are more likely to be bighearted with their checkbook.

Americans who contribute regularly to churches also are likely to back causes that most places of worship are not directly involved with, such as aiding veterans or people with disabilities, Sellers says.

"This apparently is not a conflict with their giving to a place of worship, but a supplement to it," says Sellers.



## Pastors Strongly Identify as Pentecostals

**A Pentecostal identity is vital** to an overwhelming majority of Assemblies of God pastors, according to the new academic book, *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* (New York University Press). A pastoral survey in the scholarly work by Margaret Poloma and John C. Green says 49 percent of AG pastors call self-identification with the Assemblies of God extremely important and 36 percent say it is vitally important. Another 14 percent say it is somewhat important. Only 2 percent believe it is unimportant.

A majority of AG pastors, 60 percent, agree or strongly agree with the belief that too many churches in the Fellowship stress a general evangelical identity at the expense of a Pentecostal heritage. In addition, 82 percent of AG pastors speak in tongues at least weekly.

There is widespread adherence to biblical orthodoxy among AG clergy. The study shows that 100

percent of AG pastors agree that Christ is the only way to salvation, 99 percent believe the devil actually exists, and 98 percent think Scriptures are literally accurate.

The report also found solid support

49 percent of AG pastors call self-identification with the Assemblies of God extremely important and 36 percent say it is vitally important.

among those serving in AG local churches for national and district leadership. In response to whether the Fellowship is meeting ministry objectives, 100 percent of pastors indicated a financially stable national church is operating, 99 percent believed overseas mission efforts and ministries are expanding, 98 percent said resources are provided for spiritual revitalization, and 91 percent experienced support for strengthening the local church.

As far as congregants go, the study showed only 30 percent had been raised in the AG. A sizable 20 percent had grown up Catholic, 14 percent attended evangelical churches as teens, 13 percent formerly went to mainline Protestant churches, 12 percent did not attend church before, and 10 percent went to another Pentecostal or Spirit-filled church.

The book calls the Fellowship a success story in an age of shrinking denominational affiliation. A key factor is the growing number of ethnic minority churches, as many white majority churches have become less Pentecostal in practice.

"Ethnic congregations are generally more accepting and encouraging of Pentecostal experiences that mirror the Pentecostalism of their native countries," Poloma and Green wrote. "The future of

the AG is thus at a crossroads, with the charismatic experiences of the traditional ethnic congregation on one side and the predictability and routinization of the evangelical Euro-American congregation on the other."

## Leasing Inflatables Poses Risk for Churches



### Congregations leasing inflatable equipment for community outreach events

or church activities need to make sure that the contract does not hold the church responsible for anything that goes wrong, according to Jerry Sparks, president of AG Financial Insurance Solutions of Springfield, Missouri.

Typical agreements hold the rental company harmless for any potential losses that occur —

even if equipment is faulty upon delivery. A standard contract reads: "Client agrees to indemnify and hold vendor harmless from any and all claim, actions, suits, proceedings, costs, expenses, fees, damages, and liabilities, including, but not limited to, reasonable attorney's fees and costs, arising by reason of injury, damage, or death to persons or property, in connection with or resulting from the use of leased equipment."

Even though leasing companies usually provide staff to oversee bouncing houses, inflatable slides or rock walls, if a child is injured, it is the church — not the company — that is on the hook for damages. Also, unless the church purchases a damage waiver, the same holds true if the inflatable is damaged, no matter the cause.

Sparks says churches need to spend a little extra and get the company to remove the "hold harmless provisions" from contracts so the vendor, not the church, is culpable for any damages or injuries. In addition, Sparks says churches need the leasing firm to provide a certificate of insurance that will guarantee the church at least \$1 million worth of coverage in case of a claim. If the vendor refuses, Sparks advises to find a business that will.

Only officers of the church — not youth pastors — are qualified to sign such legal corporation contracts, according to Sparks. He handled a recent case where a child was seriously hurt in an inflatable mishap. The parents sued the inflatable company and secured a large six-figure court award, but the company turned around and presented the judgment to the church because of the contract the youth pastor signed. Until then, the senior pastor did not know about the contract, nor that the vendor could not be held liable for any mishap.

Parents usually do not sign an "activity participation agreement" releasing the church from any harm because such events are often viewed as ministry outreaches.

Sparks also notes that pastors need to check the church's insurance before leasing because some policies specifically exclude inflatable coverage.

"Most pastors have no idea of the liability involved," Sparks told *Enrichment* journal. "If you are going to rent equipment, first you must read the contract."

Failure to do so could mean financial ruin for the congregation.

## Enrolling Seminary Students Skewing Older

**While some of the oldest baby boomers are collecting Social Security** checks, others are heading back to school, specifically seminary. The Association of Theological Schools reports that 12.9 percent of all students entering seminary in 2010-11 were older than 50. Another 15.3 percent are older than 40, while 20 percent are in their 30s.

Although those in their 20s still comprise the bulk of seminarians (52 percent), more and more are heeding the spiritual call after starting a family, being employed in a nonreligious career, eliminating college debt, and already serving a church in some capacity.

The ATS study found that married males make up 32.4 percent of all seminary students and married females account for 16.2 percent. Overall, 22.3 percent of entering students have one or two dependents, while 12.9 percent have three or more dependents.

More than one-fourth of students (27.9 percent) who enroll in seminary already have an advanced degree. Although 14.5 percent of students carry an educational debt load topping \$30,000, most have no school loans to pay off.

Most seminary students (53.7 percent) enroll in a master of divinity program, with the majority working more than 20 hours a week while attending school.

Prior to coming to seminary, ATS figures show that most

(54 percent) students already have been elected or appointed to a leadership position in a church or in a religious organization. A whopping 29 percent of new students said they did not even consider seminary until after at least 2 years of full-time employment. Another 13.6 percent had no notions of a seminary education until after graduating from college, while 3.7 percent said they did not entertain the idea until they already had completed other graduate studies.

It is the 31.4 percent who started thinking about seminary during college that has been the target of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, according to President Byron Klaus.

When he became leader of the Springfield, Mo., school 12 years ago, Klaus says AGTS had a hefty number of students in their 40s who had embarked on a career long before.

"Five years ago we started seeing a renewed growth of students in their 20s, almost straight out of university," Klaus told *Enrichment* journal. "We have worked long and hard to penetrate Chi Alpha groups."

While those in mid career still account for a sizable minority of AGTS students, Klaus says the average AGTS master's degree student is 28 years old.

The Pittsburg-based ATS indicates that 68 percent of seminary students are white, 13.2 percent black, 9.6 percent Asian, 5.4 percent international, 3.2 percent Hispanic, and 0.6 percent Native American.





T H E M E :

# *The Way of* **HOLINESS**

I N T R O D U C T I O N

## **GOD'S CALL** *for* **HOLY LIVING**

**BY RICHARD L. SCHOONOVER**

**R**ooty toot, toot; rooty toot, toot. We're the young men from the Institute. We don't smoke; we don't chew; and we don't go with girls who do." We smile when we hear this satirical ditty that pokes fun at holiness as a list of rules. But today, many look suspiciously at the holiness requirements laid out by our early Pentecostal pioneers: no reading comics on Sunday, no TV, no playing basketball (wearing shorts), no dress above the knee, or long hair for men. People often called preaching on such topics *clothesline preaching*.

Philip Wannenmacher, longtime pastor of Central Assembly of God, Springfield,

Missouri, made a profound statement: "While we might not agree with our Pentecostal forefathers' list of requirements for living a holy life, we cannot fault their desire to live a life of holiness." Thus, what does it mean to be holy?

Holiness is at the heart of biblical teaching. In the Old Testament, the

words used for holiness suggest a cutting off or separation. God's holiness expresses His perfection, His separate-ness, and His distinction from creation. Holiness, then, is the core of God's being, encompassing all other divine attributes: "Be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44).

Holiness is also central to the life of God's people. The command, "You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15) sums up this understanding of God





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and His relationship to His people.

God's command for His people to be holy describes their separation from ordinary use and their separation for service to and worship of God. In the Old Testament, God's call to holiness involved being distinct from other people. God commanded His people to separate from other nations and from everything that would compromise their commitment to Him. In the New Testament, God calls believers to live "in the world" (among unbelievers)

but not "of the world" (according to their ways or values).

Because of the fall of man, we live in a sinful world and are not holy. But if God is holy and separate from His creation, how can we, as His creation, come to be holy?

God cannot make himself less holy to have fellowship with us. He has, however, provided for our holiness by redemption through Christ and applied to us through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11). This is our positional holiness (sanctification) in Christ. As a result, we bring honor to God through our lives (1 Peter 2:9). But how does holiness play out in our everyday lives?

Too often we regulate our holiness to a list of rules — dos and don'ts — as reflected in the satirical ditty above. We become like the Pharisees (*see Gary Tyra's article, "Defeating Pharisaism: Jesus' Critique of Pseudo-Holiness," page 54*). But this is not what God desires of us. Holiness must be more than outward actions; it must come from the heart.

Cheryl Bridges Johns, in her article, "Cultivating a Heart for Holiness," page 82, discusses the importance of our affections in our walk in holiness and provides practical counsel in cultivating

such a heart. Dan Crabtree, in "The Fulfilled Life: Rediscovering the Transforming Power of Sanctification," page 30, explains how we can live out who we are in Christ.

**C**hristians often wish they had quick formulas that would take care of their spiritual problems. To live a life of holiness, however, we must do what Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16: "Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." The word "live" describes our daily walk — our way of life.

The Spirit and the sinful nature are mutually exclusive. If we are occupied in pleasing the former, we will not please the latter. Paul continues his instruction by telling believers to be "led by the Spirit," (verse 18); and, "keep in step with the Spirit" (verse 25). As we allow the Holy Spirit to direct our thoughts and actions, we will continue on the path of holiness God requires of us.

The editors of *Enrichment* hope the articles in this issue on holiness will not only help you in your personal walk of holiness, but will also provide material you can use to help your people walk in holiness. "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). 🌟

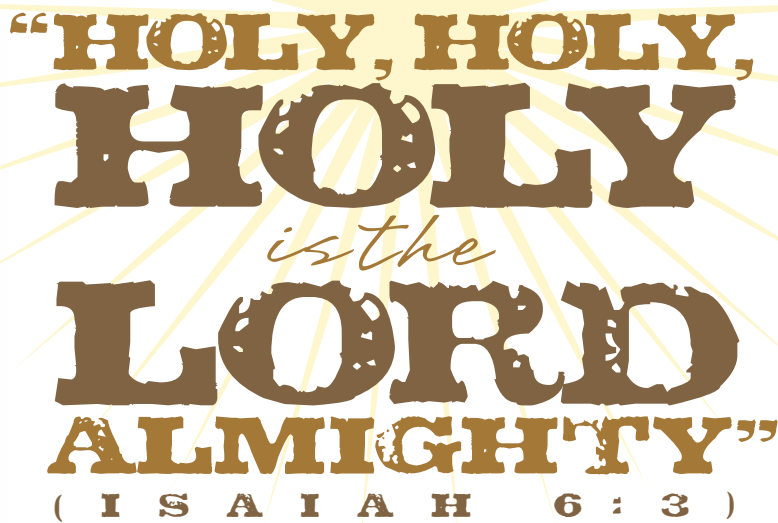


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**“HOLY, HOLY,  
HOLY  
*is the*  
LORD  
ALMIGHTY”  
( I S A I A H 6 : 3 )**

**WHAT  
DOES IT  
MEAN  
TO SAY  
GOD IS  
HOLY<sup>1</sup>**



**BY DEREK TIDBALL**

.....

This single vision in which  
Isaiah encounters God  
in the temple emphasizes  
three aspects of God's holiness:  
His sovereign transcendence,  
His moral purity, and His  
costly grace.

**W**hen God appeared to  
Moses at the burn-  
ing bush, He made  
himself known as  
the One who is holy (Exodus 3:5). Holi-  
ness is His essential nature, the essence  
of His being.

The Old Testament describes God's  
name as "Holy" more than all other ways  
combined. Isaiah, "the prophet of hol-  
iness,"<sup>2</sup> repeatedly calls God "the Holy  
One of Israel." While we often resort to  
images, such as Rock, Father, Shepherd,  
or Light to describe the indescribable  
God, when we say God is holy we are  
not using a metaphor. There is nothing  
in our human experience to which we  
are comparing Him. We are telling it as  
it is.

What do we mean when we say that  
God is holy? Holiness refers to God's  
altogether different nature, His trans-  
cendent separateness, His exalted majesty,  
His awesome power, His absolute purity,  
His immeasurable brightness, His unfath-  
omable glory, and His redeeming salva-  
tion. It is shorthand for the excellence of  
His perfection.

The word *holy* is like a brilliant firework  
that explodes into a myriad of colors.  
It is impossible to take it all in at once.  
We mostly focus on one aspect or another  
of God's radiance. Isaiah, in chapter 6,  
however, gets as near to describing the  
fullness of God's holiness as anyone. This  
single vision in which Isaiah encounters  
God in the temple emphasizes three  
aspects of God's holiness: His sovereign  
transcendence, His moral purity, and His  
costly grace.





## God's Holiness as Sovereign Transcendence (Isaiah 6:1–4)

Isaiah's visit to the temple occurred the year King Uzziah died (verse 1), at the end of Uzziah's 50-year reign. An era of stability had passed and the people faced a period of uncertainty. The increasing aggression of Assyria and its inroads into neighboring territories (2 Kings 15:17–38) compounded this uncertainty. At the point when the transience and weakness of earthly thrones was all too apparent God granted Isaiah a vision of the One who is the real Lord of all, whose reign was both permanent and powerful.

In this vision, earth and heaven merged, giving Isaiah a sight of "the Lord seated on a throne" (Isaiah 6:1). The vision caused Isaiah to gaze upward to the superior position of the throne. God's throne is not on a level with earthly thrones — whether it be Uzziah's, or the rising Assyrian throne of Tiglath Pileser III. It is higher than theirs. Its location speaks of His supremacy over the earth and all human rulers who rise and fall at His command.

God's surpassing greatness was the bedrock of Israel's faith. The Psalmists did not intend for their repeated cries for the Lord to "be exalted" to imply God's elevated position needed shoring up. They knew that "God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne. ... the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted" (Psalm 47:8,9). Rather, this was a way of recognizing the status He already possessed.

God's throne was inviolable whatever circumstances His people were undergoing. Even when the nation had apparently come to an end and its people were in exile, Daniel still spoke of God as "the Most High God" who was "sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" (Daniel 4:2,25).

Trappings of majesty surrounded the throne Isaiah saw. The royal robe reached from heaven into the temple. Its length captures the

grandeur of God's sovereign rule, but also, in making a connection with earth, suggests that God is not remote from or indifferent to the struggles of His subjects below. The robe "filled the temple" — not the palace, the seat of power; or, the courts, the seat of law; but, the temple, the seat of atonement. This further suggests God's desire to overcome His people's lack of holiness by providing them with a means of cleansing and reconciliation.

Any earthly sovereign has attendants. Here the seraphs (Isaiah 6:2,6) attend the King of kings. These fiery creatures, mentioned by name only in these two verses in the Bible, cannot look directly on God. Hence, "With two wings they covered their faces [and] with two they covered their feet." Probably they covered their feet because they "disavowed their intention to choose their own path."<sup>3</sup> The other pair of wings they used to fly, since they were constantly ready to do

**Grace is not only costly to God — in that He provided the sacrifice for atonement — but also to sinners, in that there must be evidence of a changed way of life.**



the bidding of their Lord. Their ears remained uncovered; their duty was to listen to God's command and obey.

The Egyptians said that such creatures were responsible for spreading their wings to protect their gods, like modern Secret Service agents interpose their bodies between the President of the United States and any potential assailant. But the seraphs attending the living God of Israel are the ones in need of protection. Their wings do not cover Him. They cover themselves in view of His awesome holiness.

Isaiah's attention shifts from what he sees to what he hears. "And they were calling to one another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (verse 3). This song is something of a surprise. Since the focus has been on God's sovereignty, we might expect the seraphs to celebrate His rule: its legitimacy, power, and authority. Instead the seraphs celebrate His holiness. They are not content to mention His holiness and pass on, or even mention it twice — the usual Hebrew way of providing emphasis. They repeat their cry three times with increasing intensity. He is utterly, thoroughly utterly, perfectly utterly, holy. This is, "an emphatic formulation (that) is tantamount to a definition of the nature of YHWH."<sup>4</sup> God's holiness is such that only a "superlative"<sup>5</sup> does it justice.

The second line of the seraphs' song speaks of the sphere in which this holy God operates. God wants people to see His glory — the manifestation of His divine attributes — throughout the world. Isaiah encounters Him in the temple, but God is not limited to that shrine. Isaiah represents the children of Israel, but God has not limited His sovereignty to His covenant people. Just as we find God's signature throughout His creation, so we, too, know His law is throughout the earth and the nations observe His works (Psalm 19). The God in this vision is no petty tribal deity, limited in authority to a small group in

Judah. He displays His holiness in the theater of the whole world.

It would have been surprising if this breaking in of this "highly active, energetic, dynamic even threatening" divine power<sup>6</sup> had not had an immediate impact on the place where it occurred. And it did. Isaiah records the classic signs of a visitation from God in saying, "the doorposts and thresholds shook," as if an earthquake was occurring, and "the temple was filled with smoke" (verse 4). This was reminiscent of Moses' encounter with God on Sinai (Exodus 19:16–20). In Isaiah, the holy God of the Exodus and Sinai revealed himself once more at a crucial point in Israel's history.

### **God's Holiness as Moral Purity (Isaiah 6:5)**

Such an out-of-the-ordinary experience was naturally profoundly disturbing. We are not surprised to read that Isaiah's response was to cry out, "Woe to me! I am ruined!" (verse 5). But we do not read of him showing signs of panic, or of deep emotionalism, shaking, lying prostrate, or going into a trance. Rather, to our astonishment, the text takes us for a second time in an unexpected direction. The cause of his fear lies not in his emotional terror in the face of the power that has confronted him, but in his personal unworthiness in the face of the holiness he encountered. His response says his fate is sealed because "I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Having encountered holiness, Isaiah realizes that his own life is far from clean. His confession focuses on his lips for a number of reasons. The seraphs' lips had proclaimed God's holiness and, by contrast, he realized that his own lips had failed to witness to God's perfection.

The chief instrument Isaiah used as a prophet were his lips. It was natural, therefore, to concentrate on them. He was not confessing to swearing or filthy

conversation but to preaching unworthy messages, which perhaps came from his own imagination, frustrations, temper, or desire for comfort and compromise.

It was natural for Israel to think of speech in the Temple where words and songs were central to the liturgy. Perhaps Isaiah treated worship with the contempt that arises from overfamiliarity. More significant still, lips give expression to the mind and heart and reveal the otherwise silent thoughts of those who speak. In focusing on his lips, Isaiah is not exclusively majoring on the sins of speech but rather using the lips as a symbol that his whole life and those of his fellow citizens were out of sync with God. He is saying he is wholly unfit to serve a holy God. Whatever it means precisely, Isaiah was not alone in his guilt. The rest of the nation was just as culpable.

It is hard to overestimate the significance of Isaiah's response for our understanding of holiness. Some, following Rudolf Otto, have tried to reduce religion to an emotion and have stressed that "the idea of the holy" lies in a feeling of "creatureliness" which causes us to tremble in awe before the mystery of "the wholly other."<sup>7</sup>

We would be patently foolish to deny some element of emotion when God reveals himself in His awesome holiness as He did to Isaiah. But it is a grossly inadequate explanation of what was going on and ignores Isaiah's own response. Morality, not mystery, characterizes Isaiah's reaction to this in-breaking of overwhelming power, and for good reasons. Isaiah's schooling in the Law and formation as a member of the covenant community, the setting in the Temple where the high priest made atonement for failure to observe the Law, and the song of the seraphs which draw attention not to God's power but to His holiness, all combine to make Isaiah's reaction one of confession of sin. As John N. Oswalt says: "For Isaiah, the announcement of God's holiness meant that he





was in the presence of One distinct from — other than — himself. But for Isaiah as a Hebrew, it also meant that the terrifying otherness was not merely in essence but in character. Here was One ethically pure, absolutely upright, utterly true.<sup>8</sup> The One who is wholly other relates to His people in very down-to-earth ways and looks to them “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with [their] God” (Micah 6:8).

Isaiah’s instinctive reaction was self-deprecating because he was measuring himself correctly in the light of his encounter with the Holy One. To quote Oswalt again: “The content of this experience is not merely numinous, emotive, nonrational. Had God only wished to convey His otherness to Isaiah, He could have done so without words. But there is moral substance here, indicating that revelation does not come merely through raw experience, but through a divinely given interpretation as well.”<sup>9</sup>

Other deities made themselves known as “raw power,” but the God of Israel was unique: His holiness was not only power, but morality; not only transcendence, but also ethics. Other gods may have given their people laws, but those laws did not necessarily reflect their

character. The God of Israel required His people to live in such a way as to mirror His own character. They were to be holy — to live ethically — because He was holy (Leviticus 11:45; 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15, 16). Isaiah’s response, therefore, was entirely appropriate and exactly right.

## God’s Holiness as Costly Grace (Isaiah 6:6–13)

Isaiah’s vision reveals another dimension of God’s holiness — that of costly grace. Christians are apt to contrast God’s holiness with His love, pitting law and grace, judgment and salvation against each other. Isaiah would have no dealings with such a view. Because God is the Holy One of Israel, He exercises compassion on His less-than-holy people, providing salvation for them and inviting them to enjoy being reconciled. Isaiah also says, “The Holy One of Israel” is their Helper (Isaiah 41:13); Savior (Isaiah 43:3; 52:10); and, most frequently, Redeemer (Isaiah 43:14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5).

God manifests His costly grace in Isaiah 6 in three ways: the cleansing of the prophet, the chastening of the people, and the choosing of a remnant.

In response to Isaiah’s confession, a seraph with a live coal from the altar touched Isaiah’s lips and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for” (verses 6,7). Surprisingly, this act does not disfigure Isaiah’s lips, but cleanses them.

This act only makes sense in the context of Israel’s sacrificial understanding of worship where there is a strong

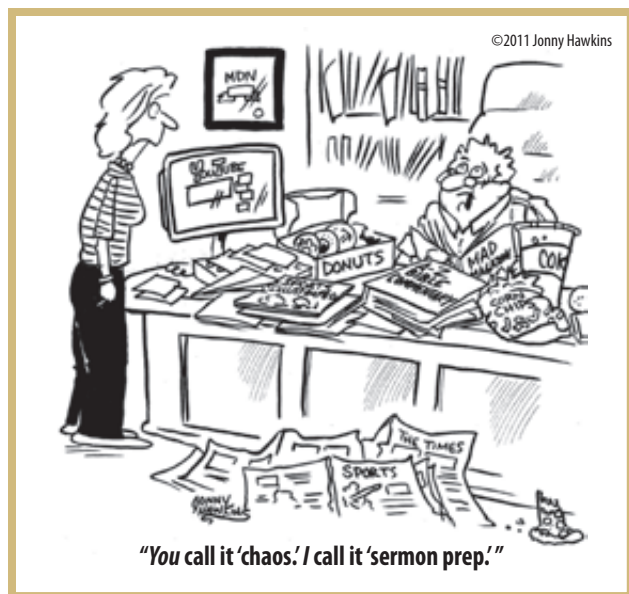
connection between holiness and fire. God reveals himself in fire, displays His judgment through it, and commands its use in sacrifices — all of which this passage reflects.

We do not know from which altar the seraph took the coal. He may have taken it from the altar of burnt offering, signifying the renewed commitment into which Isaiah was entering. More likely, he took it from the altar of incense that stood in the Holy Place and played a crucial role in the annual atonement ceremony (Leviticus 16). The smoke, probably from incense, suggests that. Whichever altar is involved, through identifying with the sacrifice offered, God pardons Isaiah and atones for his sin and makes the unfit prophet fit for service again. This act satisfies God’s holy purity, and He manifests His holy grace — it met the penalty of sin and cleansed the sinner.

In touching Isaiah’s mouth, God is not only dealing with Isaiah at his expressed point of need, but also touching him at the place that symbolized his calling as a prophet. His lips were not injured but equipped. Isaiah correctly understood this act not only as one of salvation, but of commissioning. Immediately following Isaiah’s cleansing, God spoke (verse 8), and Isaiah once more readily made himself available to God. His life is no longer his own.

Just as God’s holiness marks His separateness, it also separates the prophet from ordinary affairs to be wholly available to do God’s bidding. It was important that Isaiah’s commissioning be unmistakable. Isaiah was to face the most challenging of all prophetic callings and speak to audiences that were profoundly deaf to God.

Isaiah’s preaching did not result in the people turning to God, but the fault was not his. He lacked neither skill nor urgency in communication, but the people failed to hear. This was part of God’s plan. Though in His holiness He is not a God of cheap grace or cut-price salvation. To offer cheap grace is



incompatible with His holiness, as well as failing to meet the true needs of a sinful people. Blanket forgiveness coupled with easy repentance would prove worthless. It would neither lead to a genuine reconciliation between a holy God and His sinful people, nor to a real transformation in their lives. Grace is not only costly to God — in that He provided the sacrifice for atonement — but also to sinners, in that there must be evidence of a changed way of life.

Sin cannot be repaired on the cheap.

Isaiah learned this the hard way: He preached to an unresponsive audience. Indeed, his preaching would make them even more unresponsive than they already were. It was not that Isaiah caused their hearts to be calloused toward God. They already were. But he drew their hardness out, just as a bruise comes out before the wound heals. No wonder Isaiah asked how long this unrewarding ministry was to last (verse 11). He must not have

but most believe it points to hope beyond the exile. For most it signals the survival of the stump. Just as the stump of a felled tree breaks forth into new life, so the stump of Israel that returns from exile will be the bearers of a new hope and heralds of a new beginning. Such a message is consistent with the other prophets of Israel.<sup>14</sup>

God's grace is never facile. The demands of holiness need to be satisfied, and then the other facet of His holiness, that of redemptive and costly grace, can come to the fore.

**Isaiah's instinctive reaction was self-deprecating because he was measuring himself correctly in the light of his encounter with the Holy One.**

Consequently, before God could bring about salvation for Israel, it was necessary for Him to chastise them so they would face the seriousness of their sin and the cost involved in renewing grace. P.T. Forsyth says we might treat God too lightly if we see Him only as a father for, in truth, He is the Holy Father. People spoke, Forsyth protested, much about God's love but had not thought deeply enough about it. God's love is inseparable from His holiness, the ultimate claim we make about Him. "You can go behind love," Forsyth wrote, "to holiness, but behind holiness you cannot go."<sup>10</sup> " 'God is love' is not the whole gospel," he wrote. "Love is not evangelical till it has dealt with holy law. In the midst of the rainbow is a throne."<sup>11</sup> This makes the Cross necessary.

Forgiveness does not occur without cost for "the soul of divine fatherhood is forgiveness by holiness."<sup>12</sup> "Forgiving is not just forgetting. It is not cancelling the past. It is not mere amnesty and restoration. There is something broken in which a soul's sin shatters the world."<sup>13</sup>

gained much comfort from the answer (verses 11,12), which bound him to the task until the exile occurred and Israel was, in effect, no more.

God's severe mercy, it seems, reflects His holy love in bringing people to an end of themselves, their excuses, and their self-justification before they are ready to receive the remedy of His salvation — secured, ultimately, at the cost of the sacrifice of His Son.

Exile is not the end of the story. God's aim was to chasten Israel, or at least a purified remnant of them, that He might restore them to their homeland. God alone determines when the process of refinement is complete and the new exodus will take place.

The Hebrew of verse 13 is uncertain,

## Conclusion

So what is the holiness of God? Holiness defines the very character of God who is transcendent over the earth, awesome in majesty, sovereign in power, perfect in goodness, pure in His moral nature, and gracious to the core of His being. ☪

## NOTES

1. A longer version of this article is found in the author's *The Message of Holiness* (Nottingham and Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 42–55.
2. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 17.
3. Motyer, 76.
4. R.W.L. Moberly, "Holy, Holy, Holy: Isaiah's Vision of God" in S. Barton (ed.) *Holiness Past and Present* (London: Continuum, 2002), 126.
5. Motyer, 77.
6. B.W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 43f.
7. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (1917; Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1959).
8. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 181.
9. Oswalt, 180.
10. P.T. Forsyth, *God: The Holy Father* (1897; London: Independent Press, 1957), 5.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid, 9.
14. E.g., Jeremiah 33:1–26; Ezekiel 36:1–37:28; Hosea 11:9; Amos 9:11–15; Micah 7:19.



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# *The* **FULFILLED LIFE**

## **REDISCOVERING the TRANSFORMING POWER of SANCTIFICATION**

**BY DAN CRABTREE**

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Providing biblical teaching on living a holy life can provide spiritual freedom to the people in your congregation.

**B**elief in the personal holiness of every believer has been part of Pentecostal teaching at least since the Azusa Street Revival. The Scriptures teach that, “without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). Since God is holy we must also be holy. But this creates a dilemma: We cannot make ourselves holy. Any attempt to do so through our own effort results in legalism, an outward conformity without the inward transformation true holiness requires.

Growing up in church, I understood that at salvation, by divine declaration, God pardoned my sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Following salvation, I also understood that living a holy, sanctified Christian life was primarily my responsibility. God had already done His part by saving me; now, through human effort, I needed to make myself holy. So I took up the call to be holy, even though it seemed like a daunting and impossible task that would inevitably have many moments of humiliating failure. I was grateful for God’s grace, but I felt trapped by His seemingly impossible standards of holiness. Unintentionally, I had chosen the way of legalism, but how was I to obtain the standard of holiness God required?

At its very core, legalism weakens the church, leaving in its wake frustrated, burned-out, and defeated Christians. Many believers have been led to believe that to earn God’s favor they must follow a rigid set of rules, standards, and regulations. Despite enormous efforts by pastors to teach their people how to daily live in holiness, some leaders have unwittingly reinforced a legalistic, works-based righteousness. God has called

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believers to freedom and liberty in Christ (Galatians 5:1). It is our responsibility as pastors and leaders to affirm that a life of holiness flows out of what Christ has already accomplished for us at the Cross and not by what we can achieve through human effort.

## How Does God, in Christ, Sanctify the Believer?

New Testament writers employ various terms to describe the dramatic change that takes place as a result of Christ's self-sacrifice. Salvation draws on the metaphor of slavery. Biblical writers often associate redemption with the price paid to liberate from bondage.

*Justification* is a legal term describing a courtroom verdict in which God, the Eternal Judge, pardons the believer from his or her sins. We often, however, overlook sanctification when describing the salvation experience. We sometimes view sanctification, or holiness, as what a believer experiences after justification and before glorification. This is, however, a somewhat incomplete understanding of how God in Christ sanctifies the believer. The danger is this: While justification is a matter of grace, we believe we achieve sanctification through human effort.

At salvation, God both justifies and sanctifies us. Theologians often speak of two different yet interrelated aspects of sanctification: positional sanctification — who we are in Christ as a result of His death on the Cross; and progressive sanctification — learning how to daily live out a life of holiness. Paul expressed this concept by using indicatives and imperatives. Indicatives are Paul's statements describing what is already true of the believer as a result of Christ's work. His imperatives are his call to ethical and moral living that flows out of the indicatives. You have been made holy by Christ's death; now live like it.

The following passages describe what Christ has done on the Cross, making the believer holy and giving her a new

status in Him. These Scripture place an emphasis on positional sanctification, although I also address the call to live out who we are in Christ. In these passages God never calls believers to make themselves holy — only to live out the holiness that is already theirs through Christ's death.

## Positional sanctification

### Hebrews 10:5–18

Through His death Christ accomplished what the repeated shedding of the blood of animals could not. Christ offered himself "once for all" as the final perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10). The fact "we have been made holy" is a status or condition made possible through Christ's death. His sacrifice is "once and for all," "no further sacrifices or rituals are needed to keep us in that sanctified condition."<sup>1</sup>

God with a "sincere heart in full assurance of faith" which is the fulfillment of God's promise to change the hearts of His people (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26,27). Through Christ's self-sacrifice we are free to worship and serve the living God in a way that pleases and honors Him. "When the sanctifying work of Jesus is proclaimed and believed, God changes our hearts and binds us to Him as children of the new covenant."<sup>2</sup> Understanding who we are in Christ is foundational to holiness, the inward transformation of our hearts leading to a lifestyle of outward obedience.

### 1 Corinthians 1:2

Paul opens his letter to the Corinthians by addressing them as "the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

**Despite enormous efforts by pastors to teach their people how to daily live in holiness, some leaders have unwittingly reinforced a legalistic, works-based righteousness.**

Verse 14 restates believers' sanctification through Christ's death, "by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever," but then adds, "those who are being made holy." How should we understand, "those who are being made holy"? Because this is in the present tense, it speaks of Christ's ongoing inward work in the heart of the believer. Because of Christ's death the believer can have confidence to draw near to Him (Hebrews 7:19; 10:1,22).

In Hebrews 10:22, the writer of Hebrews exhorts believers to approach

The emphasis here is on divine activity. They are "of God"; they are God's people and have been "sanctified."<sup>3</sup> They are made holy not by what they have done, but what God has done "in Christ Jesus."

At salvation they were positionally sanctified in Christ. Nonetheless, the Corinthians did not act like sanctified, holy people. Their quarreling led to division (1 Corinthians 1:11–13); they were complacent about a man living with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5); they sued each other in front of pagan

judges (1 Corinthians 6:1–8); they abused the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:17–34); and they misused spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12–14).

The Corinthians' sanctification can hardly refer to their holiness of character or conduct since Paul had to spend so much of his time correcting their behavior and calling them to ethical living. "In many ways they look more like Corinth than they do God's people *in* Corinth."<sup>4</sup> And yet, Paul addressed them as "those sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

The Corinthians were already sanctified in a relational sense, but they needed to express that sanctification in a lifestyle.<sup>5</sup> To deal with the gap between who they were in Christ and the reality of their lifestyle, Paul reminded the Corinthians that they are also "called to be holy" (1 Corinthians 1:2). They are called to be who they are in Christ and thereby reflect God's character.

### **1 Corinthians 1:30**

In 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul writes, "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us the wisdom of God — that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption." Paul insisted that Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, over against the Corinthians' attempt at seeking wisdom for themselves (1 Corinthians 1:18–25). As the ultimate expression of God's wisdom, Christ has become three things for us: (1) "righteousness" (justification), a legal term describing the believer's pardon and undeserved right standing before God; (2) "sanctification," describing the believer's new status as holy in Christ; and (3) "redemption," the price of our liberation from the bondage of sin.

In this passage, sanctification is not a process of moral change but a description of our new status in Christ. All three terms — *righteousness*, *sanctification*, and *redemption* — refer to God's saving activity. "It is because of him (God) that you are in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Paul places sanctification after righteousness but before redemption. If sanctification referred to a process of moral change following conversion, then logically Paul would have listed it after redemption.

The Corinthian believers' new status in Christ gave them a new identity. They were no longer defined by a world that viewed them as not "wise by human standards; not ... influential; not ... noble" (1 Corinthians 1:26–29). Paul called them to live out their new identity and status in Christ by listening to the wisdom of God and not the wisdom of the world.

### **1 Corinthians 6:11**

In this context, Paul admonished the Corinthians to stop dragging each other before public courts over private matters (1 Corinthians 6:1–8). Perhaps as something of a warning, Paul presents a list of those who will not "inherit the kingdom of God" (verses 9,10). Paul then exclaimed, "That is what some of you were" (verse 11). Using the past tense, Paul reminded them of what Christ had already done for them: "But you were washed, [but] you were sanctified, [but] you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (verse 11). As in 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul used all three terms to describe God's saving activity in Christ. In the Greek, all are aorist passive, describing what God has done for us in the past. *Alla* (but) precedes each of them, although English translations do not always reflect this. Paul is offering three different descriptions of the same reality: "you were washed" — implies cleansing from sin; "you were sanctified" — God has claimed them as His own and made them His people; "you were justified" — implies declaration of legal right standing. All of this takes place in the "name of ... Christ," referring to the saving authority of Christ on behalf of the believer and "by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

"Together, then, the two prepositions refer to what God has *done* for His people in Christ, which He has effected *in* them by the Spirit."<sup>6</sup>

In this passage, as in 1 Corinthians 1:30, sanctification does not refer to moral improvement. Despite their proclivity for suing each other, they were already sanctified in Christ. By reminding the Corinthians of what Christ had done for them, Paul sought to motivate them to holy living. Despite Paul's challenge, "and that is what some of you were," the Corinthians chose to reflect their past lives in their actions. By not loving one another, they compromised their witness before unbelievers, the very people before whom God desired to reveal himself as holy.

### **Ephesians 5:25–27**

Paul uses an analogy from marriage to depict Christ's love for the church. Paul describes Christ's sanctifying self-sacrifice on the Cross when he writes, "Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy."

"Christ's intention was to have the Church as His own possession, the community of His holy people, set apart for himself."<sup>7</sup> As His bride, Christ set apart the Church to be exclusively devoted to Him. Whatever faults the Church may exhibit in the present, she is still His holy bride; and at His second coming Christ will "present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (verse 27).

### **Living Out Who We Are in Christ** **Progressive sanctification**

Christ's death on the Cross not only positionally sanctifies us, but also makes possible the progressive ongoing life of holiness. We need to use the word *progressive*, however, with some caution because it suggests we can through our efforts become more holy.

There are no steps to holiness that the believer must climb. The New Testament





never calls us to make ourselves more holy. The Bible challenges believers to live in keeping with who they are in Christ. But no one is making himself more holy. Only Christ can and has done that.

Christ not only sanctifies us but also sets the example of what a life of holiness looks like. As God in the flesh, He reveals to us the character of God. He then calls us to be like Him when He says, "Follow Me." As church father Athanasius said, "He became like us that we might become like Him."

To follow Jesus we ask, "What would Jesus do?" Dallas Willard puts it well: "I am learning from Jesus to live *my* life as He would live my life if He were I. Remember, we are not learning how to live Jesus' life (that has already been lived); we are learning how to live our lives as Jesus would live them, if He were us."<sup>8</sup>

Pursuing holiness is more than doing our best to obey a set of rules, but learning to live and love the way Christ does. In practical terms, we best express holiness through love. If sinning keeps us from loving, then living a holy life should result in love. Christ taught, "All the Law

and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" — loving God and loving your neighbor (Matthew 22:34–40). Indeed, "Love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).

The Holy Spirit enables us to live the sanctified life by continually applying the benefits of what Christ accomplished on the Cross. He reminds us of Christ's work and at the same time guides us in living like Him. Walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16,25) results in the fruit of the Spirit, which is love (Galatians 5:22). As the Spirit leads us, we are to set our minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5). By the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13). By His presence in our lives, the Spirit — who is holy — enables us to live holy lives. "It is the Spirit who is at work in the believer, bringing about likeness to Christ."<sup>9</sup>

## Romans 6–8

In Romans 6, Paul calls believers to live lives that lead to holiness (Romans 6:19, 22) by recognizing who they are in Christ (Romans 6:11). They are no longer slaves of sin but are to offer themselves as slaves of righteousness. By identifying with

Christ's death and resurrection, the believer dies to the "old life" (Romans 6:2,6) and rises to "live a new life" (Romans 6:4). Just as the control of sin characterized the old life before Christ, so a life under God's control needs to characterize the new life. Having been made alive to God through Christ, the believer is to no longer "let sin reign" or "obey its evil desires"

(Romans 6:12). Instead the believer is to offer himself "in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness" (Romans 6:19; c.f. 6:22).

Living the life of holiness flows out of what Christ has already accomplished for us at the Cross. But we must believe and accept our new status in Christ. Paul admonishes, "Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11). We are "summoned to agree with God's perspective."<sup>10</sup> Paul calls on believers "to be what he declares they are. For Paul identity is determined by being in Christ, but the believer must still choose to believe this reality sufficiently to live accordingly. Through faith one receives a new identity, and through faith one must also continue to embrace and live in that new identity, so that obedient works become expressions of living faith."<sup>11</sup> This does not mean that Paul anticipates a sinless perfectionism on the part of the Roman believers, but quite the opposite. He anticipates the enormous difficulties and challenges the believers will encounter as they seek to live holy lives. But it all begins by understanding and being motivated by the truth of who we are in Christ.

Paul describes the struggle with sin with gripping, first-person narration in Romans 7:14–25. Whether Paul is describing his pre- or post-salvation or simply using a rhetorical device need not detain us here. The important point is that Paul graphically describes the attempt and ultimate failure to keep the Law through human effort.

Paul's repeated use of "I" illustrates the futility of self-sanctification. How can one be delivered from such a wretched condition? The answer is the Cross — "Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25). At the Cross, Christ accomplished what the Law was powerless to do (Romans 8:3).

Romans 8 pictures the Spirit-controlled life as living "in accordance with the Spirit" (Romans 8:5) with a "mind controlled by the Spirit" (Romans 8:6).



The "Spirit," not "I," is in control resulting in victorious Christian living. To surrender ourselves to the Spirit's control we must allow the truth applied by the Spirit to shape our thinking. We are to "count [ourselves] dead to sin" (Romans 6:11) and have our "minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5). The flesh/sinful nature controlled the mind of the unbeliever, resulting in ungodly patterns and habits of thinking and living (Romans 8:5-8).

apparently included their persecutors. To maintain their testimony under fire, Paul asked God to strengthen their hearts so they can be "blameless and holy" at the Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 3:13).

Holiness flows out of a heart strengthened by God. True holiness is never merely a matter of externals. God works from the inside out. "Love and holiness are two related ways of viewing the Christian life. Holiness will be preeminently expressed in love, and love will be the

true during times of stress brought on by suffering. Understanding this, the writer of Hebrews challenged the believers, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

## Conclusion

At the Cross, Christ sanctified us and set us in right relationship with himself. Our challenge is to believe and accept what Christ has done in giving us a new identity in Him. We are to "count" ourselves "dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11) and to see ourselves as hidden "with Christ" (Colossians 3:3). God's work of holiness begins in us when we believe what He has done for us through Christ at the Cross.

When we accept who we are in Christ, we begin to see ourselves the way God sees us. We no longer primarily define our identity by how others view us or by our own self-perception, or the dominant cultural values. To place our identity in something we can lose is to live in perpetual insecurity. But our identity is found in Him. When we accept who we are in Christ, we can with confidence say, "yes" to holiness and "no" to the world. We may be *in* the world but we are no longer *of* it.

God sanctifies us through Christ and then calls us to live out our new identity. This is not a call to make ourselves holy. God is not asking us to do what only He can do. Rather it is an exhortation — having been sanctified — to live a sanctified life, or be who we are in Christ. This requires commitment and endurance on our part as we seek to live holy in an unholy world. Through the Spirit we are to "put to death the misdeeds of the body" (Romans 8:13). Sometimes, however, in the intensity of the conflict, we struggle and fail. God in His grace picks us up and through His Word reminds us who we are.

Our example in living a holy life is

**Christ's death on the Cross not only positionally sanctifies us, but also makes possible the progressive ongoing life of holiness.**

After conversion, new believers are often tempted to fall back into the same habits and patterns they developed prior to conversion making them feel they are still under the control of sin. We can seal off this natural entry point of sin into our lives by renewing our minds so we do "not conform any longer to the pattern of this world" (Romans 12:2). Through the Spirit we put to death in our lives what God has already sentenced to death on the Cross (Romans 8:13). "Human effort is required, but not apart from, nor distinct from the activity of God's Spirit, who subdues the flesh as we mortify it in His power, and as we set our minds on the things of the Spirit."<sup>12</sup>

### 1 Thessalonians 3:12,13

Paul addressed 1 Thessalonians to a church undergoing severe persecution that potentially threatened their unity. Paul prayed that their love would "increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else" (1 Thessalonians 3:12). "And for everyone else" means those outside the church and

essential means by which holiness is maintained. Paul's prayer indicates that love must increase and abound, if believers are to persist in holiness. ... In effect, holiness abounds when love abounds."<sup>13</sup>

### Hebrews 12:10—14

The writer of Hebrews wrote to believers who were being tested by adversity. Challenged by the example of those who have gone before them (Hebrews 11), they are to run the race of faith with endurance as they keep their eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). The sufferings they are enduring serve God's purpose of discipline. Like a father disciplines the son he loves, so God disciplines us so we may become more like Him (Hebrews 12:10). Holiness here means "character." God can use "all things" to conform us to the image of His Son (Romans 8:28,29).

The goal of sharing in His holiness is to live in "righteousness and peace" with others (Heb. 12:11). God did not intend for us to live out our holiness in isolation, but to reveal our holiness in our treatment of others. This is particularly





## THE FULFILLED LIFE: REDISCOVERING THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF SANCTIFICATION (continued from page 35)

**God did not intend for us to live out our holiness in isolation.**

Christ himself, who through love revealed the character of God. In imitation of Him, we are to express God's holiness through our love. As we do this together we become a holy community revealing God's character to the world. This is

what God called Israel, the disciples, the believers in Thessalonica, and now us to do. God has sanctified us through Christ at the Cross so that together we might reveal His holy character to the world. ☺



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### NOTES

1. David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 34.
2. *Ibid.*, 40.
3. In the Greek Paul uses the perfect passive participle for "sanctified" to describe what they had already experienced at salvation. The passive indicates that the Corinthian believers are recipients of God's action and the perfect indicates an event that took place in the past but has continuing effects in the present.
4. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 33.
5. Peterson, 41.
6. Fee, 247.
7. F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1961), 116.
8. Richard Foster, "Salvation Is for Life," in *Theology Today*, (61, 2004): 307.
9. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book 1985), 970.
10. Craig Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary*, (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2009), 81.
11. Keener, 82.
12. Peterson, 112, 113.
13. Peterson, 80.

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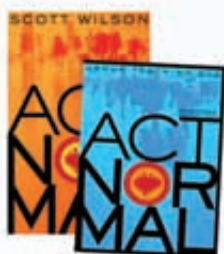


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# HOLINESS AND THE FIVE CALLS of GOD

BY HOWARD A. SNYDER

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## **I**s holiness still relevant today?

I believe it is. However, its relevance becomes clearest when we look anew at what the Bible says about it, examining it in light of today's questions and challenges.

I am structuring my thoughts around what I call the *five calls of God*. We are called to holiness. But we need to understand this call in the context of the full biblical witness of God's intention for people, cultures, and creation.

In this article I examine these five calls in a history-of-redemption sequence. There is a story we can trace throughout Scripture. If we are to play the role God intends in this great drama, we must be a holy people.

What then are these five calls of God, and what do they have to do with holiness?

### **The Five Calls Of God**



## **CREATION CARE**

### **The call to creation care**

The first call of God is to *creation care*, the faithful human nurture and management of the created order.

We read in Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." This is a commission to both "men and women, not just to males. The joint commission is clear in Genesis 1:28: "God ... said to *them*, ... 'have *dominion*' " (NRSV, emphasis added).<sup>1</sup> *Dominion* here means stewardship or nurturing management, not selfish exploitation.

The call to creation care predates the Fall. It is an early commission given to all humankind, not just to Christians.





But the Bible bids Christians in particular to protect and nurture the physical environment.

We may view creation care as the broadest circle of God's call.



## The call to covenant peoplehood

The second call is to *covenant peoplehood*. This call appears in Scripture after the Fall, though it is implicit earlier and God's abiding intent. This is the beginning act in God's initiative to restore and heal a fallen creation.

This call is the expansion, partial fulfillment, and development of God's word to Abraham: "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3, NRSV). Since humankind rebelled against God, God raised up His own people to serve Him both in worship and in witness. In the Old Testament, this witness took the form of a contrast society among the nations — "peculiar people" and "priestly kingdom" (Deuteronomy 14:2, KJV; Exodus 19:6, NRSV). But the Hebrew Scriptures also signal a mission to the nations. This is the background of Jesus' great commission in the New Testament to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19, NRSV).

Notice the two main elements of this call: covenant and peoplehood.

**Peoplehood:** The call is not just to individuals. Rather it is a call to form, be, and act as a community in internal solidarity and with God.

**Covenant:** The call is not simply to be any kind of people — just one more people group among the nations and

ethnicities of the earth. The point is to be a people in covenant with God — so closely connected with Him that their way of life is shaped more by God's character than by the nations and cultures all around.

The call to covenant peoplehood is a call to repentance, faith, obedience, and community. Because of sin, we cannot of our own initiative become God's people. Here we face the biblical teaching about human rebellion — the deep stain of sin that requires salvation through Jesus Christ.

The call to peoplehood is thus the call to salvation — to accept the offer of salvation God graciously makes in Jesus Christ by the Spirit. This is a call God now makes to everyone, everywhere (Acts 17:30).

In terms of the five calls of God, we may view covenant peoplehood as a second circle inside the larger circle of the call to creation care.



## The call to God's reign

For many Christians, the call to covenant peoplehood exhausts the meaning of God's call to humanity. Many people converting to Jesus and affiliating with the church are yet to convert to Christ's kingdom. This requires a deeper, more comprehensive conversion. So much of the church thinks it is called only to be the church — that is, to be a community or organization that says, "Jesus Christ is our Savior." They have sort of a religious club or a lifelong waiting room for heaven mentality. This misses another essential divine call. Listen to

Jesus' words: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33, ESV).<sup>2</sup>

This is the call to God's reign. Scripture is about God's reign, even where the term *kingdom of God* is not used. The Bible is about God's sovereign providential oversight, His beneficent government, His loving care and sure purposes, and His concern with righteousness and justice. The Kingdom call therefore concerns *allegiance* and loyalty: an allegiance above all other allegiances and a loyalty that trumps all other loyalties.

More than a God who demands allegiance and loyalty, He *promises* the kingdom of God in its fullness. He is the *shalom*-promising God, the one with healing medicine for our bodies and souls, our land, and all earth's cultures. "God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20, NRSV).

The Kingdom call is a call to Kingdom values and virtues, Kingdom ethics. It is a call for the church to live out the meaning of God's reign within her particular sociocultural contexts. It is a call to Kingdom loyalty and allegiance first and above all to Jesus Christ and His purposes, thus viewing all other identities and allegiances as secondary.

So our allegiance is to the Triune God and therefore to intentional solidarity with His people. Loyalty to God's reign trumps national loyalty. As a Jesus-follower, my highest allegiance is not to my nation, party, president, state, or social or ethnic group, but to Jesus Christ and the righteousness and justice of His reign. It calls us to the primary task of discerning the difference between Kingdom allegiance and a proper national patriotism — a high-priority task for American evangelicals today, as well as for Christians in other lands.

Jesus was explicit that the Kingdom

call is a call to the justice and righteousness of God's reign. The Kingdom thus calls us to social and economic justice — to righteousness and justice in family and neighborhood, in and among the nations and families of the earth. It is a call particularly to the poor and oppressed of the earth, for Jesus himself said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18, NRSV).

In terms of the five calls of God, we picture this Kingdom call as a third circle within the larger circles of earth stewardship and covenant peoplehood.



### The call to specific ministry

Jesus called the Twelve, but they are not the only persons He calls into ministry. He calls many disciples, though relatively few apostles. By the help of the Holy Spirit and the discipling process of the Christian community, these Jesus-followers are able to discern and live out God's special call on their lives.

Behind this reality of the New Testament church is an amazing, and socially unsettling, teaching: *everyone called to salvation is called also to minister*. No exceptions; no distinctions on the basis of wealth, class, gender, intelligence, physical characteristics, or ethnic or national identity.

Scripture reveals a clear and rich doctrine of the ministry of the whole people of God. The teaching rests on three pillars.

First, the *priesthood of believers* (1 Peter 2:4–10). God called Old Testament

Israel to be a "priestly kingdom" (Exodus 19:6, NRSV), God's priestly people among the nations. Within this general call was the more restricted Levitical priesthood.

This Old Testament history lies behind the New Testament teaching. In the New Testament, the New Covenant brings two key changes to the Old Testament priesthood. On the one hand, the priesthood is narrowed to just one person: Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, through whom we have salvation and receive the call to discipleship. But at the same time the priesthood is expanded to include all believers — fulfilling the original intention of a faithful, holy, priestly people in the earth.

All Christians now live in the Pentecostal dispensation when the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all believers — precisely so we can be God's witnesses, King Jesus' priestly people in the earth (Acts 2:16–18).

Second, *the gifts of the Spirit*. Just as everyone is a priest, so everyone is spiritually gifted. While we are all priests, we do not all have the same priestly ministry (1 Corinthians 12:4–7). There is one universal priesthood, but diverse gifts.

How then are we to understand the role of what the church calls *ordained ministry*? The key passage is Ephesians 4:11–13. The work of the ordained ministry is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry," so through their work all of us come to "the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (NRSV).

Finally, *servants of Jesus Christ*. In the Old Testament, we read of people like Moses, the servant of God; or David, the servant of the Lord. But in the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, we are all God's servants. We are all called to servanthood — to what the New Testament calls *diakonia*.

The call to be servants and ministers of Jesus Christ reveals the spirit, the attitude and character, and incarnational

manner in which we are to carry out ministry. Jesus' words, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21, NRSV), were not meant for the first apostles only. They set the model for all ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

Here then is our commission to ministry. We are all — each one of us — called as *priests* of God, *gifted* by the Spirit, and sent as *servants* of Jesus Christ.

We may view this comprehensive call of God — the call to specific ministry — as a fourth circle within the calls to creation care, covenant peoplehood, and the kingdom of God.



### The call to holiness

We come now to the heart of the good news: God's call to holiness. This is the call to know God in His fullness; to enter into the fellowship of Triune, self-giving love.

This is the call — and the amazing, gracious invitation — to become "participants of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) — to know the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who allow us to enter into gracious fellowship with them.

Holiness means sharing the character of God. This is what Jesus prayed for in John 17:21: "As you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (NRSV).

Here Jesus beautifully blends the call to holiness, a participation in Trinitarian love, and mission in the world. This is what true biblical holiness, understood





within the five calls of God, means. The call to holiness is to be understood within the larger story of the other four calls — because God is one and His plan is one.

part of the heart-call of God. The more we share the character of God, the more we are concerned with God's concerns. So we want to fulfill the call first given to Adam and Eve to tend the Garden. We

all living creatures.

So, holy people tread lightly and joyfully on earth. Living in reciprocal harmony with God, they seek to live in harmonious reciprocity with God's good land.

**If we are to play the role God intends in this great drama, we must be a holy people.**

A key reason for the call to holiness is so we may fulfill the other four calls. These earlier calls give us a fuller understanding of the larger context and the ethical and missional implications of holiness.

## Holiness and the Five Calls

Let us consider, then: What would it mean for us to live out the manifold call of God?

## Holiness and creation care

The creation-care mandate is an integral

want to preserve, nurture, and protect the physical environment, playing our part in helping it thrive to the glory of God and for His creative, esthetic, and redemptive purposes — as well as for our own survival.

In practical terms, this means everything from recycling paper and plastics to supporting efforts to combat global warming and the disasters it brings to the world's poor. These are not mere secondary or peripheral ethical concerns, nor are they primarily political issues.

They are good old-fashioned holiness issues.

Creation care means, as well, the care of our bodies as part of holy and holistic living. Our bodies were created by God, as were marriage and the family, so these are part of our creation-care mandate.

Holy people are those who feel deeply about all the creatures God has made. Holiness means being sensitive to the well-being or the suffering of

## Holiness and covenant peoplehood

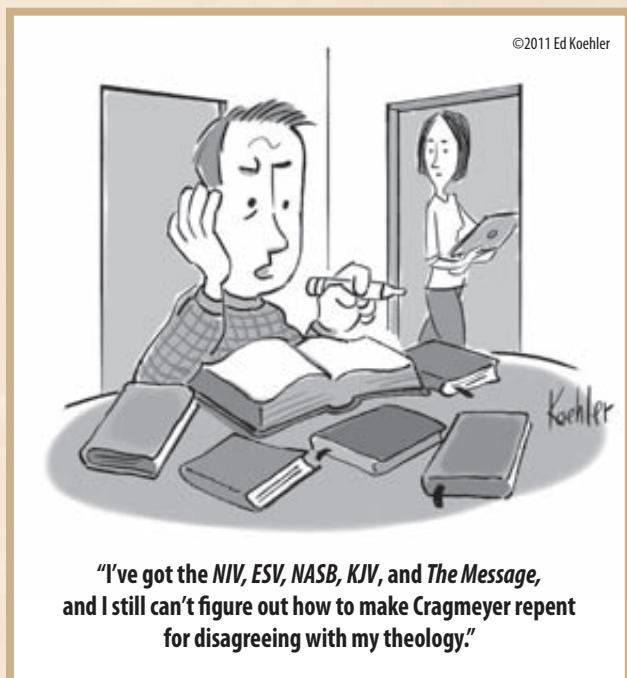
Here the implications of holiness are obvious, but profound.

Covenant peoplehood reminds us that holiness, while personal, is not individual. It is social. It concerns the character of the Christian community, and of each of our lives within it. As Jesus' physical body on earth was holy, so the body of Christ on earth is to be holy — loving God with all its heart, mind, soul, and strength, and loving its neighbors as itself. Holiness therefore means loving, mutually accountable community. This is the key to maintaining our own individual moral and ethical integrity. Holiness as personal experience is best entered into in the context of Christian community.

Practical holiness as a matter of covenant peoplehood therefore means attention to the priorities and structures of biblical *koinonia*. It means affirming the gifts and fruit of the Spirit; practicing ministry and mission as taught in Scripture and modeled by Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves fulfilling Jesus' words that His followers will "also do the works that I do and, in fact, ... greater works than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12, NRSV). We will find ourselves fulfilling Jesus' call to serve others, not just ourselves, and we will see that this is rooted in the character of God. The more we grasp the meaning of the Trinity and Jesus' incarnation, the more we see that true Christianity is all about relinquishing status for the sake of lifting others.

## Holiness and the reign of God

Holiness means living the reality of God's reign in this present age. This was the new



insight that came to E. Stanley Jones in the 1930s. Jones was raised in the Holiness tradition; he was a Holiness missionary. But after visiting Russia in the heady days of Communism's utopian vision, Jones came to realize that he had no adequate theology of the kingdom of God now. He was troubled, and out of that questing came two of Jones' most prophetic books: *Christ's Alternative to Communism* (1935), and *Is the Kingdom of God Realism?* (1940). The Christian alternative to Communist utopianism, Jones said, is the liberating biblical vision of the kingdom of God. And yes, the kingdom of God is realism — the way the world was made to be — not just idealism.

Jones concluded that the gospel is not only about "the unchanging Christ" but also about "the unshakable kingdom." The gospel concerns a Person and a plan — Jesus Christ and His kingdom — and the two must be held together in our theology and in our lived discipleship.

So it must be for us. The work of the sanctifying Spirit is to make us kingdom of God people — people who, like Jesus, incarnate the reality and priorities of God's reign in our personal lives, our families, our economics, and our politics.

### Holiness and particular vocation

The call to holiness is the call to open us to God's Spirit so that His gifts and graces flow and flourish in our lives. Holiness means life empowered by the Holy Spirit so what is said of Jesus in John 3:34 becomes true also of His disciples: "The one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit."

How do we experience this deeper life in the Spirit? It comes through receiving the cleansing, empowering presence of the Holy Spirit by faith and obedience. Here pastors, disciples, and other leaders have a keen responsibility to lead believers into deeper life in the Spirit.

The Wesleyan emphasis on Christian perfection holds toward two vital emphases at this point. First, the goal of Christian community, and of each of our lives within community, is to grow up into the fullness of the character of Jesus Christ. This is the central point of Ephesians 4:7–16 and like passages that speak of the church as the body of Christ, animated by and filled with the Spirit.

Second, this walking in the Spirit is to be our present experience, not just a future hope. We need to help one another enter into the fullness of the Spirit, to be filled with and walk daily in the Spirit of Jesus.

So this is the call to holiness in relation to the other calls discussed earlier. I emphasize again, it is the Spirit's infilling that supplies the power that enables the church and each of us as Jesus' disciples to fulfill the other calls God extends to us.

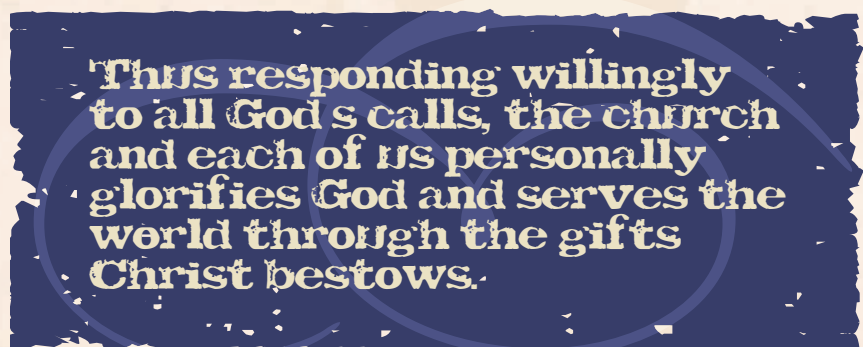
glorifies God and serves the world through the gifts Christ bestows (cf. 1 Peter 4:10,11).

Since holiness touches and penetrates every sphere of life, we could just as well conceive of holiness not as the inner circle, but as an outer circle that includes all the other calls of God. It is the dynamic work of the Spirit that penetrates all dimensions of life.

### Conclusion

The five calls of God may seem like demands, but they are really the breath of the Spirit. They not only drive us, they life us, call us higher, call us to such faithfulness, ministry, love, and joy as has hardly entered our minds and imaginations.

But we have to be open to the Spirit. We have to place ourselves in God's currents. Like autumn leaves blown by the wind, the church can soar and scatter



We may view this fifth call of God — the call to holiness — as the central circle among all God's call. This is the heart of our vocation, for it is the call to the heart of God. It is the call to love the Lord our God with all our heart, strength, soul, and mind, and thus to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is the call that enables us to live out our gifts and callings; to see and serve His liberating reign; to be God's covenant people; and to care for the good earth. Thus responding willingly to all God's calls, the church and each of us personally

its witness to the world, in the name of Jesus and the power of the Spirit.

The five calls of God are the compound call of the Spirit. *By the Spirit of the living God*, Jesus people today can:

- **be filled with the fullness of God in Christ**, living holy, devout, pure, healing lives, being Jesus' counter-culture and contrast society in witness to the world;
- **exercise a beautiful and effective array of ministries and callings** according to the diversity of the gifts of the Spirit;





## HOLINESS AND THE FIVE CALLS OF GOD (continued from page 43)

- **be God's kingdom people in the world**, living in full allegiance to Jesus and His reign — Spirit-endowed coworkers for the kingdom of God;
- **live as a faithful covenant people**, building accountable community, growing up into Jesus Christ, embodying the spirit of God's law in holy love;
- **care for the garden — this good earth** — God's gift in trust to us, working in faith, hope, and confidence for the healing of all creation, being the leading edge among the nations for the care and feeding and eventual reconciliation of all things — things visible and invisible; things in heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1:10,22; 3:9; Colossians 1:16–20; Hebrews 1:2,3).

This is what holiness — life in the Spirit in response to the fivefold call of God — means in today's world and within earth's diverse cultures. We must be a holy people. For God says, it is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6, NRSV) that He fulfills His designs. ☯

### NOTES

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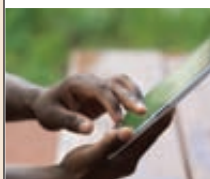
**HOWARD A. SNYDER, Ph.D.**, professor, chair of Wesley Studies, Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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# INTERVIEW

## HOLINESS: LIVING LIKE CHRIST

**I**n terms of people, holiness is about moral purity and covenantal love. But without theological foundations concerning the character of God and the doctrine of sanctification, many have mistaken notions about holiness.

George Paul Wood, executive editor of *Enrichment*, interviewed Carol Taylor, president, Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, California; Don Meyer, president, Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania; and Byron Klaus, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri. These seasoned Assemblies of God theologians, leaders, and teachers are preparing students for life and ministry. In this lucid interview, they address the issue of holiness in both its authentic and counterfeit forms.



**TAYLOR**



**MEYER**



**KLAUS**

## **H**ow would you describe the word holiness?

**Taylor:** Holiness is everything that looks like Christ — what is sacred, worthy of worship, set apart, and consecrated. Holiness is everything that sounds like Him, acts like Him, and walks like Him.

**Meyer:** I agree. Additionally, I think of two things — that which is separate from all that contaminates and anything that is contrary to the holiness of God. Holiness is not only the avoidance of things that contaminate; it is also the presence of that which is righteous.

**Klaus:** Hebrews 12 talks about running a race and laying aside anything that will keep us from running the race. We look at track stars today. They have aerodynamic clothing. They shave their bodies. They eliminate anything that keeps them from the one-thousandth of a second that will be the difference between winning and losing. We are to lay aside any negative activity or character quality that casts a shadow on Jesus and does not reflect His goodness. Anything in our lives that hinders our running the race effectively is a problem with reflecting His holiness.

## **Who exemplifies the quality of holiness in a way that impacts and inspires you?**

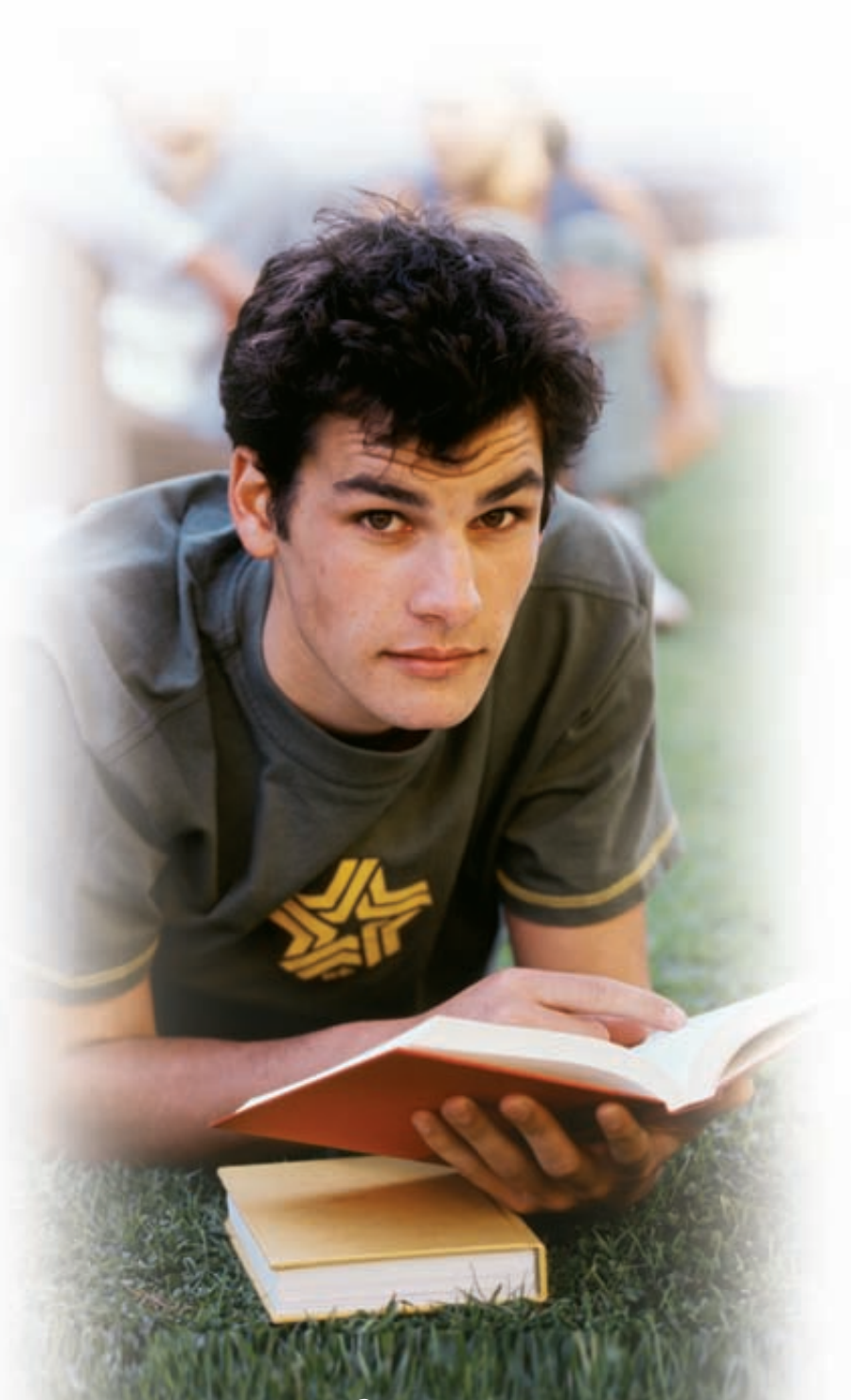
**Klaus:** Holiness to me is most personified in people whose lives speak of personal sacrifice. I am thinking of a person I was with in a country where it is illegal to be a Christian. His family was living in a situation where their lives were constantly in danger. I lived with this family in what we call primitive settings — no electricity or running water. But I saw the joy of the Lord in their lives. They could not have been happier.

This brother said, “Byron, I love where I am. I am in the middle of what God wants me to do. But one thing I would like when I retire is a flush toilet.” His statement overwhelmed me. This was not about, “Oh, we’re sacrificing; we’re

so holy.” It was about, “We are having the time of our lives.”

So when I think about holiness, I think about sacrifice — not in terms of, “Look at what I am giving up” — but in terms of getting rid of anything that keeps

me from the call of God on my life. I think about people who are minimally encumbered by the human attachments that are supposed to give us significance. These people are truly separated unto holiness and to the cause of Jesus Christ.



**In counterfeit holiness, people focus on forms and forget about transformation.** —Taylor





**Meyer:** Years ago at a camp service in Lake Geneva, Minnesota, I was talking with U.S. Grant, a long-time pastor from Kansas City. The church he pastored had some challenges after he left. One person sitting with us wanted to hear a little juicy news concerning what was going on in Grant's former church. This person

school. My mother's influence was so profound. She lived out the simplicity of the Christian life before my three siblings and me. I also think of A. Robertson McQuilkin, who wrote *A Promise Kept*. He resigned from Columbia Bible College and Seminary — now International University — to care for his wife,

remain on our campus today. We are debtors to this kind of influence around us by people who live holy lives.

**Taylor:** When I was a student at Evangel University, I visited a small country church in Kansas, where the district had asked my grandfather to serve in his retirement. It was a midweek service, testimony time. They invited me to say something as the visiting college student. After I spoke, an elderly, blind woman, whose grandson had brought her to church, began talking about how she loved her time in the Word. She began quoting long passages of the Psalms. What struck me was this incredible sense of joy that exuded from her.

I was convicted. I had focused on wanting to know about God. She exuded this incredible relationship. I spent the rest of the evening in tears because I realized I wanted what she had — that intimate relationship, that joy, that sense of belonging and being part of something so vast and beautiful. I realized I had seen a holy woman where the presence and joy of Christ had captivated her life.

This woman inspired the notion that it does not matter what knowledge we acquire if we have lost touch with the Author of the Book. We serve out of a relationship with Christ. We can only give what we have received. That evening influenced my life. It created in me a desire to never lose that sense of wonder of knowing that it is all about a relationship with Christ. If we do this, then everything we study about the Word and loving God with our minds, we don't lose sight of the Great Commandment, which is to love God not just with our minds, but also with our hearts and service.

In the world of academia, the tendency is to get lost in loving God only with our minds. The Great Commandment is a wonderful reminder that we do not get to choose whether we will love Him with our mind, love Him with our



**Causes that are passionate and novelties that are humanly derived can hamstring the incredible passion that young adults have today. —Klaus**

asked, "How are things going at the church?" I will never forget his answer. It was an example of godly character.

Grant got this whimsical look in his face, glanced out over the lake, and gently said, "You know, I'd rather talk about how the fish are biting out there on the lake than talk about that." And he just laughed. I thought, *What a mark of a man of God, to shift a mention from the trivial and the unnecessary to that which would honor God.* This reminded me of a holy life lived out in our daily walk.

My father died my junior year in high

Muriel, who suffered from Alzheimer's. After Muriel died, he spoke in our chapel about sacrifice. He only talked about it because we invited him to. He said a woman often stands by her man, but rare is the man who stands by his woman, especially in circumstances like that.

These kinds of people create an updraft in my spirit as models of holiness. J. Robert Ashcroft often said, "The spirit of education is the education of the spirit." His influence as a servant leader helped Valley Forge Christian College remain open at a very critical time a number of years ago. The echoes of that

heart, or love Him in service. All three are necessary to live a holy, righteous life.

**What are some examples of counterfeit forms of holiness? What damage does counterfeit holiness cause?**

**Klaus:** I think the activities we don't participate in and places we don't go as a measure of our holiness may give deference to separation from the world, but it also creates a sense of false pride. I know people who did not do certain things, did not go to certain places, yet they were the meanest people I know. They cut you off at the knees. They were mean to the core, and yet people perceived them as holy. That does not reflect Jesus fairly in a world that is already clueless about who Jesus is.

**Taylor:** In counterfeit holiness, people focus on forms and forget about transformation. There is a sense that somehow our lives are bifurcated. We have a list of things we do or do not do that somehow make us holy — as if holiness works from the outside in. That is hurtful. We forget holiness works from the inside out.

Holiness begins with transformation, and changes everything, especially our hearts. We become convicted at the thought of cutting someone off at the knees or being nasty skunks. Perhaps more than anything, this behavior shows a lack of evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, a lack of graciousness. This bifurcation of our lives not only hurts those in the church, but it hurts those who see it as a reason not to be affiliated with the church. It is this larger harm that is done to the Christian witness.

**Meyer:** Early in my Pentecostal journey I encountered a lot of the counterfeit expressions of what it means to be filled with the Spirit. I genuinely thought anyone who spoke in tongues was filled with the Spirit, only to discover that their lives and speech did not always coincide.

The fruit, as Carol has said, did not measure up. I had relatives who broke their glasses in prayer meetings as a display of faith that God was going to heal their eyesight. Two weeks later when deer hunting season came and they couldn't see the antlers on the deer, they had to

get glasses. As a young person, I wondered if they would wear them to the next prayer meeting? Some of them didn't.

Others, in expressing how to live a holy life said, "Don't waste your time preparing for ministry. God will purify



**As we challenge  
this generation  
of young people,  
we need to  
empower them  
with a sound  
biblical theology  
regarding the  
character of  
God. —Meyer**





you and you don't need all these tools." This advice almost ruined my life. Someone else said that the time you take to sharpen your tools is never wasted. This changed my life. On the counterfeit side, we probably all know about the casualties. But for the grace of God, there was opportunity for some of that casualty to affect my life. This is a serious topic — we must understand the genuine against the counterfeit.

rules or a list of things you cannot do. Holiness comes because our desires have changed.

One of the challenges in Christian education is helping students nurture an internal relationship with Christ that informs the decisions they make. We want them to make good decisions, not simply because the basis for their decisions is written as a requirement and expectation for community. A tension

said, "If you spend an hour a day in adoration of Christ, and then don't do anything you know is wrong, you will be okay." We need a way to make that our code of conduct. Every day spend an hour adoring Christ. Think of all the verses that talk about seeking His face. Think about how different we would live if we committed ourselves to adoring Him first. So it's love God, then do what you will.

**Meyer:** The Book of Exodus tells us where the Ten Commandments fit in the context of holiness. Some non-Christians say, "All you need to do is obey the Ten Commandments and you will please God." But they do not understand the context of the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 7 through 19, we read of the plagues and how God redeemed Israel out of Egypt. God bore them out on eagles' wings; they were redeemed as the people of God. They became His people before receiving the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. The Ten Commandments are God speaking, "in view of your being My people." This is the relationship piece: "Here are the regulations that will measure your relationship. All I ask of you is that you have no other gods, no other rivals, and that your speech, conduct, and vertical and horizontal behavior reflect that relationship."

In Ephesians 1–3, Paul gives the doctrine of how we, in the purpose of God, become members of the Church. Ephesians 4–6 tells us that our conduct must be worthy of that position. We have established a relationship with God because we are redeemed as the people of God, and then the process follows. Gordon Fee said, "A Christian is one who really wants to become one." He was not talking about the new birth. He was talking about the process of becoming like Jesus after salvation.

Our challenge with the next generation is for this relationship to be right. This has to be a priority. But the regulations, guidelines, scriptural principles,

**Students are teaching us what every generation learns — holiness is about an authentic relationship with Christ. —Taylor**

**What guidance does the Bible provide in distinguishing between authentic and counterfeit forms of holiness? Can we distinguish these in terms of motivation, content, and trajectory?**

**Taylor:** True holiness provides a transformation; it changes the way we live in community, the places we go, the things we read, and what we watch on TV or in theaters. But it is not because of the

exists, however, between helping students nurture an internal relationship with Christ and telling them we are going to help them by holding them accountable to community standards. But if it only stops with following rules, we have failed our students.

When Henri Nouwen met Mother Teresa, he asked her how he could live out his vocational calling. She simply

and standards are necessary. They measure the quality of the relationship. So if I am crossing boundaries that are inappropriate, this reflects something I need at the core of my relationship. I can say to my wife that I love her, but I'm not going to ask her, "How much can I get by with and you will still allow me to be your husband?" The relationship and the regulations are in balance together. The relationship is not enhanced by the regulations; it's measured by the regulations.

**Klaus:** At AGTS we work hard at spiritual formation. Our accreditation is connected to what we call a standard for "readiness for ministry." Our accreditors review us on whether or not we are spiritually forming the people who will be leading a congregation.

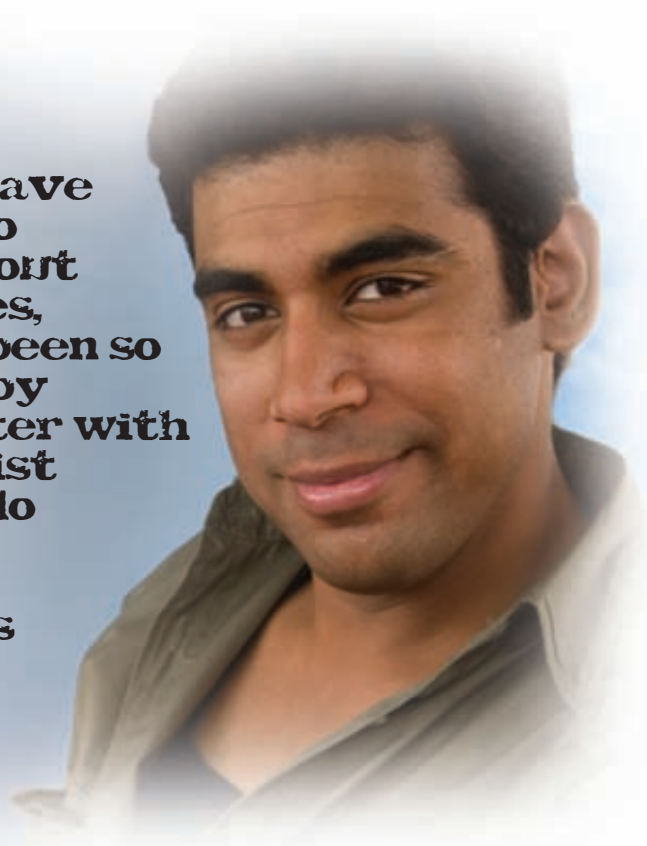
We need to look biblically at what [holiness] means. We have our own context where we see good and bad examples. But it is important that the Pentecostal movement have some dimensions of holiness. The Assemblies of God has that.

Wesleyan and Holiness groups are holiness oriented; they believe in a distinct crisis experience of sanctification. Pentecostals need to have a historical perspective on holiness as well. This perspective provides a rich resource that helps us understand what holiness means in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century context.

Wesley lived in a context of huge change in English society. He preached to factory and coal workers who lived rough lives. He realized someone needed to hold them accountable and challenge them to understand there were certain things in their lives that needed changing. Wesley created an accountability framework that allowed fellow believers to ask: Where did you spend your pay check last week? Did you spend it at the pub, or did you spend it on milk and bread for your kids?

This approach may seem cursory, but it helps to get to the heart of the issue of holiness. Accountability supports the alignment of the inward transformed

**We must have people who are not about themselves, but have been so captured by an encounter with Jesus Christ they will do anything to reflect Him in this world. —Klaus**



life with the outward expression of the Christian life. Holiness is not just an individualistic, pietistic journey between Jesus and us. Our journey coexists in the context of like-followers of Jesus. He calls us to accountability, so we can reflect to the world what it means to be reconciled to God and to one another corporately.

**What is the church's role in contemporary society in communicating what holiness is and helping believers live out that total conversion in their lives?**

**Meyer:** To be relevant is certainly the desire of all of us. Os Guinness says in his book, *Prophetic Untimeliness: A Challenge to the Idol of Relevance*, that the church, in its quest to be relevant, has become irrelevant. Without the distinctives of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, there is nothing that causes us to seek holiness. The early believers' love for one another was the example of being a follower of Jesus. People would see their good works and glorify God.

How do we influence a culture with these kinds of realities when the culture wants to squeeze us into its mold? That is the challenge our young people face. They will need to figure out with their generation of leadership how to live this out in a way that will influence — without compromise of the core reality — how they live a holy life.

**Taylor:** I think about the book, *The Holy Spirit Is Not for Sale*, by Lee Grady. He was editor of *Charisma*. He saw what God is doing in the world today, but he also saw the number of failed ministries. One of the things he stresses is a call that says we need to move from the sensational back to the supernatural; to move from the sense of creating super stars in ministry, to a call to servanthood and sacrifice. This is at the heart of what we are talking about.

**Klaus:** Because I try to be a missiologist, I look at the holiness movement in the U.S. as an offshoot of Wesley's focus.



That movement, at the end of the 19th century, propels or parallels a huge mission-sending effort in North America and Western Europe.

Holiness has not always been about ourselves and how “holy” or pure we are, but it is about an encounter with God that changes us so we commit ourselves to His cause. This is critical to the cause of Jesus Christ, however it expresses itself — in traditional evangelism or in reflecting Christ’s kingdom in the marketplace. We must have people who are not about themselves, but have been so captured by an encounter with Jesus Christ they will do anything to reflect Him in this world.

**What are your students teaching you about authentic holiness? What areas are they calling the Church to refocus its attention on and to practice a holiness that is more integral and more biblical?**

**Taylor:** Students are teaching us what every generation learns — holiness is about an authentic relationship with Christ. What I see in particular with this generation are some surprising places where holiness shines. It is more than

just having the right set of beliefs; it’s how we live that out. This is a real emphasis with young people today, particularly in their passion for justice. We are seeing it lived outside the traditional ways we think.

Byron’s daughter, Olivia, has a passion for abused women. She is living that out. This passionate pursuit of justice, and an equal passion for authenticity, is a hallmark in this generation. They detect what they sense as being inauthentic. They want what’s real, what’s authentic, and they want to do something with it. They want to work with the homeless; they care about abuse; they care about orphans; and they don’t see a disconnect between living that out and communicating the gospel while they are engaged in what they would call *holiness*.

**Meyer:** I agree. I often meditate on writings by Elton Trueblood, particularly his *Alternative to Futility*. He says in the past our Roman Catholic friends would eat no meat on Fridays. Our Quaker friends had their dress code. This created “enormous moral strength which grew out of

a common commitment to certain identification factors.” He was not advocating we go back to those habits again, but the haunting question is what do we have to replace them with, as we are living out what we define as a holy life today?

As we challenge this generation of young people, we need to empower them with a sound biblical theology regarding the character of God. Then

we need to release them to live out these themes of justice and integrity in the expressions that are consistent in their lives. This is really critical. It is going to be part of the discovery piece of this next generation.

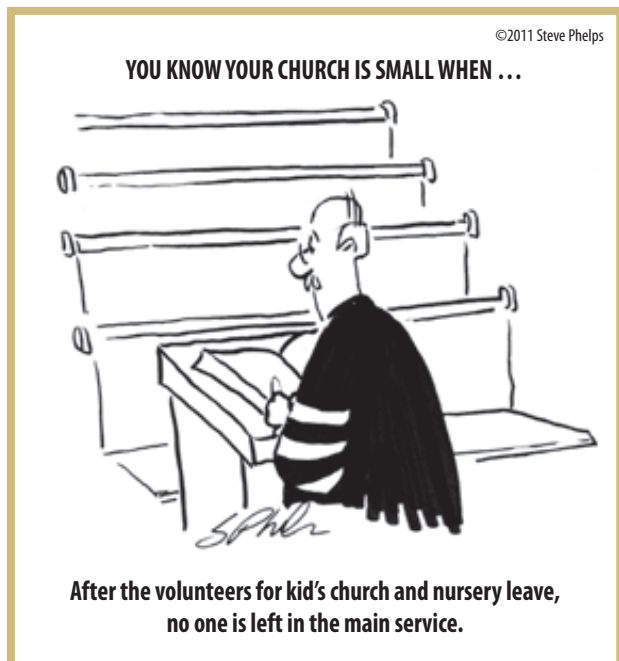
**Klaus:** I had a conversation this morning with John Koeshall, who with his wife, Anita, are serving as our Hogan Professors of World Mission at AGTS. They have spent the last 30 years in Europe on university campuses discipling young people. They have incredible stories of how unbelievers, atheists, and Nazis have come to faith in Jesus Christ.

He was just at Sam Houston State in Huntsville, Texas, with a Chi Alpha ministry where he ministered to 700 students. He worked with small groups that are part of that Chi Alpha. What he said was amazing, “These students come from all kinds of broken backgrounds. They don’t have any Christian history whatsoever; they are in various stages in their Christian walk. But the pure stuff I heard when I was a kid is the stuff I’m talking to them about now. The sacrifice issues, simple messages, unadulterated stuff, these students are eating it up.”

About half the kids in our Assemblies of God schools are coming from blended families and single-parent situations. They bring baggage that no kid should have to work through. But in that context, because there is such discontinuity with even bad versions of Christianity, they come with the capability to sense what’s real and what isn’t. The simple messages we have been talking about today will find resonance with students who have not been overly religious — socialized into religion as an organized thing.

**What blind spots or challenges will younger generations have to face in their quest for personal holiness?**


**Meyer:** One thing that comes to mind is a “casualization” of the culture where a sense of the magnitude of the holiness



of God can get lost. Recently I was praying with someone and I invited him to lead in prayer. He started out, "Dear Daddy." Now that was intimate and very personal, and in some ways was special.

history if we think today's generation doesn't have the same passions early in life as we did when we were their age.

The real question is, how do we have effectiveness over a protracted period



**Holiness is not only the avoidance of things that contaminate; it is also the presence of that which is righteous.**

—Meyer

But I must say it felt a bit too informal, to approach God in that way. I think of a restoration of, to use John Piper's terminology, the supremacy of God. In this younger generation, especially when the accoutrements of the world of religious activity are dissolving, formality is gone. Our sanctuaries are becoming more casual. How will we now reinforce a sense of the majesty and the greatness of God?

**Klaus:** I have lived long enough to realize that as I look at the descriptors of current young adults, while the flavors may be different, the song is still the same. We are naïve and disconnected from

of time? Young adults today have to navigate this passion in a climate that will tempt them to become addicted to novelty, particularly through technology. They have great skills to navigate that. Novelties that are humanly derived can hamstring the incredible passion that young adults have today. I think the question is going to be, as Don has said, will they, through the din of humanly devised distraction, have a homing signal that comes from an encounter with Jesus Christ that is transforming and regularly embellished? Will they keep that in mind as they navigate the incredible sense of distraction the world presents to them?


**Taylor:** It goes back to what Don said — the casualness of the holy. Students today throw the word *awesome* around to describe an In-And-Out Hamburger here on the West Coast, or Andy's frozen custard in Springfield, Missouri. But we talk about Andy's and In-and-Out with the same words we use to describe God. I sometimes tell students, "In-and-Out Burgers are great, but only God is awesome."

One of the challenges is that in the casualness of our churches, we want our students to be able to address Abba and say "Daddy," especially students who come from broken homes where their image of a father is anything but a loving, caring Father who embraces them and will never forsake them. At the same time, we want them to see God as awesome and full of awe.

Another is the reality that we are living in a post-Christian culture. *Almost Christian*, a recent book based on Pew-funded research, looks at thousands of today's generation of young people in churches. For the majority of these students, their Christian faith is more "Christian-ish." That is how they describe it. It is about being nice, about being accepting, but it is not about the deep claims of following Christ. That presents a huge challenge, even in our churches. This is where many of our students are coming from.

One of our challenges is helping students be captured and captivated by who Christ is and to see Him as far bigger than anything they can think or imagine. We want them to see the beauty of His holiness, and as part of that, to be discerning. What concerns me is that some of our students have a difficult time discerning between a Lady Gaga concert and a worship concert. They are both ecstatic experiences, and they can move from one to the other and not understand that one is a road to life, and the other is a road to death. The challenge is helping students live discerning lives. ☪



A man in a grey suit and red tie stands against a textured, brown wall. He holds a thick book in his left hand and gestures with his right. A large, dark shadow of him is cast on the wall behind him, with the shadow's right arm raised in a dramatic, almost accusatory gesture. The lighting is dramatic, coming from the side, creating strong highlights and shadows.

What we must ask ourselves is:  
To what degree are Pharisaic  
patterns of behavior present in  
our lives and churches?

# DEFEATING PHARISAISM: JESUS' CRITIQUE of PSEUDO- HOLINESS

BY GARY J. TYRA

**N**ot a pretty picture. I am referring to the New Testament's portrait of the tense, adversarial relationship that existed between Jesus and the Pharisees. Scholars have presented several theories in an attempt to account for the bad blood between Jesus and His main ministerial antagonists. These theories range from the suggestion that Jesus was a liberally minded Pharisee in conflict with His more conservative cousins, to the idea that the Pharisees, as a group, were deeply envious of this rogue rabbi's popularity with the general population. In between these two

possible explanations is one that contends that Jesus and the Pharisees simply disagreed about what it means to be holy before God.

## The Problem the Pharisees Had With Jesus

The Gospels seem to indicate the Pharisees were quite critical of Jesus' contact with tax collectors and "sinners" (Matthew 9:9–11; Luke 15:1,2), and with the apparently cavalier manner in which He approached the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1,2,9–14; Luke 13:10–17; John 9:13–16). The Pharisees simply could not wrap their minds around the idea of a truly

pious person doing the things Jesus did.

Furthermore, the Pharisees believed their hope of national deliverance from Roman rule depended on the holiness of the Jewish people as a whole. According to the Pharisees, this mandated holiness before God required not only a scrupulous observance of the rules and rituals prescribed by the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and their oral tradition (rabbinical commentary on the Torah), it also necessitated a strict separation from sinners, whether Gentile or Jewish. Therefore, Jesus' refusal to embrace and promote their unique understanding of holiness struck the Pharisees as not only heretical but treasonous as well. This, say some scholars, is why the Pharisees were so willing to do whatever was necessary to silence Jesus (Matthew 12:14). They considered Him a genuine threat to the spiritual and political welfare of the nation.

## The Problem Jesus Had With the Pharisees

Jesus considered the Pharisees' religious approach to be not only ineffective in establishing true righteousness (Matthew 5:20), but counter-productive to the trust-based, intimate, interactive, and genuinely transformational relationship with God He had come to model for humanity. At the heart of the Pharisaic approach to holiness is a craving for both certainty and control that functions as a form of idolatry.

What began as a well-meaning desire to make sure they did not *offend God*,

**To the degree we want to see the Beatitudes played out in our lives, we need to see the pseudo-holiness of the Pharisees for what it is: a fool's errand.**





## DEFEATING PHARISAISM:

### JESUS, CRITIQUE OF PSEUDO HOLINESS (continued from page 55)

morphed into a desperate fear-based need to be *certain of their status before Him*. This, then, evolved into an elaborate system of rules and rituals that allowed them to *control God*. Some scholars say this best explains the rather harsh nature of Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees recorded in Matthew 23, and His repeated warnings for His disciples to steer clear of the Pharisaic approach to the spiritual life (e.g., Matthew 16:6; Luke 12:1; 20:46,47).<sup>1</sup> According to the canonical Gospels, there is such a thing as a Pharisaic "pseudo-holiness" that Jesus wanted His followers to avoid at all costs. Here are some reasons why Jesus was so adamant on this issue.

appearing pious toward others while secretly and hypocritically harboring lawless impulses and engaging in sinful behaviors (verses 27,28); and 7) their penchant for persecuting anyone who dared to disagree with them (verses 29–36).<sup>2</sup>

In his book, *Extreme Righteousness: Seeing Ourselves in the Pharisees*, Tom Hovestol creates a similar list of vices Jesus attributed to the Pharisees. Hovestol sees Jesus finding fault with the Pharisees for their self-righteousness, doctrinal dogmatism, hyper-piety, traditionalism, legalism/moralism, separatism, and hypocrisy.<sup>3</sup>

And what effect did these problematic attitudes and actions have on the Pharisees?

Luke 18:9–14). Instead of being *meek* (i.e., trusting in God to protect them), the Pharisees felt the need to go tit for tat in their dealings with others and to engage in conspicuous, shameless self-promotion (Matthew 5:38,39; 23:1–12). Instead of *hungering and thirsting for righteousness* (i.e., possessing an insatiable appetite for an intimate, interactive, genuinely transformational relationship with God), the Pharisees contented themselves with a religion that focused on legalistic and ritualistic performance (Matthew 23:23,24). Instead of being *filled with mercy* (i.e., possessing a huge capacity for compassion), the Pharisees were harsh and judgmental in their dealings with others (Matthew 9:10–13). Instead of being *pure in spirit* (i.e., taking care to strive for sincerity in one's professed devotion to God), the Pharisees were not beyond engaging in pious acts for no other reason than to impress others (Matthew 6:1–18; 23:25–28). Instead of functioning as *peacemakers* in their society (i.e., proactively promoting peace), the Pharisees produced strife and conflict wherever they went (Matthew 23:29–32). Finally, instead of being willing to be *persecuted because of righteousness* (i.e., willing to endure pain because of one's loyalty to God and the Kingdom cause), the Pharisees were doing the persecuting (Matthew 23:33–39).

Jesus knew what He was doing when He began His sermon with the Beatitudes. Some scholars believe that in Jesus' day common folk considered the Pharisees, as a group, spiritual heroes.<sup>4</sup> Thus, as a sermon introduction, the Beatitudes would have startled and intrigued Jesus' audience not only because the Beatitudes seemed to contradict the prevailing notions of happiness and success in their society, but also the people would have recognized that *every one of these prescribed attitudes and actions was noticeably absent from the lives of most of their spiritual heroes—the Pharisees*.<sup>5</sup> Jesus, the master communicator, knew precisely how to gain the attention of an audience.

**Jesus viewed the Pharisees' religious approach to be counter-productive to the trust-based, intimate, interactive, and genuinely transformational relationship with God He had come to model for humanity.**

#### The Earmarks and Effects of Pharisaic Pseudo-Holiness

In her book, *We Are the Pharisees*, Kathleen Kern takes a long, hard look at the fierce diatribe Jesus directed at the Pharisees in Matthew 23. According to Kern, Jesus indicted His antagonists for: 1) their exclusivity (verse 13); 2) the negative effect they had on their converts (verse 15); 3) their use of manipulative, slippery speech (verses 16–22); 4) their gnat-picking (super-scrupulous legalistic ethics) that missed the heart of God (verses 23,24); 5) their focus on pious rituals while at the same time ignoring their attitudes of greed and indulgence (verses 25,26); 6) their obsession with

Jesus began His Sermon on the Mount by enunciating a set of attitudes and actions that belong to those blessed by God (Matthew 5:3–12). The spiritual attributes we know as the Beatitudes were woefully lacking in the lives of Jesus' adversaries. Instead of being *spiritually poor* (i.e., manifesting a radical dependence on God instead of material wealth), the Pharisees loved and depended on their money (Luke 16:13–15). Instead of being those who *mourn* (i.e., who are sensitive to and genuinely sorry for the sin in their lives), the Pharisees engaged in a loophole-seeking approach to ethics that allowed them to justify themselves before God (Matthew 5:21–48;

To the degree we want to see the Beatitudes played out in our lives, we need to see the pseudo-holiness of the Pharisees for what it is: a fool's errand. For all of their concern to maintain purity before God, behaviors that distressed the heart of our Heavenly Father earmarked their lifestyles.

### The Possibility of a Contemporary Christian Pharisaism

What we must ask ourselves is: *To what degree are any of these problematic patterns of behavior present in our lives and churches?*

I believe Jesus would have a problem with some things that go on each week

in churches that purport to represent Him to the world. What follows are several examples of behavior that demonstrate contemporary Christian Pharisaism.

Not long after arriving at my second pastorate, a parishioner invited me to lunch and asked where I stood on the issue of race relations. He told me that



## PHARISAICAL ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS

Based on my own survey of the manner in which the Gospels portray Jesus confronting the Pharisees, I suggest He had a tremendous problem with the Pharisees' tendency toward:

- **Egoism** (self-righteousness and spiritual arrogance) — Some Pharisees tended to be so "confident of their own righteousness" that they looked down on everybody else (Luke 18:9–14).
- **Dogmatism / Sectarianism** — Some Pharisees tended to assume without question that their doctrinal positions were the epitome of absolute truth and that their party alone enjoyed God's approval (Luke 7:29–35; John 9:24–34).
- **Super-Spirituality / Hyper-Piety** — Some Pharisees tended to parade their piety about publicly, drawing attention to their super-scrupulous observance of religious rituals and spiritual disciplines to gain the attention and admiration of their peers

(Matthew 6:1,2,5,16; 23:5–7).

- **Traditionalism / Ritualism** — Some Pharisees tended to deify human traditions, with the result that they became so overly concerned with a proper engagement in religious customs that they ended up substituting a real relationship with God with a feverous devotion to various religious rituals (Mark 7:1–13).
- **Legalism / Separatism** — Some Pharisees tended to believe that a right relationship with God could be achieved and maintained by mere human effort and by isolating themselves from everyone who did not share their commitment to ritual purity (Matthew 9:10–13; Luke 15:1–32; John 5:39,40).
- **Judgmentalism** — Some Pharisees tended to behave in harsh, unloving, ungracious, judgmental ways toward anyone who did not belong to their group or whose piety did not match their own (John 8:3–11; 9:13–34).
- **Pugilism** — Some Pharisees tended to believe they were doing God a service by actually persecuting those who might succeed at promoting a religious perspective that differed from their own (Matthew 23:29–34).
- **Trivialism** (spiritual myopia/tunnel vision) — Some Pharisees tended to "strain out gnats" while "swallowing camels." They tended to focus all of their attention and emotional energy on trivial issues that lacked scriptural support while ignoring those matters that, according to the Bible, mean a great deal to God (Matthew 23:23,24).
- **Formalism / Hypocrisy** — Some Pharisees tended to pose and posture — to pretend to be more spiritually mature than they really were (Matthew 23:25–28).

These are the actions and attitudes that, according to the four Gospels, Jesus confronted in the lives of at least some of the original Pharisees. For all of their concern to maintain purity before God, their lifestyles were earmarked by behaviors that distressed the heart of our Heavenly Father.

— GARY J. TYRA





## DEFEATING PHARISAISM: JESUS, CRITIQUE OF PSEUDO HOLINESS (continued from page 57)

he left a previous church after the pastor offended him when he conducted a dedication ceremony for an infant born of parents of different races — African-American and Caucasian. When I told him I would behave in the same way, he launched into a tirade about the radical importance of racial segregation. After he calmed down, I gently asked him: "If in heaven Jesus introduced you to a black man, obviously expecting you to shake his hand, what would you do?" The response of this long-time evangelical church member stunned me.

He said, "My Jesus would never ask me to do that."

When I questioned him further, he stated that while he agreed there would be people of color in heaven, "They will have their area and we'll have ours."

I think Jesus would have a problem with this. Is this not an example of "exclusivity" to which Kathleen Kern refers and the separatism the ancient Pharisees were famous for?

Not long after this incident I became aware that another church member was concerned that visitors and new adherents would sometimes smoke outside the church's front entrance. This veteran

church member had determined that part of his ministry responsibility was to safeguard the image of the church. So whenever necessary, he would confront such a visitor, lecturing him about how cigarette smoking was sinful and that smoking on the front steps of the church was sending the wrong message to passersby. But in his attempt to protect the church's image, he was chasing away the very people we were trying to reach.

I think Jesus would have a problem with this, too. Would not this type of negative, confrontive, judgmental "gnat-picking" have an ultimately adverse effect on the new believers in your church

and on the non-believers you are wanting to reach?

Here is a final story. A few years ago I was teaching a ministry-related course for older, nonresidential students who were returning to college to earn a degree.

One evening a student, who was a member of his denomination's board of directors, related a story of a recent leadership crisis in one of

the denomination's churches.

The pastor of this church had come under ecclesiastical discipline. Not responding appropriately to the denomination's prescribed process toward rehabilitation, he had been suspended from his ministerial duties. When the official board convened a special congregational meeting in the pastor's church to explain this action, they were greeted by a group of hostile church members who "wanted their pastor back."

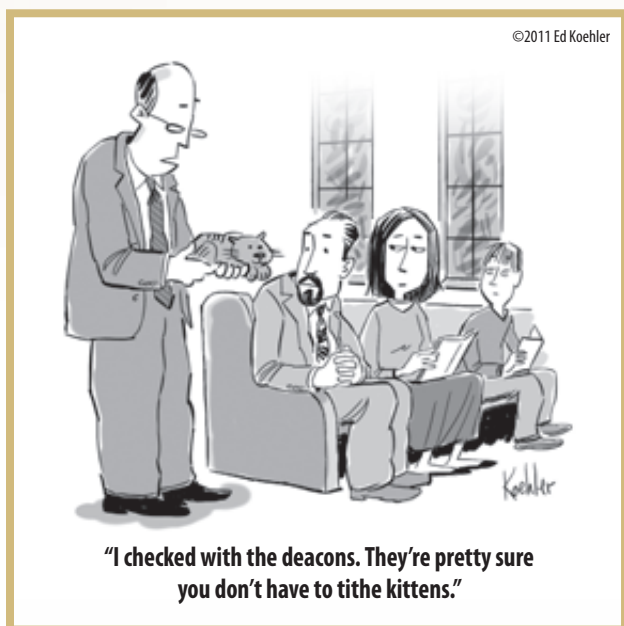
As the denominational official sent to preside over the meeting attempted to address the congregation, a female church member grabbed a microphone near the piano and began to sing a worship chorus containing the prayer, "Lord, bring us back to Your holy place."

Unable to be heard over the singing, the denominational official addressed her, politely asking her to refrain so he could speak. She responded by screaming into the microphone, "We don't have to listen to any of your [expletive]." Then, without pausing, she returned to her singing: "Lord, bring us back to Your holy place."

Again, I think Jesus would have a problem with this type of super-spiritual, hypocritical behavior.

Hopefully, the personal examples presented here are sufficient to make the case that, sadly, it is possible for contemporary Christians to adopt a fear-based, rules-oriented approach to the pursuit

**"The presence of Pharisaism in many evangelical and Pentecostal churches is hindering their ability to be missionally effective in an increasingly post Christian world."**



of sanctification that, because it is so very similar to the one employed by the ancient Pharisees, not only fails to be truly transformative, it actually breaks the heart of God.<sup>6</sup>

## Conclusion

There is an elephant in the room evangelicals and Pentecostals need to deal with. If we are not careful, our approach to the pursuit of holiness can, like that of the ancient Pharisees, focus too much on external rather than internal issues,

be driven more by our fear of God than our love for Him, focus too much on vices we need to avoid rather than virtues we need to acquire, mandate that we separate ourselves from those to whom Jesus would have us reveal His love, and serve to push people away from the church rather than draw them toward it. This is a crucially important ecclesiastical issue.

I am convinced that the presence of Pharisaism in many evangelical and Pentecostal churches is hindering their

ability to be missionally effective in an increasingly post-Christian world. May God help us become the kind of Christian leaders who are both able and willing to help our parishioners avoid the lure of a Pharisaic pseudo-holiness. ☺

## NOTES

1. For a more thorough discussion of the root cause of Pharisaism and its idolatrous implications, see my book *Defeating Pharisaism: Recovering Jesus' Disciple-Making Method* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster Publishing, 2009), 68–75.
2. Kathleen Kern, *We Are the Pharisees* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1995), 59–76.
3. Tom Hovestol, *Extreme Righteousness: Seeing Ourselves in the Pharisees* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 47–176.
4. Tyra, 32–34.
5. W.D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 86.
6. For a more thorough treatment of the degree to which New Testament Pharisaism is present in contemporary evangelicalism, see my book *Defeating Pharisaism*, pages 53–76.



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# CONTAGIOUS HOLINESS OVER

BY CRAIG L. BLOMBERG

\*\*\*\*\*

Jesus befriended sinners because He believed that His holiness was contagious. His friendship with sinners serves as a model for helping people experience God's transforming grace.

**E**ven in this age of fast-food restaurants and microwave meals, it matters with whom we eat. At least in the U.S., it is rare for complete strangers to sit together over a meal in a public place. As Christians, we may be even more selective about whom we invite into our homes.

In the ancient Middle East, people took hospitality more seriously than most of us and were more guarded with whom they ate. Most cultures had dietary restrictions and taboos; and, in some instances, eating the wrong food could render a person ritually unclean. Only after the passage of time and participation in purification rituals could



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one be declared clean.

The implications of our dietary practices with respect to evangelism and discipleship are worth noting. Whereas the Pharisees avoided contact with “sinners” so they would not become ritually unclean, Jesus befriended sinners because He believed that His holiness was contagious. This article will examine Jesus’

friendship with sinners as a model for helping people experience God’s transforming grace.

#### **Israel’s Kosher Meals**

The ancient Israelites formed a classic example of dietary practices. Genesis 18 depicts Abraham and Sarah having “entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews

13:2, KJV), as they lavished a feast on total strangers. But the Law given at Mount Sinai became the basis of kosher laws that prevented the Israelites from eating certain meats and shellfish (Leviticus 11). Over the centuries, this often prevented them from accepting dinner invitations from non-Israelites, lest they defile themselves by eating at the





same table or in the same home as those who were, from their perspective, ceremonially unclean.

Second Kings 6:21–23 provides a rare exception to this exclusivism and also illustrates love for one's enemies. During the days of the divided kingdom with Israel in the north and Judah in the south, Israel is fighting her northern neighbor, the Arameans. After taking a number of prisoners of war, Joram, the king of Israel, asked the prophet Elisha if he should kill them. Elisha told him no and ordered him to prepare food and water for them. The result was a great feast, and the release of these prisoners. As a result of Israel's kindness, Aram stopped raiding Israelite territory. But even in this turn of events, the writer of Second Kings does not describe the Israelites as eating *together* with the Arameans, but merely providing a lavish meal for them.

The importance of table fellowship emerges in the Psalms in new ways. Psalm 23:5 promises, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." The Psalmist wanted David's enemies to see how the Lord had favored him with abundant provision, but they

do not share in it.

When people did share a meal, one of the most treacherous acts ancient Middle Easterners could undertake was to betray a host or a guest (or even a former host or guest). This is what makes Psalm 41:9 so heinous: "Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely, the one who shared my food, has turned against me" (NLT<sup>1</sup>). Jesus applied this text to His betrayal by Judas (John 13:18).

An exceptional text appears in Proverbs 25:21,22: "If your enemy is hungry, give him some food to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him some water to drink. In this way you will make him feel guilty and ashamed, and the Lord will reward you" (GW<sup>2</sup>). Paul quoted this principle in Romans 12:20 and saw it as binding for Christians. But in Old Testament times, such sentiments were few. More common were the attitudes that Daniel discloses: he would rather eat only vegetables and drink only water than defile himself with the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar's meat and wine (Daniel 1:8–20).

During the roughly 450 years between the time of Malachi, the last of the writing prophets, and the ministry of Jesus, Jews

became even more entrenched in their anti-Gentile attitudes. Stipulations concerning what constituted ritual purity at mealtime became more elaborate.

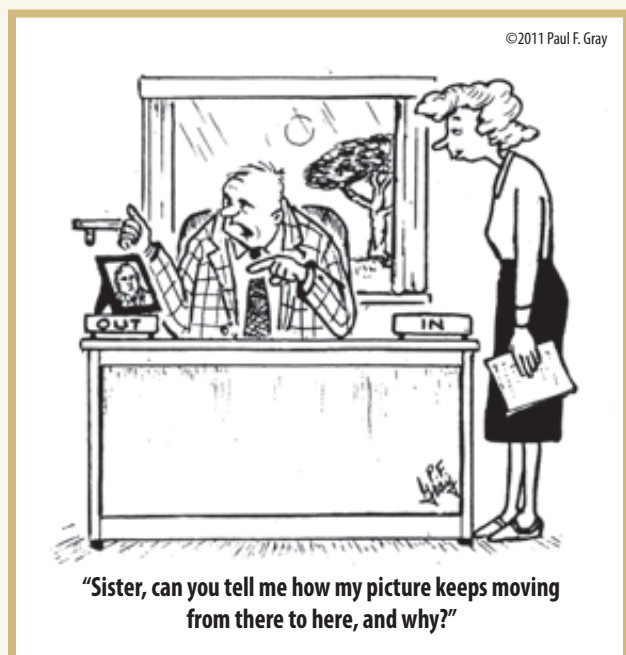
So also did restrictions on dinner companions. At the same time Jews looked forward to the Messianic Age when the prophecy of Isaiah 25:6 would be fulfilled and all peoples would gather together on Mount Zion in Jerusalem

and feast on "rich foods" and "aged wines." But the Jews assumed that all the nations would stream to Jerusalem to learn and practice God's law so everyone could eat in ceremonial purity. The closer they came to New Testament times, the more the influence of the Greek and Roman empires that occupied Israel made this vision for holy feasting attractive, because the Greco-Roman world was legendary for its debauched partying — feasts thrown by wealthy people leading to excessive consumption followed by sexual promiscuity with courtesans provided for the partygoers.

## Jesus' Meals With Sinners

Keep this background in mind as we observe the practices of Jesus. One of His twelve disciples is Levi, also called Matthew, a tax collector. The Jews would have viewed Levi, a Jew working as a middleman for the hated Romans — often also levying extortionary tribute — as perpetually unclean. Yet Jesus not only called him but also went to dinner at his house along with many other "sinners" (Mark 2:14,15) — a term normally reserved in the Gospels for the most notoriously wicked in Jesus' world. When Jesus learned of the Pharisees' outrage over His behavior, He responded, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (verse 17). Luke spells out what that calling entails — a call "to repentance" (Luke 5:31).

When Jesus fed the 5,000 and 4,000 in the wilderness (Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–13), many would have been ritually impure because they did not have water to perform purification rites. Feeding the 4,000 most likely occurred with a predominantly Gentile crowd. In Mark 7:1–23, Jesus and His disciples did not follow the Pharisaic principles for hand washing before meals. Before the end of the controversy this created, Jesus insisted that *no* foods can defile anyone, only the thoughts and actions that come out of





## SCUM OF THE EARTH CHURCH

**I belong to a missional church** in Denver, Colorado, that has the vision of contagious holiness over dinner. We call our church Scum of the Earth Church (from 1 Corinthians 4:13). Our church is a 10-year old urban congregation of about 200, largely young adults. Mike Sares, our senior pastor, wrote a book about

our story: *Pure Scum: The Left Out, the Right-Brained and the Grace of God* (InterVarsity Press, 2010).

We have no membership. We have a large circle of lay leaders, a lay church council, and pastoral staff. To be involved in any of these groups you must be a maturing Christian. To

take Communion you must be able to say you love Jesus (and mean it). Otherwise, anyone is welcome at any church service or activity. In fact, we encourage skeptics and seekers to hang out with us and ask hard questions. We try to avoid giving simplistic answers. Some find Jesus in the process.

The larger of our two main services is on Sunday night, where, in the middle of our service — after worship and before the sermon — we eat a simple meal together. This is a perfect setting to catch up with friends and welcome newcomers.

Our smaller morning service begins with a shared breakfast and attracts a somewhat different, slightly older, congregation. A smattering of homeless people participate in one or both congregations. I have yet to see anyone corrupted by our non-Christian visitors or regular attenders. I have seen many people start to catch holiness by association with Christians, especially the more mature ones.

— CRAIG L. BLOMBERG

a person. Mark, probably writing in the 60s, adds the parenthetical comment that, by saying this, Jesus was declaring all foods clean (verse 19).

Mark, Early Church tradition affirms, learned most of the information for his Gospel from Peter. The apostle Peter had a vision of unclean and clean animals together descending from heaven on a large sheet, with God instructing him three times to rise, kill, and eat these animals (Acts 10:9–23). The fledgling church understood better in the 60s than they did during Christ's earthly ministry in the late 20s just how sweeping the implications were of His teaching on what made a person clean or unclean, holy or profane.

Hints of a day when Jew and Gentile would eat all foods together in Christian love also appear in the story about the Roman centurion's faith (Matthew 8:5–13).

When Jesus praised the belief of a commanding officer of 100 occupying enemy troops as greater than anything He had ever seen in Israel (verse 10), His praise was scarcely designed to win Jewish supporters. Worse still, from their perspective, Jesus added that Gentiles from around the globe would replace Jewish patriarchs in the great Messianic banquet at the end of human history (verses 11,12).

In Matthew 11:16–19, Jesus told a parable about children playing in the marketplace. They first played "wedding," then acted out a "funeral." But no one joined in their play. Jesus likened these uncooperative responses to His contemporaries' rejection of Him and John the Baptist: "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'" The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of

tax collectors and sinners" " (verses 18,19).

While Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and sinners, there is no evidence He ever overate or overdrank. Still, the fact when people caricatured Him, they likened Him more to a party animal than to an ascetic, proves telling. He wanted to associate with all people in the intimate context of table fellowship, even if, at times, that led others to misrepresent His behavior or intentions.

Nor did Jesus avoid the more powerful, well-to-do, and respected leaders of His society. He accepted dinner invitations from Pharisees. But when a notoriously sinful woman, presumably a prostitute, crashed one such gathering, He remained calm even though her actions scandalized others. One commentator likened her pouring a costly jar of ointment on His feet and wiping them with her hair to a woman showing up





topless at a contemporary church potluck. But Jesus recognized the woman's gratefulness for His ministry to her and does not berate her (Luke 7:36–50). In fact, when He did berate anyone over dinner, it was when He was eating with Pharisees. Culturally, He came across as a fairly discourteous guest when He rebuked them for their hypocrisies and love of honor and acclaim (Luke 11:37–53; 14:1–24).

Consider Jesus' meal with Zaccheus (Luke 19:1–10). Zaccheus was a chief tax collector who, not surprisingly, was quite wealthy (verse 2). Jesus' announcement that He (and, by implication, His disciples) were going to stay at Zaccheus' house would have been culturally shocking. This was more than an invitation to the evening meal. Jesus and His disciples would not have been able to walk the 13 miles from Jericho to Jerusalem during the safe daytime hours after the meal. Jesus' words are an implicit request for overnight lodging as well.

fourfold all he had defrauded and giving away half of his total net worth to the poor (verses 6–8). Jesus thus declares Zaccheus' salvation and appends what some have called the thesis statement of the Gospel of Luke: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (verse 10).

The most significant meal during Christ's life is the one He celebrates with His disciples on the night before His crucifixion. Judas also eats and drinks with Him before leaving to carry out the ruse that delivers Jesus over to the authorities. It seems there are significant sinners at every meal Jesus was a part of in the Gospels. Sometimes the sinners are merely ritually impure; often they are morally wicked. Occasionally, they are the seemingly upstanding religious leaders whose hypocrisy is obvious to few, if any, but Jesus. Finally, even one of the twelve disciples tips his hand concerning his evil heart.

How would Jesus' mealtime practices

catching, readily spreading from one person to another.

Jesus stood this notion on its head. For Him and for His genuine followers it was holiness — purity — that was contagious. Jesus and His disciples brought redemption and wholeness into settings of sin and uncleanness. Even when no food was present, the same principle was at work. Instead of incurring ritualistic and physical uncleanness from touching a leper, Jesus' touch made the leper clean (Matthew 8:1–4). Unlike the Jewish leaders who imposed long periods of probationary penance on those who claimed to have repented of a lifestyle of sin, Jesus welcomed people as His followers at the first sign of a genuine change of heart (see especially Luke 15: 11–32).

### The Church's Missional Meals

The implications of this for contemporary evangelism and discipleship are staggering. Some have characterized evangelicals as separationists — sometimes consciously avoiding close friendships with lost people, and often so busy with their activities with fellow believers they have few, if any, close, unsaved friends. If they do have unsaved friends, evangelicals are more comfortable inviting them to Christian gatherings than hanging out in places their friends like to be — with largely or exclusively non-Christian companions. The reason for this reaction is a fear that non-Christians will corrupt Christians rather than Christians having any positive effect on non-Christians. Some might add that even if the Christians involved could resist corruption, they might lead a weaker Christian brother or sister astray. Finally, some will quote the KJV translation of 1 Thessalonians 5:22: "Abstain from all appearance of evil." The Greek word for "appearance" here means "kind." The NIV, "Reject every kind of evil," is less misleading.

First Corinthians 10:13 teaches that God gives every believer the ability to

**Jesus' model needs to captivate us with the vision of our ability — through the Spirit's empowerment — to make holy the unholy.**

Even today, with our more casual approaches to hospitality, we would not, at the last minute, invite ourselves and 12 friends for a meal and a sleepover at the home of a total stranger, and certainly not someone whose occupation is an embarrassment to everything we stand for as believers. But that is in essence what Jesus did (verse 5).

Zaccheus seemed honored rather than offended, and gladly provided the requested hospitality. He announced his repentance by promising to restore

have looked against the Old Testament background surveyed earlier? Clearly Christ turned everything upside down. Israelite religion was about preserving the purity of God's people in both a ritual and a moral sense. Jews believed that dining with the wrong people, even if they were not at that moment consuming unclean food, was simply too risky to be permitted. It was too easy to become defiled, even unwittingly. One might sum up this attitude with the concept that impurity was contagious —

not give in to temptation. Of course, there will be times when we need to dissuade young, immature Christians from placing themselves in situations in which they will be tempted to revert to sinful practices. But Christians must mature beyond this stage.

Jesus' model needs to captivate us with the vision of our ability — through the Spirit's empowerment — to make holy the unholy. Christians who move in groups into rough neighborhoods can

make a difference in bettering communities. Christians in the workplace who courteously model ethical business practices can over time improve the standard of an entire company. Christians who stay in the public schools as administrators, teachers, or students can make a difference in the moral atmosphere of their institutions.

Missional churches often talk about belonging before believing or becoming. This was my experience as a high

school student years ago in a Campus Life/Youth for Christ club. We welcomed all students. We considered anyone who came regularly a valued part of our group. Some were Christians; others, like me, came to Christ through activities. A few never did, but they were all touched in some way.

We need a lot more churches to think creatively about how they can become more contagious Christians. 🌱



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#### NOTES

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- E X T R A O R D I N A R Y -



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# PREACHING HOLINESS

BY GEORGE O. WOOD

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When preaching on holiness, there are four specific topics we must consider.



**his fall, my older grandson, Jacob, returns to junior high school,** while

my younger grandson, Reese, begins preschool. I am proud of both boys and look forward to seeing them become men of God. But I have deep concerns for them as well.

The secular worldview and culture of this age differ radically from biblical faith and practice, and even oppose them. This worldview admits of no ultimate truth about reality: no God-created beginning or God-controlled ending of history, no inherent meaning or purpose to life. The culture is relativistic: anything goes as long as everyone agrees and no one gets hurt.

The cultural consequences of this worldview are devastating. Sin and its effects permeate our culture: sexual immorality and family breakdown, materialistic greed and indifference to the poor, complacency in the face of injustice, and violence as entertainment. When anything goes, someone always gets hurt.

How can Jacob and Reese become men of God in the midst of this age? How can they become holy — knowing that “without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14)? Holiness in thought, word, deed, and relationship is my greatest hope and deepest concern for my grandsons.

As pastors, you and I have the same hope and concern for our church members. How can they become increasingly holy? And what can we do to help them? Romans 12:1,2 answers both questions: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing

and perfect will.”<sup>1</sup>

With our concern and Paul’s words in mind, let us look at four specific topics we need to consider when preaching holiness.

### **Tone and Demeanor**

First, when you preach about holiness, pay attention to your tone of voice and demeanor — both in and out of the pulpit.

In Greek, the first word of Romans 12:1 is *parakal*, which the NIV translates here as “urge” but elsewhere as “appeal” (1 Corinthians 1:10), “comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:4), “encourage” (12:8), “plead” (Philippians 4:2), and “exhort” (1 Timothy 5:1). The word is not a technical term for preaching, although it appears in preaching contexts. For example, in Acts 2:40, Peter “pleaded” [*parakálei*], “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” And in 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul wrote, “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage [*parakáleson*] — with great patience and careful instruction.”

English verbs have three moods: indicative, imperative, and subjunctive. The indicative states facts, the imperative issues commands, and the subjunctive expresses wishes or makes requests. These moods correspond to three modes of preaching.

Growing up in Assemblies of God churches, I often heard preaching in an imperative — even imperial — mode. Pastors operated with a command-and-control model of leadership that carried over into the pulpit. They thundered forth the Word of God in a high, loud, and fast tone of voice. They left no time for questions and made no space for nuance. When they finished their sermons, all they wanted was a yes or no answer from the congregation.

Early on in my pastoral career, perhaps as a reaction to imperative-mode preaching, I preached in the indicative



mode. I downloaded information on members of my congregation with a professional tone of voice. My sermons were long, complex, and nuanced.

There is a place for both imperative- and indicative-mode preaching. Sometimes, pastors must exercise their authority as leaders of their churches. At all times, they must teach — through word and personal example — what Christians believe and how they behave. But as I matured as a pastor, I came to realize that most preaching occurs in the subjunctive mode. It expresses fond wishes and makes heartfelt requests. It urges, appeals, comforts, encourages, pleads, and exhorts more than it commands and as often as it informs.

Both imperative- and indicative-mode preaching assume that pastors exist over the members of their congregations. In the former, pastors have authority over others, which is why they issue commands. In the latter, pastors have a level of knowledge over that of their members, which is why they teach them. But in subjunctive-mode preaching, pastors exist alongside members of their

congregation. Paul addressed the Romans as *adelphoi*, literally, “brothers [and sisters].”

Popular commentaries point out that the verb *parakaleo* comes from two words meaning “to call” (*kaléo*) “alongside” (*para*). Whether that is the word’s proper etymology, “to call alongside” is a good description of preaching specifically and pastoring generally. When you preach, does your tone of voice call people alongside you, or does it distance them from you? What about your demeanor in the pulpit? Does it draw church members in or push them away? Outside of the pulpit, can church members approach you as an elder brother or sister for biblical counsel? Or does dealing with you cause them fear and anxiety?

Our preaching tone and our personal demeanor — in the pulpit and out of it — must call people alongside us in a relationship of mutual respect and trust. Without that relationship, we cannot lead people toward the holiness God seeks from them. For, as has often been said, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

Charles Sheldon’s classic novel, *In His Steps*? It tells the story of Reverend Henry Maxwell, who leads a spiritual revival in his congregation by asking a simple question: “What would Jesus do?” Many pastors ask a variation on that question every Sunday morning: What would Jesus do ... to overcome an addiction, to reconcile a relationship, to raise a child, to end poverty, to establish justice? These questions address aspects of holiness, so they are good questions. The Bible provides good answers to them. We pastors should preach both the questions and the answers.

But before we preach them, we must also ask, “What has Jesus done?” It makes little sense to try to pull Christ out of people’s lives if God has not put Him there in the first place. *In His Steps* does not ask or answer this prior question. The failure to do so is the great theological weakness of an otherwise profitable ethical book.

The apostle Paul did not make the same mistake in Romans. Instead, he laid a grace-based theological foundation on which he built a house of spiritual and moral change. Let’s look at how he did this.

Romans 1:17 states the theme of the entire letter: “In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’ ”

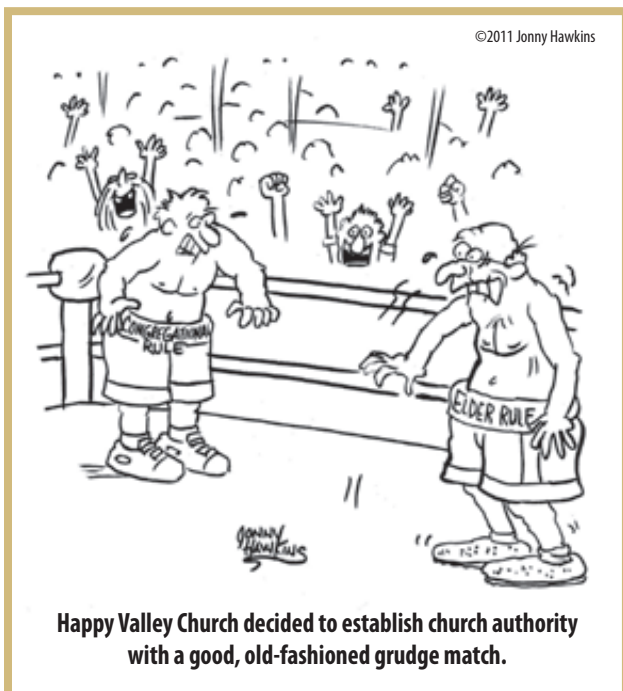
Romans 1:18–11:36 outlines how God made us righteous. We can summarize this in four indicative statements: First, we cannot become righteous by our own works (1:18–3:20): “No one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law” (3:20). Second, God made us righteous by faith in Jesus Christ (3:21–5:21). “This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (3:22). Third, because of our faith in Jesus Christ, God liberated us from sin and death, for righteousness and life through the Holy Spirit (6:1–8:39): “Through Christ Jesus the law


### Theology of Grace-Based Change

Second, when preaching holiness, articulate a theology of grace-based change.

How we preach matters, but so does what we preach. Indeed, substance matters more than style. Good theology shines through even bad preaching, but no amount of good preaching can shine up bad theology.

Have you read





of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death" (8:2). Fourth, God made us righteous because He is merciful. Though Romans 9:1–11:36 may seem to us like a detour in Paul's argument, it isn't. The first generation of Christians wrestled with this question: "Why do Jews reject their own Messiah while Gentiles accept Him?" Paul provided an answer: "God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all" (11:32). God's mercy explains His actions, not only with regard to first-century Jews and Gentiles, but with regard to us as well.

In Romans 12:1–15:13, the mood switches from indicative to imperative. In 12:1,2, Paul transitions from what God has done for us to what we should do for Him. "Therefore, ... in view of God's mercy," he wrote, "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice. Do not conform to the pattern of this world," and "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (12:1,2). The specific ethical teachings of chapters 12–15 expand on these three basic imperatives.

**The secular worldview and culture of this age differ radically from biblical faith and practice, and even oppose them.**

Whenever you see the word "therefore" in Scripture, you should ask "what is it there for?" In Romans 12:1, "therefore" connects the indicative and the imperative as cause and effect. God's mercy or grace makes our obedience possible. Indicative, therefore imperative. Foundation, then house. What has Jesus done? Then, what would Jesus do?

In a desire to be practical, too many pastors skip the indicative and go straight for the imperative. When they do this, their sermons become self-help, how-to, do-it-yourself messages with Bible verses

and stories thrown in almost as an afterthought. In effect, they preach works, not grace and faith. Their preaching becomes legalistic and moralistic. And it undermines the gospel. If we only preach works, then we have not learned the first lesson of Romans: "No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law" (3:20).

If we want to see people make progress in holiness, our preaching must lay a grace-based, not works-based, theological foundation.

### **Action, Motivation, and Result**

Third, when preaching holiness, address action, motivation, and result.

For years, I carried a membership card in my wallet for a health club. I'm embarrassed to say, however, that I never entered the facilities. I desired physical fitness, but I never presented my body for exercise at the gym.

What is true for physical fitness is true for holiness. We must do more than intend to become holy. We must heed Paul's words: "Offer your bodies as a

unless your body walks next door and rings the doorbell. When the Good Samaritan helped the victim on the side of the road, he used his body to help that man's body. Holiness involves what we do with our bodies.

Because it is possible to perform the right action with the wrong motivation, holiness also requires the purification of our motives. For example, in 2 Corinthians 9:7, Paul wrote, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." In this passage, the right action is giving, and the right motivation involves a combination of willingness, freedom, and cheerfulness.

Sometimes, performing the right action with the right motivation comes easily to us. Other times, it does not. Notice that Paul taught us to "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice." Jesus Christ exemplified the sacrificial life on the Cross when He "loved [you] and gave himself for [you]" (Galatians 2:20). Even before the Cross, however, Jesus exemplified the sacrificial life by subordinating His will to God's. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to His Father, "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). The essence of Christian prayer is similar: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

In such times when choosing God's will over our own proves difficult, we must remember the result of sacrificial living. Think again of physical fitness. Eating right and exercising is not always easy. Among other things, it means regularly saying no to sugary desserts and yes to exercise that can temporarily fatigue and cramp the muscles. But these short-term losses and stresses pale in comparison to the benefits of physical health. Just so, a life of holiness involves sacrifice. If Jesus endured the Cross for "the joy set before him" (Hebrews 12:2), surely we can endure our own smaller sacrifices for the same reason.





Members of our churches will be more likely to practice holiness if they have a clear understanding of what holiness entails. So preach about action, motivation, and the long-term result of surrendering to God's will.

### Change of Mind

Fourth, when preaching holiness, aim for change of mind.

In Romans 12:2, Paul issued two contrasting imperatives: "Do not conform" and "be transformed." The Greek root words underlying these imperatives are *schēma* and *morphē*, respectively. *Schēma* pertains to outward appearance, while *morphē* pertains to essential being. The former changes, but the latter endures. For example, my *morphē* is male, but my *schēma* has changed as I have aged.

Holiness begins with *schēma*-level, surface change. We resist the behaviors of the world whenever they contradict gospel standards. J.B. Phillips translates verse 2 this way: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould." Instead, we mold our behavior after the model of Jesus Christ's way of life.

But holiness pushes beyond *schēma*-level change. The Pharisees' holiness was *schēma*-deep, and Jesus critiqued them for their hypocrisy. "You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cumin," He told them. "But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy, and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23). He concluded, "You appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness" (23:28).

True holiness involves *morphē*-level, deep change — change of essential being, change of spiritual and moral character. According to Paul, depth-change requires "the renewing of your mind."

In Romans 1:28, Paul wrote of unbelievers: "They did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done."

In 7:23, he wrote that the struggle for holiness takes place as "the law of my mind" struggles against "the law of sin at work within me." In 14:5, regarding believers and matters of Christian freedom, he wrote, "Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind." As you can see from these verses, the mind plays a crucial role in holiness. Our thoughts either lead us astray or lead us to God. They help us "test and approve what God's will is" (12:2).

Preaching holiness requires ministering to the intellect and understanding of our church members. This is especially important in a pluralistic society such as ours, where numerous worldviews and cultures compete for attention in the marketplace of ideas. As pastors, we must prepare our church members to be discerning consumers within this marketplace, knowing how to look past the slick marketing and fancy packaging of ideas to see whether the intellectual product itself is God-honoring, true, and good.

We teach such discernment by preaching the *what* and the *why* of holiness. The *what* refers to the content of biblical teaching, while the *why* refers to its reasons. For example, preaching holiness means preaching biblical standards of sexual morality (e.g., Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27–32; 1 Corinthians 6:12–20). Many within our culture — and sometimes, unfortunately, within our churches — disregard those standards, and even dispute them. So, as preachers we must further explain why these standards are both true and good.

In other words, in a pluralistic culture, preaching holiness requires preaching doctrine — both theological and ethical

— and apologetics. Our church members will not continue to behave according to biblical standards if their thought lives ignore, misunderstand, or willfully repudiate them. We must aim for changing people's minds.

### Conclusion

Sometimes when I survey the sin that permeates and deforms our culture, I cry for my grandsons, knowing the temptations that await them. They are becoming men of God in an age that disregards holiness, even dishonors it. As a pastor, I have cried for parishioners and staff members who have harmed themselves and others by falling to sin. Perhaps you have cried too.

But after the tears, as I look back on my own life and ministry, I also realize that God has made it possible for us to make progress in holiness. In 1 Corinthians 6:8–11, Paul lists a variety of sins. Then he says, in some of the most hopeful words in Scripture: "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (verse 11).

In our preaching, let us speak to this end: that our church and family members, and we ourselves, might increasingly worship God in "the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2, KJV) — through our thoughts, words, deeds, and relationships. ☪

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**A**scribe to the Lord, O mighty ones,  
Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;  
Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness (Psalm 29:1,2).

### **The Realm of His Splendor**

Worshippers can transcend the bonds of earth to dwell for a time in the heavens. The faithful who have lived their lives before us fill an immense gallery. Thousands upon thousands of joyful angels rejoice. Amazing creatures full of wings and eyes circle through the atmosphere calling, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Somehow amid all this sound and motion is a stillness — a focus on the One who sits on the throne. No sorrow, no pain. All is health, wisdom, and peace, for He has reconciled all conflicts and paid all debts. This is the realm of the splendor of His holiness.

The New Covenant describes what happens when the redeemed of the Lord worship Him in spirit and truth in this realm (Hebrews 12:22–24). God has invited us to participate in this joy, focus, and health. Jesus opened the way for us by becoming flesh, invading the realm of death so we could enter the realm of life (Hebrews 10:18–25).

### **Four Questions**

To enter the realm of the splendor of His holiness — to lead worship that is relevant, transformative, and authentic — consider four questions:

1. How do pastors and worship leaders create an environment where people experience God?
2. How can pastors and worship leaders structure worship experiences so God's Spirit is leading?
3. How can pastors and worship leaders lead worship in such a way that people engage from their hearts?
4. How can pastors and worship leaders bring the Word of God into the

# **IN THE SPLENDOR OF HIS HOLINESS:**

## **PRACTICAL GUIDE** *for* **PUBLIC WORSHIP**

**BY STEPHEN PHIFER**

To lead worship that is relevant, transformative, and authentic four questions must be considered.

worship service? Psalm 29:1,2 provides an outline:

- "Ascribe to the Lord" — Public worship must focus on the Lord Jesus.
- "glory and strength" — The energy of the service must be the power of the Spirit of God.
- "the glory due his name" — The measure of worship must be the character of God, not contemporary culture or the needs/wants of people.

- "Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness." — Such praise will deliver worshippers into the realm of the splendor of His holiness where needs are met.

### **An Environment Where People Experience God**

Environment for worship must begin with the One we worship. Everything we design, build, present, do, and say needs to be an accurate representation





## IN THE SPLENDOR OF HIS HOLINESS: PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP (continued from page 73)

of who God is. Before the service starts, the room needs to speak of God's glory. The sanctuary needs to reflect the Light of the World and the order of creation. We can begin worship renewal with remodeling or updating the worship space. Thankfully, we have moved beyond the church platform look of previous generations. We need to focus our creativity by the need to point worshipers to the Lord. A neutral setting may not be any more conducive to worship than a cluttered or careless one. Each congregation is unique; trust the leadership of the Spirit for your church.

The challenge of creating a sacred space is daunting. Many leaders transform school auditoriums and civic centers into sanctuaries. They use meaningful symbols — Bibles, pulpits, crosses, Communion tables, banners, and stained-glass windows — to transform a room into a worship hall. If it is not possible to have the symbols, projecting these symbols could help transform the room into a more conducive setting.

As worshipers gather, tasteful lighting and inviting music can prepare hearts for worship. The lighting for congregational worship needs to be inclusive. In some cases, creating a feeling of intimacy might lead to a sense of isolation for the worshiper. Warm lighting helps

rescue the worshiper from the feeling that he or she is an observer at a concert. Each worshiper needs to sense the presence of the congregation and feel a part of a grand enterprise (Psalm 22:22; Hebrews 12:2). You need spiritual sensitivity to create the best atmosphere for your congregation.

for use by contemporary church leaders.

**Worship** is congregational ministry to the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord wants to lead the church in worship. The people of God are a holy, royal priesthood, called out of darkness into the light for this purpose (1 Peter 2:5–9).

We must see congregational

**Everything we design, build, present, do, and say needs to be an accurate representation of who God is.**

When worship services are about Jesus, everything points to Him. When the people have gathered to “ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name,” the Holy Spirit can reveal Jesus to saint and sinner alike.

### **Structure Worship Experiences So God's Spirit Is Leading**

In the 20th century, classical Pentecostalism developed a three-part structure that proved so effective that the Pentecostal witness traversed the globe in one century: worship/word/altar. In the 21st century, this structure retains its validity and is worthy of consideration

thanksgiving, proclamation, prayer, and adoration as primary purposes and not “preliminary” events. The Lord has promised to inhabit and be enthroned upon the praise of His people (Psalm 22:3). We need to see congregational ministry as the Spirit part of the service (John 4:24).

**Word** refers to the preaching of the Word of God and is essential to worship. The interest of the Holy Spirit is to exalt Jesus and edify the church (John 14–16; 1 Corinthians 12–14). Reading and preaching the Bible is the truth part of the service.

**Altar** means corporate prayer. Pentecostals went beyond the altar call to an altar service. This time of corporate prayer was born in the Holiness movement of the 19th century as believers tarried for the second blessing. In the 20th century, the altar service became a time of whole-church prayer. Some have rightly questioned high-pressure altar calls as abusive and manipulative with little scriptural support. However, corporate prayer is vital to Pentecostal life, and its biblical basis is unquestioned and pervasive.

The Spirit of God wants to lead us in this threefold structure as we worship. This structure is transcultural and transgenerational. We find it in the tabernacle/



temple worship model as New Covenant worshipers come before the presence of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> (See below.)

The threefold structure of Pentecostal worship is as relevant today as it was in the 20th century, because through it people can experience God. It is revolutionary today because it releases the full purpose of the church: worship/discipleship/witness. It is real today because the Holy Spirit still anoints worship, the preaching of the Word, and corporate prayers. We can fill this structure with an amazing variety of expressions as long as each presentation fits in<sup>2</sup> with its part of the service of worship, Word, or prayer.

### People Are Engaged From the Heart

No matter the structure, the heart of the worshiper is of primary interest to the Holy Spirit. Jesus quoted Isaiah about the heartless worship He encountered at the Temple in His day.<sup>3</sup> The Jews had

replaced the commands of God with the preferences of men. The result was a form of worship devoid of power. Without the power and presence of the Lord, church music is just music and worship services are just public meetings. As integral as the structure and focus of the service may be, if the people are not engaged from the heart, they do not draw near to the Lord and He does not draw near to them.<sup>4</sup> They never reach the realm of the splendor of His holiness.

The heart of worship is a work of the Holy Spirit. Pastors and worship leaders must preach and demonstrate the worship heart, being careful not to present their personal preferences as the Word of God. There is so much biblical truth on worship you can preach. Dig into the Word and find God's heart for worship. His heart is infinitely more important than momentary cultural trends.

When you preach the heart of worship from the pulpit and live it out on the

platform, a transformation will take place in the hearts of the people. Until this happens, there will be worship wars at worst, as people fight for their preferences; and dead services at best, where people remain disengaged from worship, trapped in an unhealthy earthly realm.

The heart for worship is the humble heart focused on the Lord Jesus and moved by His concerns for the church and world. Chief among those concerns are the health of the whole church and the healing of humanity. A willingness to enter into worship regardless of circumstances powers the worshipping heart.

In the process of spiritual transformation, the song sets need to be relevant and authentic if they are to be transformational. Worship music is a highly functional art form. Judge the songs you use by their effectiveness in two dimensions: They must be filled with the glory

Tabernacle/Temple Worship Model Psalm 100; Hebrews 8:6	Pentecostal Service Order
<b>Outer Courts</b> Enter through the gates of thanksgiving.	The service begins with corporate praise in a spirit of thanksgiving and gratitude for what God has done.
Proclaim God's excellence in the courts of praise.	Worshippers focus on who God is by the proclamation of His character as well as His deeds.
Humble our hearts before the Lord, seeking to draw near to Him (altar of sacrifice).	Worshippers set their affections on the Lord Jesus through corporate songs of prayer. Worshippers give to the Lord as they have purposed in their hearts.
<b>Inner Courts</b> <b>The Holy Place</b> Altar of incense of prayer. Table with the bread of presence and the Word. Golden lamp stand of the light and power of the Holy Spirit.	The church prays together in the power of the Spirit. The Word is read and preached in the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers the prayers of the church and the preaching of the Word.
<b>The Holy of Holies</b> Through the torn veil into the throne room of God. The manifest presence of Jesus, the ark of the presence/covenant, renews all who enter.	Having ministered to the Lord in worship and having received ministry from the Lord in the Word, the church responds in prayer as the Spirit leads. We experience signs and wonders, salvations, healings, deliverances, Spirit baptisms, and ministry callings.







## IN THE SPLENDOR OF HIS HOLINESS: PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP (continued from page 75)

due His name, and they must be usable by the congregation. Provide the words and make sure the music is well-planned, well-prepared, and well-presented. A congregation standing silent, listening to the worship team is a sign of dysfunctional music. New songs can be as singable and full of truth as familiar ones.

we have erred. We need to sing and read the Word as well as preach it. It is ironic that we, who say we believe the Bible to be the Word of God, may only read a verse or two in our services. Ancient Christian traditions call for Psalms, Old Testament lessons, New Testament lessons, and Gospel passages to be read in

in private worship. The secret place is intended to fuel public worship (1 Corinthians 12,14), and the use of common prayers and Scriptures can do much to bring a church together spiritually.

### Summary

Using the Word of God in worship begins the transformational processes of worship renewal. As the Word of God works in the hearts of the people, a heart for worship will emerge and people will enter in. As the Holy Spirit leads worship with a biblical structure that releases the full mission of the church, He will transform the environment for worship in more than cosmetic, surface ways. The Lord will respond to the sacrifices of praise of His people when we give unto the Lord the glory due His name.

His presence is authentic, transformative, and relevant. The realm of the splendor of His holiness awaits those who will worship in spirit and in truth. ☪

### NOTES

1. The New Testament transfers this worship structure into the New Covenant by the commanded use of the Psalms in worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) and by the reasoning of the writer to the Hebrews that this is "the pattern of heaven" (Hebrews 8:5).
2. For instance, starting the service with a "Holy of Holies" song instead of a "gate of thanksgiving" song.
3. "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men" (Mark 7:6–8).
4. "Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8).
5. For instance, Scripture calls for as full an instrumentation as we can offer (Psalm 150). Choirs (2 Chronicles 5:11–14), and pageantry (Psalm 20:5; 68:24–27) receive mention in the Bible as well. Full creativity is demanded, not narrow, one-dimensional worship art.

**When the glory due His name  
is the measuring stick of  
our worship, worship stirs  
a hunger for more of the Word**

Everyone needs to understand that the songs make up a living sacrifice of praise. Each worshiper's job is to give unto the Lord the glory due His name, not just to sing his or her favorite songs. The music needs to be as varied and rich as God's nature. Select your musical choices by Scripture more than by personal preferences or popular standards.<sup>5</sup> We must present music of majesty, for He is majestic; we must present music of intimacy, for He is closer than a brother.

Just as God has created a universe of incredible diversity, the music we use for worship needs to be as diverse as the cultures within the congregation. We must not present a musical representation of God that is only one-dimensional. Yet, as in creation, there must be unity within diversity — all the songs should be true to the Word. When we use this kind of music, we join the songs of the angels and witnesses in the heavenly realm.

### Bring the Word of God Into the Worship Service

When the glory due His name is the measuring stick of our worship, worship stirs a hunger for more of the Word of God. If in our thinking we have assigned the Word to the preacher and the worship to the singers and players of music,

every service. Paul commanded Timothy to see that the Scriptures were read in public (1 Timothy 4:13). There are many ways to read Scripture in the service:

- Worship team members are often good readers.
- Songs taken from Scripture lend themselves to combining the source and song.
- Cast actors as prophets, psalmists, apostles, and characters in biblical narratives.
- Video presentations of Scripture readings with music and images can bring out meaning and add emotional impact.
- Responsive congregation recitation is an ancient and powerful method.
- Calls to worship from the Psalms and New Testament doxological passages are effective.

You can enrich corporate prayer by the use of common prayers. Provide scriptural prayers of intercession and agreement in public worship for use



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# IT ADDS UP:

## COLOSSIANS AS A GUIDE *for* DISCIPLING PEOPLE TOWARD HOLINESS

BY JENNIFER GALE

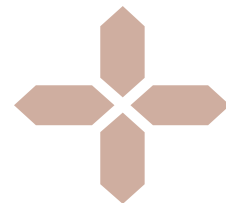
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Numerous barriers exist to corporate holiness. However, there are two areas that are becoming critical barriers in our modern society.

*"We proclaim him,  
admonishing and teaching everyone  
with all wisdom,  
so that we may present everyone  
perfect in Christ.  
To this end I labor,  
struggling with all his energy which so  
powerfully works in me"  
(Colossians 1:28,29).*

**I** am a numbers person. As a sophomore college student, I needed one more class to maintain my on-campus status. I chose Calculus II. (I was saved a few months later in a Sunday morning service, but I don't think the two were related.)

My love for numbers continues. This year our church staff redoubled its effort to get a handle



on attendance trends. I volunteered for the job. One of the highlights on Monday morning is plugging the numbers into my Excel spreadsheet.

### Math and Ministry?

Ministry and math usually have little to do with one another outside of service attendance and budget reports. When we work with people, the variables are numerous. Ministry provides little comfort for those who find rest in the predictability of equations or of guaranteed results. The results we are after defy quantification. How do you assign a number to a radically transformed life? To a healed addiction or reconciled marriage? To faithful service or patient endurance? And how do

you take account of what is unseen?

Much of God's transforming work takes place in the deep recesses of the heart. Out of the 168 hours in a week, the average church attendee spends most of those hours somewhere other than church. It is hard to determine spiritual growth. Even so, our God-given commission compels us to seek eternal, spiritual results for His glory. Jesus commands, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 18:19).

How do we encourage this process during the 166 hours outside of the main worship service or meeting? What would God have us do to facilitate this growth?

Before we can answer this question, we need to see how Scripture defines success in spiritual growth. Paul's letter to the Colossians provides a compelling picture of progress in holiness and

practical examples of effective discipleship toward that end.

### It Has To Add Up

The Colossian church had issues. Yet Paul directs this letter "to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse" (1:2).

Paul's choice of words is significant. From the beginning of his letter, Paul set out a truth he clearly hopes will form the basis of the Colossian church's self-understanding. In Christ, the Colossians are, in fact, holy.

Simply put, we describe holiness as a state of dedication or of being "set apart" for the work and worship of God. Holiness is also a process of separation from sin, evil, and that which is against God, and separation to all that is and of Him.

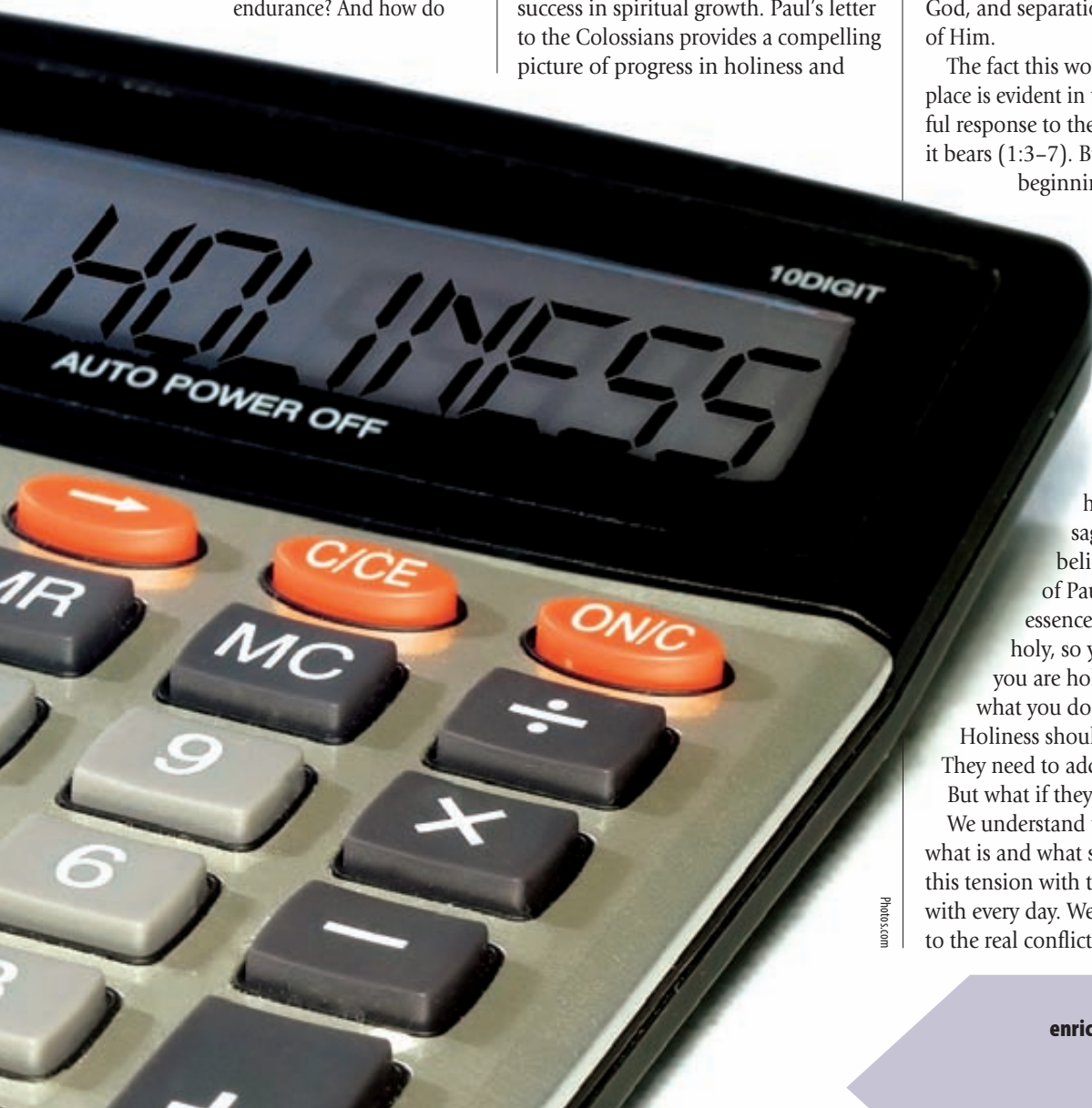
The fact this work of grace had taken place is evident in the Colossians' faithful response to the gospel and the fruit it bears (1:3-7). But holiness is just the beginning. An ethic, a moral-

ity, a way of living that centers all actions and decisionmaking in the person and work of Christ flows from a right relationship with God (1:21-23).

The message of holiness is a clear message in this letter to believers, and in many of Paul's other letters. In essence, he says, "You are holy, so you should live like you are holy. Who you are and what you do need to correspond. Holiness should equal a holy life. They need to add up."

But what if they don't?

We understand the tension between what is and what should be. We live in this tension with the people we work with every day. We get a front-row seat to the real conflict in our own hearts



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## **IT ADDS UP: COLOSSIANS AS A GUIDE FOR DISCIPLING PEOPLE TOWARD HOLINESS** (continued from page 79)

and lives. God is faithful to complete the work He began in us and in those we serve, but we know that completion is something we will only fully realize at the end of the age.

### **Key Elements in the Equation**

So how do we disciple people toward holiness every day of the week? In the Book of Colossians, we make two observations about Paul's relationship to the church that will help us.

First is Paul's commitment to the Colossians' spiritual growth. Paul is 100 percent committed to helping the Colossians fully realize and live out their hope in Christ. Remember, Paul is writing to people he has not yet met. And his commitment is not just to the Colossians, for Paul says he ministers "so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" (1:28).

God told those who were already His people, "be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44,45). The writer of Hebrews declares, "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (12:14), and Peter writes, "you ought to live holy and godly lives" (2 Peter 3:11).

The holiness of others is a worthy goal of discipleship. And yet, as a staff member whose portfolio includes discipleship, I often have more commitment to smooth-running services or productive-planning meetings than I do to the spiritual growth of those around me. Will we let the example of Paul motivate us to make holiness of others a committed priority?

Second, Paul seems to know what holiness should look like, and he was committed to seeing it in others. "Perfection" or maturity in Christ includes not only the big picture characteristics of fruitful good works, knowledge of God, great endurance, and joyful thankfulness (1:10-12), but the details of daily living (chapters 3,4).

We need to help our people understand that growth in holiness is a personal and community goal in discipleship. As we do

this, not only will we and those we serve more quickly identify areas of need, but also places of achievement and growth. But there is more to the equation.

Revisiting our earlier question, "How do we disciple people toward holiness every day of the week?" Let's look at three expressions of that commitment in Paul's ministry to the Colossians.

### **Prayer**

"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you" (1:9). "I want you to know how much I am struggling for you" (2:1).

The first expression of Paul's commitment to the Colossians' spiritual growth is seen in his persistent, personal, and proactive prayer. Paul is convinced that intercession is essential to the disciple-making process.

We know we are called to pray for others. Jesus lives to intercede for those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25). Paul understood that Jesus' followers should do the same.

Paul's intercession shows three characteristics that describe effective prayer in the disciple-making process.

**Prayer that is persistent.** Paul says he has not stopped praying. He not only prays continually for the Colossians, but for those in other churches (Ephesians 1:15-23 and 1 Thessalonians 1:2,3, for example).

How much of our current prayer time do we spend in prayer for the holiness of others?

**Prayer that is personal.** Colossians 1:3-8 reveals Paul's intimate knowledge of the church's situation with prayer that reflects their true spiritual need.

We rarely know of this kind of need outside of relationship. How well do we know the people we serve?

**Prayer that is proactive.** Paul's letter to the Colossians may have been reactive, but his prayers were not. In praying for their growth in holiness and faith, Paul looks ahead, taking the initiative to ask God for their essential needs.

Much of our prayer for people is reactive. We pray for health crises, relational struggles, and so on. What would happen if we began to pray proactively? Would those we serve respond differently to the crisis of tomorrow because we prayed for their spiritual growth today? These are tough questions that should challenge us in the area of disciple-making prayer.

Some say Paul's use of the word *struggle* in 2:1 must refer to his Spirit-empowered battle in prayer against evil spiritual forces on behalf of the Colossians (see Ephesians 6:12). Since Paul wrote to the Colossians from prison, likely his struggle is in the spiritual realm of prayer.

Prayer acknowledges that spiritual growth is a spiritual work. It is partnering with the will of God, inviting Him to do the work that only He can do. Holiness is ultimately the work of God (Exodus 31:13; Romans 15:16).

### **Prayer + Proclamation**

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" (1:28).

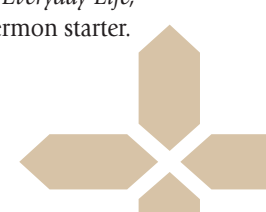
To prayer we must add another practical expression of Paul's commitment to the Colossians: proclaiming Christ.

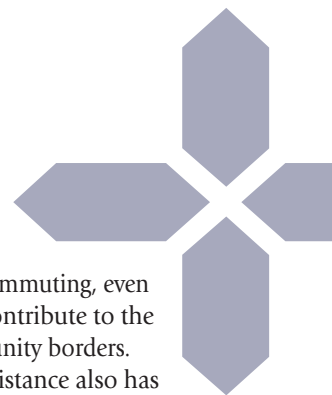
Though he did not know them personally, he had the Colossian believers in mind (2:1-6). And he preached with a goal of producing results (1:28).

We want our proclamation to make a difference in the character and quality of the lives of those who hear. But that will only happen if we start with the end in mind. This is intentional proclamation.

How do we want our people to look? How do we want ourselves to look, spiritually speaking?

One resource is the classic *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges (NavPress), or the updated 2003 version, *The Chase: Pursuing Holiness in Your Everyday Life*, which can be used as a sermon starter.





Paul understood that the Colossians could overcome whatever challenge to their faith they faced if they “continued in [their] faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel” (1:23). He prayed that they might grow in the “knowledge of [God’s] will,” have “spiritual wisdom” and “understanding” (1:9, 10; 2:2).

One church I visited as a college student challenged members to memorize the pastor’s text that week and test themselves the next week by repeating the passage to an elder. I only attended services over Christmas break, but I still know Psalm 1 by heart.

to include relationship that involves meaningful presence. Jesus’ close-up-and-personal method of discipleship is ideal. God builds His church through relationship. When thinking about holiness, how better to disciple someone in this area than to take the journey together?

Maybe this is the best place to start — inviting someone on the journey toward holiness with us. Walk through *The Pursuit of Holiness* together.

We see Paul’s commitment to the Colossians’ spiritual growth in his presence. Paul was so invested in the Colossians’ faith walk that all would agree he

available housing, commuting, even social networking contribute to the expansion of community borders.

Presence from a distance also has implications for recognizing and training those whose ministry is physically present. Sunday School teachers, small group leaders, even family members are present when we are not. Through them and their discipleship ministry of prayer, proclamation, and presence, we can, by extension, disciple people toward holiness.

Holiness is lived out and realized in community (3:1 through 4:1). And as much as leading the people of God involves administration, the imagery of the shepherd who knows his sheep is still relevant. Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, would not have promised, “And surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

**Paul was so invested in the Colossians’ faith walk that all would agree he was right to claim, “I am present with you in Spirit.”**

Another church I know uses the Sunday morning text as a launching pad for in-depth Bible study in Sunday morning classes and midweek groups.

All of this matters because the Word of God is living and active (Hebrews 4:12), God-breathed, and useful for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

If our proclamation leads people to continually engage the Word of God, we can be assured of coming closer to a formula for discipling people toward holiness.

But there’s one more element to consider.

### **Prayer + Proclamation + Presence**

“For though I am absent from you in body I am present with you in Spirit” (2:5).

The final expression of Paul’s commitment to the Colossians’ spiritual growth is seen in his presence.

When we talk about ways in which we disciple people toward holiness, we need

was right to claim, “I am present with you in Spirit.”

You might say Paul was present from a distance. He may not have known the Colossian believers’ names, but he knew people who knew their names. He might not have been there to hear their prayer requests, but he was so connected to their lives through mutual friends that he knew their needs.

The idea of presence from a distance has relevance for us today because community borders are expanding. Without concerted effort, some of us are unlikely to be physically present among those we serve throughout the week. Mobility,

### **Prayer + Proclamation + Presence = ?**

When we study Paul’s passionate commitment to the Colossian church, we see a pattern for discipleship that makes prayer, proclamation, and presence a priority for discipling people toward holiness.

Our challenge is to allow God’s commitment to His people and His desire for the holiness of His people to become our priority; then, to allow that priority to shape our prayer, proclamation, and presence throughout the week.

The good news is that we do this not in our own strength, but with all of His energizing energy that works so powerfully in us (1:29).

Even if we can’t plug numbers into Excel. ☺



**JENNIFER GALE** is vice president of Student Life, Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.



# CULTIVATING A HEART for HOLINESS

BY CHERYL BRIDGES JOHNS

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In a sinful world, how is it possible to live a life of personal holiness?  
The journey calls for the reshaping of our affections.



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**A** holy person is beautiful. Such a person seems to have an inner light that radiates through her countenance. She has a power of attraction, drawing others into the presence of God and magnifying the beauty of holiness.

At the same time holy people reflect an otherness that can be somewhat disconcerting. By their nature they expose the profane as a contrast to the holy. Their light reveals the ugliness of the darkness that permeates a sinful world.

I know such people. They come from a variety of callings and traditions: a missionary to the Arabs in the Middle East, a Franciscan monk, prayer warriors in my church, my mother-in-law known for her healing prayers. We do not reserve this type of enchanted life, however, for a few saints or superhero Christians. Scripture is clear that holiness is normative for all Christians, for without holiness “no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

In spite of the biblical admonitions toward holiness, much of Protestant theology, with its overemphasis upon forensic justification and imputed righteousness, has created a Christian culture of sinful people. This arises from failure to see the full gospel — one that brings about actual transformation. Such failure causes many Christians — even Spirit-filled ones — to believe that holiness is not necessary. They are content to remain sinners saved by grace but not transformed by that grace. The popular bumper sticker: “Christians are not perfect; just forgiven,” sums up this concept.

Because of this truncated understanding of salvation, too many believers do not see a life of holiness as necessary for their Christian journey. They are content to live in the shadowlands of a profane culture, making excuses for besetting sins. As a consequence, their witness is weak and a lack of power marks their journey.

Profane Christians are not beautiful. Their bumper stickers do not attract others to the light of God. Rather, they





hinder the message that Jesus came to save, heal, and deliver all creation from its bondage to sin.

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus made it possible for humankind to be rejoined in fellowship with the Creator. Moreover, by His grace, God is at work reclaiming all creation. This work of reclamation is not merely glossing over sin, but it involves transformation to the extent that there is deliverance and healing. Jesus came to deliver us from evil not merely to give us a “get out of hell card.” In other words, salvation is the healing of broken creation. That which sin marred can once again flourish. Lives broken by addictions can become beautiful vessels of holy presence. Such is the power of the gospel.

But, in a sinful world, how is it possible to live a life of personal holiness? How do we cultivate such a life? Be fair warned: the journey into holiness is not easy. It calls for the reshaping of our affections. This reshaping involves a continual dialectic of crisis and development that takes us from grace into ever-deepening grace. There is great joy

in holiness. There is wonder and beauty.

## The Core of Holiness: the Affections

Affections are the core of who we are. They express the disposition of the heart, which, in the words of Steven Land “order all the powers of emotion, perception, will, and understanding.”<sup>1</sup> The affections thus involve our mind as well as our emotions. They are deep and abiding dispositions that determine the direction of our lives. Through our affections we express our desires. Through our affections we show who and what we love. Our affections reveal the nature of our heart.

The journey into holiness is thus a journey of our affections. It is our journey into desiring God. Through this journey we learn to love as God loves and to desire what is holy. The more we abide in and with a holy God the more we are transformed into the likeness of God. Bottom line: holiness is a love relationship. It is about having a heart on fire with godly love.

## Cultivating Holiness: Crisis

The heart is not easily set on fire with godly love because the affections of our heart are deceitful. Indeed, sin has wounded the core of our being. As a consequence, we often desire those things that are contrary to the kingdom of God. These things wound our affections, distorting them toward the profane. Our wounded desire must be healed and restored toward godly love and this restoration requires costly

grace. It requires a death.

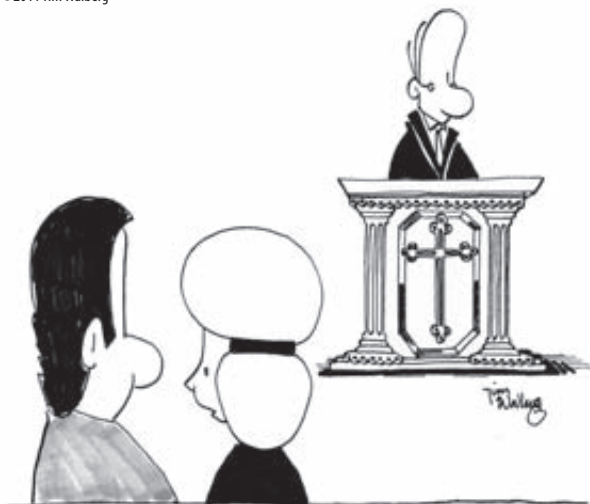
Jesus, in His discipleship of the Twelve, made it clear that life in the Kingdom involved death, not only His death, but the death of His followers. The journey into personal holiness begins with death of self. It involves purging our claims to self-gratification, self-glory, and self-direction. Crisis, then, is the necessary starting point for cultivating a life of holiness. It involves what John Wesley called the “circumcision of the heart,” cutting away those affections that are not godly. Crisis both begins the journey into holiness and is an ongoing part of the journey.

People do not easily receive this message, for everywhere we turn we hear that it is all about us. Our culture of narcissism tells us we are the center of our lives and we deserve only the best life has to offer. Even Christians have bought this message, thinking that the beautiful life offered by the world is the same as the wondrous beauty of a sanctified life.

One clear message of the Azusa Street Revival was that the power of the Holy Spirit came only to those who were willing to die to self. In the course of seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit many came into the fires of sanctification. Consider the testimony of Adolph Rosa, an evangelist from the Cape Verde Islands who came to Azusa Street: “The power of God came upon me until I dropped to the floor. I was under the power of God for about an hour and a half, and it was there that all pride, and self, and conceit disappeared, and I was really dead to the world, for I had Christ within in His fullness (sic).”<sup>2</sup>

The type of crisis experience described above is not the end point of holiness. Rather, it is the beginning of a journey characterized by both crisis and development. Crisis breaks things open so the Holy Spirit can show us our true selves, the world, and God in a new way. By the power of God’s in-breaking grace we are able to receive both the judging and

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“For some reason I thought his sermon was going to be more elaborate.”

healing aspects of grace. We can say then that crisis is necessary and good for us.

becomes the center of our affections, it transforms us into the nature of the

**Many Christians — even Spirit filled ones — believe that holiness is not necessary. They are content to remain sinners saved by grace but not transformed by that grace.**

## Cultivating Holiness: Development

While crisis is necessary toward sanctification, there is the need to weave crisis experiences into a patterned and disciplined life. The development of holiness takes shape by abiding in Scripture, living in Christian community, and practicing Christian disciplines. Each component: Scripture, community, and the disciplines serve to create in us holiness.

**Abiding in Scripture:** One important component toward cultivating a heart for holiness is Bible study. The reason some Christians neglect this practice today is that they have not placed the Bible at the center of their affections. Eugene Peterson observes that that “text” of the “sovereign self” is the one most read by Americans. This “text” is ruled by what he calls a “new trinity” of “needs, wants, and feelings,” and it competes with the biblical text for authorial power in the lives of Christians. This new trinity produces the fruit of consumption and acquisition.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, we might safely say that this new text eschews the idea of holiness. More and more Christians live by this text, and as a consequence, cheap substitutes replace holiness.

But the Bible takes us into another realm. It reveals the life of a Triune God who makes known His presence through His Word. When this Word

divine life. We cannot separate God’s Word from God’s presence for the most basic metaphysical reality of the Bible is that of Spirit-Word. God’s Spirit is present in God’s Word and is active, alive, and powerful.

To read the Bible is to enter into sacred space where God speaks with authority. In this space it convicts, comforts, and transforms. Here we are to abide. Abiding in the Word means we live in the Word, taking it unto ourselves, making it our food for daily living. As we eat this Word, it transforms us. We begin to radiate its message not merely apply its message.

**Christian community:** Holiness is not a solitary experience. It is forged within the grace of community. Many only attend a worship service once a week. A weekly worship service does not provide enough visible expressions of grace necessary for our ongoing transformation. We need to form connections with believers who will love us, hold us accountable, pray for us, and journey with us into deeper holiness.

John Wesley understood the need for discipleship that helped transformed lives move into their journey of grace. Because of his concern that many of his converts “grew cold, and gave way to the sins which had long easily beset them,” he created class meetings, bands, and other forms of discipleship.<sup>4</sup> These

groups enabled believers to bear one another’s burdens, exhort one another, and hold each other accountable. They were means wherein the grace of God would flow in and through the church. The more we are together, the stronger we become both individually and communally.

**Practicing the disciplines:** The disciplines are structured means whereby we pattern transformation into our daily lives. They make real the profession of our faith. The disciplines in themselves do not make us holy. But, as Richard Foster observes, the disciplines put us where God can “work within us and transform us. ... They are means of God’s grace.”<sup>5</sup> Foster describes several disciplined means of grace: meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. Each discipline serves as a unique avenue for ongoing transformation.

Pentecostals have found that prayer, fasting, service, and worship are especially efficacious in cultivating a heart of holiness. Prayer takes believers into the presence of God. It is the means of developing intimate communion with Him. Holy people are people of prayer. Foster observes that prayer “is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives.”<sup>6</sup>

Forms of prayer include: adoration, intercession, thanksgiving, healing, and confession, to name a few. Whatever form, prayer shapes the affections toward godly love. Each form of prayer uniquely transforms our affections. Confessional prayer keeps believers in a posture of ongoing repentance and submission. To live a life of penitent prayer is to live with the door of our affections always open to hearing and responding to the Word of God.

Fasting is a powerful discipline. Fasting exposes the inner desires of our heart. These desires are often hidden, and





through fasting we are able to see more clearly. We can see how much we crave food, things, pleasures of this world, and how little we hunger for those things that are eternal.

While fasting from food is the most common practice, there are other types of fasts. During Lent (the time between Ash Wednesday and Easter) I try, as much as possible, to fast from media. This journey into Lenten silence calls me to give up TV, radio, Facebook, etc. I try to go deeper into the stillness of God's presence. I am addicted to the sights and sounds of technology. But, as the days go by, I find delight in free space created by unplugging. There is rest from the tyranny of technology and here I find rest in the presence of God.

overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind."<sup>8</sup>

Self-righteous service, on the other hand, promotes pride. In this type of service there is a focus on honor and external rewards. Ministers are especially prone to the temptation toward self-righteous service. Frequently, people praise their good works. If they are not diligent, they begin to believe the reports of others. Egos become inflated and the good works that are done become counterproductive toward a heart of holiness. Cultivating a life of holiness means that laity and ministers alike serve out of hearts aflame with godly love. Holy affections produce a missional heart.

age to come. They are transformed more into the likeness of this glory. They are filled with passion for the Kingdom.

## Conclusion: A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life

The postmodern world is hungry for the authentic and real. People long to see a profoundly beautiful life that images the genuine over against the fake. Such lives are possible if we are willing to pay the price. We pay that price in the fires of death to self. We cultivate it through the practices of abiding in Scripture and living faithfully in community. We further shape it through the disciplines of prayer, fasting, worship, and service. This is the life that is to come when the glory of the Lord shall fill the whole earth. We are now in the ready room for that time. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to dress us as the beautiful bride so when our Lord appears we will not be found wanting. ☺

**People long to see a profoundly beautiful life that images the genuine over against the fake.**

Service is a necessary discipline toward a life of holiness. We cannot be holy and not serve others. Foster contrasts what he calls "self-righteous service" with "true service." He notes that true service is a lifestyle that does not seek self-glory. It is fueled by the grace of humility. As we live in the grace of humility "deep change occurs in our spirit."<sup>7</sup> Serving others transforms inordinate desires and affections. Becoming a true servant means we learn to put aside our desires and agendas for the good of others. William Law, whose life and writings greatly impacted 18<sup>th</sup>-century England, wrote in his book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, a beautiful description of true service: "condescend to all the weaknesses and infirmities of your fellow-creatures, cover their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship,

The discipline of worship has been central to Pentecostal spirituality. It has shaped our affections with passion for the Kingdom. Land observes that in Spirit-filled worship "praise and proclamation, the presence of Jesus and the Spirit, and the affections in Christ and the power of the Spirit are all fused in a call to Christian character and vocation."<sup>9</sup> This unique fusion transcends time and space, bringing worshipers into the presence of God. True worship exalts the beauty of holiness. It images the nature of the coming Kingdom. As believers participate in this sacred space, they taste the wonder and beauty of the

## NOTES

1. Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 133.
2. Cecil M. Roebeck, Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2006), 178.
3. Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 32.
4. See Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1980).
5. Richard Foster, *The Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 6.
6. *Ibid.*, 30.
7. *Ibid.*, 113.
8. William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (Nashville: The Upper Room Press, 1952), 26. Quoted in Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 114.
9. Land, 129.



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LEADERSHIP

SPANISH



**R**ecently, a megachurch pastor who is married with children admitted he is gay. Several young men publicly accused another well-known pastor of sexual abuse. A male prostitute publicly admitted sexual involvement with a well-known leader, author, and pastor. A prominent televangelist admitted to an affair. From biblical times until now, some people who profess to be Christ's followers have committed unexplainable and devastating sins.

When Christian leaders fail, the negative effect on the church is multiplied exponentially. These failures undermine the global confidence of spiritual leadership. Their unwise behavior lessens the influence of the church as a moral authority.

Corporate holiness is a significant challenge within and beyond Pentecostal churches. The loss of holiness is not due to doctrinal inadequacies, scriptural deficiencies, or leadership ineptness. The loss of holiness stems from the absence of core persuasions and beliefs that transcend the cultural morass of immorality and promiscuity.

The Bible is clear regarding God's will for those who have made Jesus Lord of their life: "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15,16). Holiness is an attribute possessed by God, essential to His nature, and an expected discipline of those who confess Christ as Lord.

To be biblically accurate, holiness is not an experience, status, or recognition. It is a distinct discipline that results in a God-reflecting quality. The indwelling nature of God through the Holy Spirit brings transformation. Thus, we may better understand holiness as a progressive manifestation of the Holy Spirit's indwelling.

Holiness begins with the decision to accept Christ and develops into a discipline from a Christ-centered life. Holiness is more than a standard of

# MOVING BEYOND *the* BARRIERS: RESTORING CORPORATE HOLINESS

BY L. ALTON GARRISON

Numerous barriers exist to corporate holiness. However, there are two areas that are becoming critical barriers in our modern society.

behavior; it is a measure of discipline and maturity. Holiness, in its most pragmatic form, is the character of Christ.

How do I become holy and develop a greater discipline of holiness? The Bible is clear that righteousness is a direct result of forgiveness (Romans 3:22; 5:17). Holiness, however, is a spiritual discipline that we pursue. Holiness is intentional. It begins with grace but is completed through maturity. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord" (NLT<sup>1</sup>). The apostle Paul described the work of the Holy Spirit: "And we all ... beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18, ESV<sup>2</sup>).

Simply put, the more we behold Him, the more we become like Him. The more we become like Him, the more we beam Him to others. This process is transforming

us into what Peter describes as "a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9). As we journey forward, the Holy One transforms us to reflect the fullness of His character.

According to some, however, the transformed life of holiness is not a private matter: "In the Bible, the 'holy one' (saint) is not an individual with a halo. In fact, except for God and Jesus, the term never occurs in the singular.

"On the contrary, *holiness is always social*, something we ultimately must enter into along with others. John Wesley was well aware of this: 'The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness.'

"Not only are we meant to be in the company of others to grow in holiness, the families, races, and nations that result from our being together are tools designed by God to implement His purposes. God calls us ... His 'holy nation.'"<sup>3</sup>

The one stark purpose of the church







## MOVING BEYOND THE BARRIERS: RESTORING CORPORATE HOLINESS (continued from page 88)



is to demonstrate God's "manifold wisdom" to demonic principalities and authorities (Ephesians 3:10). Satan knows that if he can derail the church from the path toward holiness, he can thwart the ultimate purpose of the church. Satan cannot stop the manifold wisdom of God through the church; therefore, he is determined to discredit it. Corporate holiness places hell at an extreme disadvantage. Likewise, the absence of corporate holiness places the church at an extreme disadvantage.

The purpose of this article is to help us rediscover the core beliefs and convictions that can save our spiritual calling from public shame while protecting the church from the repudiation associated with failure. The Pentecostal Movement seeks to be led by the Holy Spirit; it cannot embrace Spirit-led ministry while rejecting the Spirit's nature of holiness. Numerous barriers exist to corporate holiness. However, there are two areas that are becoming critical barriers in our modern society.

### Rejecting Spiritual Authority

As a district superintendent, I had the unfortunate but necessary responsibility to mediate church conflicts. I never mediated a conflict, however, that originated over doctrine. Every conflict started over personal preference. People often try to spiritualize their preferences or agenda, expecting spiritual authorities to accept unbiblical positions. When

spiritual authorities reject such positions, people often reject that spiritual authority. Paul warned of this practice in 2 Timothy 4:3,4. People will often reject truth in favor of their own opinions.

The mantra of American culture is, "I have my rights." This mantra has no biblical standing in the church. Lordship means we surrender our rights and embrace responsibilities. Maturity in a Christ-follower means releasing the right to be unforgiving, critical, reactionary, disloyal, moody, vindictive, judgmental, or divisive. When Jesus is Lord, people respond to their spiritual authorities biblically because they love God, the lost, and the church.

Although Scripture provides consistent teaching regarding spiritual authority, it is a fragile subject in many churches. When a leader teaches on lordship, submission, self-denial, and accountability, there is strong resistance from those who reject biblical and spiritual authority. Exodus 32:1-9 records how people can spiritualize an agenda or preference, thereby creating a barrier to corporate holiness.

When people lack a competent understanding of spiritual authority, they become vulnerable to deception and destruction. Understanding the need and responsibilities of spiritual authority is critical to procure holiness.

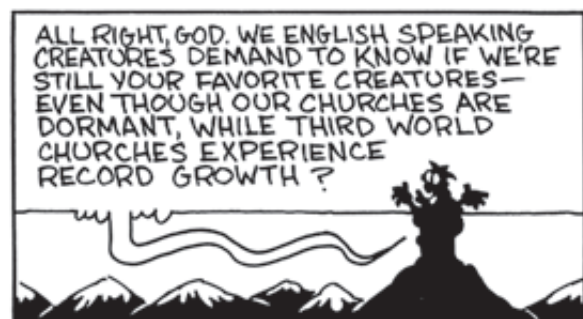
God is the absolute authority; man is a delegated authority (Romans 13:1). The church is organized as a body with

Jesus Christ as its Head, not as a corporation with Jesus Christ as its president. Christ is the Head, and those who receive salvation function under His authority. The late Adrian Rogers shares some interesting biblical observations about spiritual authority in his book, *The Incredible Power of Kingdom Authority*: "The popular idea of the church being a democracy (the rule of the people) is not found in the Bible. ... The church is a body of the Lord, by the Lord, and for the Lord. ... It is a *Christocracy*, not a democracy."<sup>4</sup> The Body is to be the servant of the One who inhabits that body. When a body is healthy, all the members have one agenda — the mission, vision, and values of the church unique to that local body.

The kingdom of heaven operates by unity, not majority. Voting on decisions that belong to spiritual authority is a poor substitute for leadership. All believers have equal value and worth before God, but not all have the same gifts and corresponding spiritual authority in the church. We must never construe anointing as authority. The presence of anointing flows under authority, not against it. There are God-given roles of ministry leadership and oversight. Personality differences should not preclude acceptance of or submission to spiritual authority (Acts 14:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:7).

God has called the pastor to guide, instruct, correct, and give pastoral care (Acts 20:28). The New Testament describes a pastor by three basic terms (Acts 20:17,28, 29; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The pastor is an elder — this speaks of maturity; the pastor is an overseer — this speaks of his or her management; and the pastor is a shepherd — this speaks of his or her ministry.<sup>5</sup>

### Pontius' Puddle



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An unscrupulous pastor/leader could possibly abuse God's system of governance; therefore, God has reserved the judgment of spiritual authorities solely for himself. Those who violate God's governing system will find themselves uncomfortable in His judgment.

Titus 2:11,12 states, "For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God" (NLT). The Bible

confidence that God can do something more with our sins than forgive them."<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, Jerry Bridges in his book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, has said: "God has made provision for our holiness and He has also given us a responsibility for it. ... Through the power of the Holy Spirit and according to the new nature He gives, we are to put to death the misdeeds of the body (Romans 8:13)."<sup>10</sup>

To move beyond the barriers to corporate holiness, we must embrace discipleship as:

**Strong emphasis on grace and soft emphasis on maturity have spawned a theological culture of holiness-neutral faith.**

### Intentional spiritual formation

Discipleship is not automatic; it is intentional. Developing strong, mature Christ-followers must be a focal objective of a missional culture. We must intertwine effective discipleship with leading people to Christ. Emerging trends highlight the need for specific, measurable goals in the area of biblical discipleship.

Greg Ogden reports: "According to George Barna, fewer than one in five born-again adults have any specific, measurable goals related to their spiritual development. Not one of the adults we interviewed said that their goal in life was to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ or to make disciples of the entire world."<sup>11</sup>

Relational influences and religious conveniences are replacing spiritual disciplines. The result is a fading biblical worldview among Christ-followers.

The church is at a critical juncture because those who claim to be Christians are not sufficiently practicing individual faith disciplines. Discipleship must become intentional. Every church or pastor can begin by:

- Teaching faith basics in a regular, systematic format.
- Promoting Bible reading and providing Bible studies.
- Communicating discipleship goals and measurements.
- Encouraging accountability.
- Correcting false understandings of the Bible.

In spite of a system that depends on delegated spiritual authorities, God has reserved and preserved this system as His choice of governance: "Obey your spiritual leaders and submit to them [continually recognizing their authority over you], for they are constantly keeping watch over your souls *and* guarding your spiritual welfare, as men who will have to render an account [of their trust]" (Hebrews 13:17, Amplified Bible<sup>6</sup>, emphasis mine).

Wisdom dictates spiritual authorities offer personal accountability to God, to their spiritual authorities, and to those they lead and serve. No spiritual authority is a law unto himself. "Being under authority is a place of privilege where the focus is service. Being in authority is a place of power where the focus is ruling."<sup>7</sup>

### Accepting Discipleship Deficiencies

A great error in discipleship is under-emphasizing spiritual maturity. Strong emphasis on grace and soft emphasis on maturity have spawned a theological culture of holiness-neutral faith. This culture views grace as the path of discovering God rather than as a process of spiritual discipleship toward maturity. Scripture clearly challenges this modern theological culture.

clearly states that as God reveals grace to us, it produces holiness through personal discipleship. Accepting grace as a "holiness-neutral faith" brings devastating consequences.

In his book, *unChristian*, David Kinaman writes: "In virtually every study we conduct, representing thousands of interviews every year, born-again Christians fail to display much attitudinal or behavioral evidence of transformed lives. ... One study we conducted examined Americans' engagement in some type of sexually inappropriate behavior, including looking at online pornography, viewing sexually explicit magazines or movies, or having an intimate sexual encounter outside of marriage. In all, we found that 30 percent of born-again Christians admitted to at least one of these activities in the past 30 days, compared with 35 percent of other Americans. In statistical and practical terms, this means the two groups are essentially no different from each other."<sup>8</sup>

Theologian W.E. Sangster said, "All through the Word of God exhortations to holiness appear. They are not sporadic, occasional, or tempered by doubt concerning God's ability to do this thing in us. Underlying them all is the





## MOVING BEYOND THE BARRIERS: RESTORING CORPORATE HOLINESS (continued from page 91)



### Understanding biblical convictions

Biblical convictions are Spirit-directed boundaries. Convictions promote spiritual growth and protect spiritual health. There are three levels of conviction: biblical absolutes (essentials), community standards (traditions), and personal convictions (declarations). Tensions develop when someone mistakes personal con-

viction for a biblical absolute and seeks to impose his conviction as a godly essential. This disturbs unity and harmony in the church body, and hinders spiritual formation. Frequently, when this occurs, people introduce a fourth level — personal preference. When personal preference replaces biblical authority, corporate holiness is rarely

the objective. The result is a lack of unity that hinders God's relationship with His people.

### Biblical Approach to Conflict Resolution

Churches often disrupted by tension, disagreements, and division lack a biblical approach to conflict resolution. Internal strife results in an inward focus. The result is a powerless church filled with gossip, unforgiveness, and division. Churches can avoid or redirect these with a proper understanding of Matthew 18. In short, this is how healthy churches and spiritually mature people deal with conflict:

- Talk to the person with whom you have a problem before you tell anyone else.
- Use feeling words, not action words. "When you did that, I felt like. ..." rather than "Why did you hurt me when. ..."
- Learn the power of the apology. Follow an apology with, "What can I do to make it right?"
- Watch voice tone and volume: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1, ESV).
- Seek the final 10 percent of truth. Get to the substance of the issue and resolve it.
- Speak words of affirmation: "Honor to whom honor is due" (Romans 13:7, Amplified Bible).
- Here is an adage that should be our goal: "Casual with all, close friends to a few, and unresolved conflict with none."

Once we have identified barriers to holiness, what is next? "The New Testament leaves no doubt that holiness is our responsibility. If we are to pursue holiness, we must take some decisive action."<sup>12</sup>

Colossians 3:5 says, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."

## WHAT EVERY PASTOR NEEDS

**Church health is an important and popular topic.** It involves much more than bodies and budgets. Money and attendance are both necessary for a church to exist. However, there are less tangible spiritual components that are just as important, if not more so.

There is more than one "right" church model. Rural churches operate differently from urban churches. Large churches are not necessarily just small churches with greater numbers. Cultures are different. Leaders have different gifts. Change occurs over time and nothing stays the same. But are there common needs that churches have? Is that possible?

In a district-wide survey we did during my tenure as district superintendent of Arkansas, we discovered that regardless of church or leader, there were eight needs common to all churches. It did not seem to matter about the church size, the age of the pastor, or the location of the ministry; these needs were universal among all Arkansas churches:

1. **Lay ministry involvement** — How to get people in the pew involved in the ministry of the church.
2. **Spiritual formation** — discipleship.
3. **Leadership skills.**
4. **Communication skills** — how to really connect with the audience.
5. **Management and administrative training.**
6. **Becoming more missional** — how to become more outward focused.
7. **Relationships** — if people don't like you, they won't follow you.
8. **Family issues** — parenting and financial needs.

Addressing these needs systematically and thoroughly through training and mentoring proved to be beneficial to the ministers and helpful for the churches.

— L. ALTON GARRISON





### Action Steps:

- Submit to the lordship of Jesus.
- Worship sincerely.
- Grow and change.
- Fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.
- Build a spiritually healthy church. Acts 2:42–47 outlines the functions of the church necessary for its effectiveness: evangelism, discipleship, worship, service, and fellowship.

The last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21,22, depict the goal of a holy God — to create a holy city for a holy people. As we remove barriers to holiness and seek the Holy Spirit's involvement, we will become the church of Jesus Christ, one without spot or wrinkle. Holiness is not a burden; it is our destiny. 🙏

### NOTES

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2. Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version, copyright © 2001, Wheaton: Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
3. Alan Kreider, *Social Holiness* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 2008), 47.
4. Adrian Rogers, *The Incredible Power of Kingdom Authority* (Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, 2002), 170–71.
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6. Scripture quotations marked The Amplified Bible or The Amplified New Testament are taken from The Amplified

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7. Malcolm Burleigh, "The Power of Being Under," 12.07.2010 sermon, Assemblies of God Chapel, Springfield, Missouri.
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12. Bridges, 83



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The urban crises that demand attention from the church and from faith-based agencies are spiritual problems that require spiritual solutions.

# HOLINESS *in the* CITY

BY GEORGE DALLAS MCKINNEY

**T**he city represents people with power and holy potential. People can be the glory or the shame of the universe. They reflect the glory of God when they practice compassion,

righteousness, and justice. But they reflect Satan's damnable influence when they live in selfishness, greed, and unbelief. Biblically and historically, the city has been a visible expression of peoples' rejection of God's authority,

power, and sovereignty.

Yet, the city dweller is not exempt from God's demand for holiness. God destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because He could not find 10 holy, righteous citizens there

(Genesis 18:16–33). God sent the prophet Jonah to the wicked city of Nineveh with a message of judgment (Jonah 3:1–5). God cancelled His judgment and wrath when the king and people of Nineveh turned from sin to righteousness, from ungodliness to holiness (Jonah 3:6–10).

In Luke 19:41,42, Jesus wept over the wicked city of Jerusalem. The pain, suffering, and death resulting from their rejection of God's offer of salvation and holiness for all the people broke Jesus' heart. Jesus wept as He considered the spiritual, social, and economic conditions then present in Jerusalem. God's plans and provisions were for a holy and just city under His authority.

The good news is God has made a way for whoever will believe to return to the family of God and experience the blessedness of holiness. This extends even to those in cities, despite their corruption and poverty and despite their magnificence and wealth.

### Urban Crises

The urban crises that demand attention from the church and from faith-based agencies are spiritual problems that require spiritual solutions. While we may analyze each of the problems from social, political, and economic perspectives, the desired changes will occur only when there is an application of spiritual truth.

Take, for example, the problem of fatherlessness. The absent father is a manifestation of the fact human beings have rejected God's plan for families to be led by fathers and mothers. For more than 60 years the welfare system in the United States promoted fatherlessness, and the church was generally silent. When fathers are absent, mothers and children suffer.

The church cannot ignore its responsibility to train boys to become men who are willing to accept the responsibility of becoming a father. Nor can the church ignore its responsibility to train girls to become women who are willing

to accept the responsibility of becoming a mother. The church's ministries must also encourage and equip men to fulfill their roles as fathers and husbands, and to encourage and equip women to fulfill their roles as mothers and wives.

beliefs, values, and practices into what they say.

All participants in public debate and policymaking have presuppositions, assumptions, and axioms, regardless of whether they base them on faith. People need to hear Christian voices

**The urban crises that demand attention from the church and from faith-based agencies are spiritual problems that require spiritual solutions.**

By addressing the problem of fatherlessness, the church will at the same time be addressing the problem of violence, especially gang violence. Gangs and violent activities are manifestations of the absence of strong family connection, resulting from fatherlessness, and the frustration caused by unfulfilled needs. Certainly the urban crisis related to fatherlessness, violence, and especially gang violence is complex, requiring extended study and multiple means of resolution. Churches, however, must become actively involved in ministering to those in need and in advocating personal, social, and institutional changes necessary for addressing the complexity of the problems.

Another crisis we cannot afford to ignore is the growing culture of death through abortion and euthanasia. Abortions are brutal and immoral; late-term abortions, in particular, are barbaric. To be sure, the issues related to abortion as well as to euthanasia are as complex as other urban crises. We must always be careful in the public arena to share ideas humbly, yet persuasively. Christians need not fear participating in public debate and policymaking simply because they are Christians and integrate their

that are informed, interdisciplinary, and persuasive. They need to hear such voices because of the seriousness and multifaceted nature of the problems involved. Abortion, for example, is a blatant denial of the sacredness of life. The church and those who represent life must be clear in their message that human life is sacred, and that the lives of the unborn are precious in God's sight.

The education of our children must also be high on our agenda. The church, home, and school must work together in the reestablishment and maintenance of quality education. Ignorance and simplistic ways of viewing things should not hamstring people, especially children who live in urban settings. Promoting quality education helps remedy a variety of related urban crises, just as failing to promote it helps exacerbate them. For example, we can correlate the failing urban schools with the growing prison population. Such ought not to be the case. When promoting education for our children, we should endeavor to address the multiplicity of problems associated with urban life.

What is the fundamental nature of the human predicament? A traditional Christian response is the problem of



sin. Perhaps this response, more than any other, encapsulates biblical teaching about that which troubles people in the present and damns them in the afterlife. Although the problem of sin may represent the fundamental predicament people encounter, there are other things that exacerbate problems in their lives. People also struggle with their finitude — their limitations as creatures, restricted by space and time. Foremost among their limitations is their ignorance of so much about themselves, the world in which they live, and, of course, God. People are also limited, to varying degrees, by the misery they experience due to challenges of various natures: physical, mental, emotional, relational, political, economic, and so on. Such challenges, too, prevent people from flourishing with the goodness, holiness, and happiness God intends.

Finally, people find themselves subject to various forms of bondage. Biblically and historically, people thought about such bondage in terms of demonic oppression or possession. However, it might also occur as physiological or psychological bondage to drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, violence, and so on. Such forms of bondage may be

just as detrimental to living lives pleasing to God and being in a right relationship with God as demonic oppression.

Cities seem to be detrimental to people in terms of living lives pleasing to God. There are various reasons for this. The problems people experience seem to compound when they occur in proximity with a large number of other people. The problems also compound qualitatively. City life also poses a unique challenge to being a Christian and a church, especially as cities grow in size and complexity. The sum of the problems seems to be greater than the mere sum of individual problems, concerns, and difficulties. Truly the crises cities face increase, rather than decrease, with the passage of time and the growth in the number of large cities, and their overall size.

### The Role of Churches

Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18,19, alluding to Isaiah 61:1,2).

Christians and churches need to follow this example of Jesus Christ. Christians and churches are called to proclaim the good news — the gospel, the evangel (*euangelion*) — of Jesus and of salvation. To whom are they primarily to preach? The poor.

This preferential option for the poor seems to be a common theme in Scripture. It does

not neglect the needs of others — those who were not poor at the time of Jesus, and those who are not poor today. Jesus, however, emphasizes over and over how believers are to place primacy on ministering to those who are impoverished. Churches need to be advocates on their behalf just as much as they need to fulfill compassionate ministries for the poor.

What does holiness demand of Christians? What does holiness demand of churches, especially those in cities? Certainly it includes being set apart, which is stated over and over in Scripture (e.g., Leviticus 11:44; Romans 12:1,2; 1 Peter 1:16). It includes being compassionate toward those in need, physically as well as spiritually. Holiness, however, also demands that Christians and churches be concerned about the righteousness of God and to withstand that which is sinful, evil, and unjust. If Christians and churches are to be truly loving and compassionate toward their neighbors, they need to become increasingly concerned about, informed of, and proactive about dealing with the causes of injustice as well as caring for the victims of individuals who have gone astray. Injustice can be due to society problems over which individuals have little or no control. Such problems can also be due to institutional sin, evil, and injustice, which can be just as pervasive and detrimental to people.

If Christians want to minister holistically to people in cities, they need to be as “wise as serpents” in withstanding sin, evil, and injustice in its many manifestations (Matthew 10:16, KJV). We must get to the root of people’s problems and not just minister to their symptoms. We must become more aware of the various ways people become impoverished physically and spiritually. Then we must become proactive in dealing with every dimension of their impoverishment.

We find more impoverished people in cities than anywhere else. Moreover, their problems are increasing numerically

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**“Yeah, that figures. I just got my prescription refilled for 6 months.”**



as well as in complexity. Churches cannot afford to shy away from their responsibilities for emulating the beliefs, values, and practices of Jesus. Just as Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor, He also wanted to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to those who are oppressed. These are real, concrete problems for which Jesus was concerned. They are problems that Christians too often overlook as incurable or unimportant,

particularly as compared to the loftier spiritual goals reminiscent of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19,20).

Certainly the Great Commission represents a great priority Jesus left the disciples. However, it does not take away from the holistic approach to ministry that He emulated in His life through His preaching, teaching, and advocacy for the poor. Such advocacy is especially needed on behalf of the urban crises facing Christians and non-

Christians in cities today. Jesus did not just minister to the spiritual needs of people, He also ministered on behalf of what held them captive — socially, politically, economically, ethnically, linguistically, spiritually, and demonically. Jesus ministered so people who are blind — one way or another — might see. He ministered so people who are oppressed — one way or another — might be free.

These ministries of Jesus are not just holistic; they reflect the holiness of God and the holiness to which God calls people. We do not generally think of cities as places conducive to the cultivation or flourishing of God's holiness, much less as places conducive to wholeness, health, and the flourishing God intends for everyone. However, hindrances that cities pose to the salvation, holiness, wholeness, health, and flourishing that God intends should not prevent Christians — individually and collectively — from ministering, advocating, and hoping for those ends.

By the grace of God there is always reason to hope. Such hope is not unwarranted for cities. On the contrary, God promises greater grace where the needs are greatest. There is no lack of spiritual empowerment for those who minister in cities. They will need it, given the extensive needs of people who live there.

### Historical Precedents

Historical precedents are not lacking of Christians and churches wishing to minister effectively to cities. In the Bible, most ministries took place in the large urban centers of the ancient world: Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. Certainly first-century Christians were aware of the needs of city dwellers. Subsequent developments in church history continued to occur in and around urban centers. Never have Christians been unaware of the neediness of people living in cities. As the church developed, there were times when the mission of

■ Psalm 12:5: "Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the Lord. "I will protect them from those who malign them."

■ Psalm 72:12–14: "For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight."

■ Psalm 109:31: "For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save his life from those who condemn him."

■ Psalm 146:5–9: "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them — the Lord, who remains faithful forever. He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked."

■ Proverbs 22:22,23: "Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, for the Lord will take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them."

■ Proverbs 28:27: "He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses."

■ Isaiah 1:17: "'Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.'"

■ Jeremiah 22:3: "This is what the Lord says: 'Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.'"

■ 2 Corinthians 9:9: "'He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.'"

■ Galatians 2:10: "All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."



the church included missionary and other ministries that reached out to smaller communities and countries that were less developed. However, seldom were such outreaches far from nearby urban centers. On the contrary, the mission of the church throughout human history has been inextricably bound up with urban settings.

Sometimes Christians and churches understood God's call to holiness to be a call to oppose the world — to withdraw from the cultural influences as well as the sins, evils, and injustices. H. Richard Niebuhr documents such views in his book *Christ and Culture*.<sup>1</sup> Yet Niebuhr also documents the views of Christians and churches that take active roles in engaging the world with its many challenges to God and God's will. Some try to find a synthesis between the beliefs, values, and practices of Christianity with those of the world and of culture, in its various manifestations. Other Christians and churches engage it paradoxically, recognizing the tension between the two; still others seek to transform it.

Christians and churches, of course, are not always consistent in terms of how they engage the world and culture. However, we need engagement for the sake of holiness more than withdrawal. If Christians and churches want to minister effectively to cities, they need to develop theologies and praxis that supports their proactive engagement.

Christians and churches cannot neglect the holistic approach to ministry that Jesus embodied — the physical and spiritual needs of people — that are especially evident in cities today. If Jesus promoted care for the poor of the world, there is no better place for Christians and churches to be at work than in urban settings. Nowhere else are the needs greater, and nowhere else can Christians and churches better fulfill Jesus' calling to salvation, holiness, and health than in cities.

## Conclusion

The city represents people with holy

potential. Cities and the people who live in them can reflect the glory of God when they practice compassion, righteousness, and justice. If, however, they live in selfishness, greed, and unbelief, they live for themselves. They are lacking in love and are characterized by lawlessness and injustice; they are susceptible to various forms of personal, social, and demonic bondage that enslave every aspect of their lives, individually and collectively. Too often cities have accentuated the plight of humanity, literally and symbolically, as visible expressions of people's rejection of God's authority, power, and sovereignty.

however, is also already present. It is present in individual Christians; it is present collectively in churches; it is present in ministries on behalf of the physical and spiritual needs of people; and it is present in cities, though not yet perfectly.

Far from being perfect, cities seem at times impregnable bastions, resistant to the ministrations of God, churches, and Christians. It is easy to become discouraged, complacent, or neglectful of the needs of urban centers. Yet God loves people in cities. Indeed, since God has special care of those who are impoverished, He has special care for those

**Nowhere else can Christians and churches better fulfill Jesus' calling to salvation, holiness, and health than in cities.**

The good news, however, is that God has neither neglected humanity nor cities. God has provided ways for whoever will believe to return to the family of God — the church — and experience the blessedness of holiness, individually and collectively. This good news extends to cities as well as to individuals. Christians and churches need to work with the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit for the sake of those in need, especially those in cities. It is no accident that the Bible visualizes heaven as a heavenly city — "the Holy City, the new Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:2).

The fullness of God's kingdom will occur in the future; God's kingdom,

in cities. Christians and churches must diligently work on behalf of those in cities, ministering to their social, political, economic, ethnic, and spiritual needs.

As we minister, we demonstrate our love toward the unique needs of those who live in cities, and we reflect the holistic and holy ministry Jesus embodied and promoted. By the grace of God and through the obedience of Christians and churches great things will happen for the sake of God's kingdom that will extend to cities as well as to the uttermost parts of the world. ☪

## NOTE

1. See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956).



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# THE THREE PILLARS OF JESUS' FAITH

## Introduction

**Identify the three spiritual practices you feel are essential for a Christian.** Place them in order of importance, with the first being most important. Keep this list handy.

During the first century, Jewish sages frequently summarized the essence of faith (cf. Luke 10:25–28), indentifying the heart of what God desires. In the Old Testament, the prophet Micah proclaimed, “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord requires of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

In the New Testament (Matthew 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–34; Luke 10:25–28), Jesus and others summarized the Law in the two commandments, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5), and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18).<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, Paul (Romans 13:8–10; Galatians 5:14) and James (2:8) both identified Leviticus 19:18 as the ultimate summation of the commandments.

The second century A.D. sage Rabbi Akiva called Leviticus 19:18, “The great commandment in the Torah” (*Sifra* on Leviticus 19:18). In addition to those who highlighted one or two of the commandments from the Old Testament as the summation of the Torah, others identified spiritual practices as the foundations for the life of faith.

Shimon the Just, a priest, said, “Upon three things the world is based: upon the Torah (i.e., Torah study), upon the Temple service, and upon deeds of loving kindness (i.e., the practice of charity” (*m. Avot* 1:2). Two things stand out about Shimon’s statement: 1) Shimon elevated the study of Torah above (or on par with) the temple service (this was a major step within Judaism), and 2) the order in which he put these three actions. The order identifies the priority of importance of the three activities. Thus, for Shimon, Torah study was most important followed by temple service and then the practice of charity.



Another sage, Rabbi Lazarus, taught, “Three actions cancel out a harsh decree [of punishment from heaven.] They are, prayer, righteousness [i.e., charity/almsgiving: צדקה],<sup>2</sup> and repentance. All three are mentioned in one verse (2 Chronicles 7:14): ‘if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray. . . .’ This refers to prayer! . . . and seek my face.’ This refers to righteousness (i.e., almsgiving), as is proven by Psalm 17:15, where it is said, ‘As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness.’ . . . and turn from their wicked ways. This is repentance [i.e., fasting]! If an individual will do all three, the promise of Scripture is, ‘then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land’” (*y. Ta’anit* 65b).

Rabbi Lazarus determined from 2 Chronicles 7:14 that prayer, righteousness (i.e., almsgiving), and repentance turn away judgment. Second Chronicles 7:14 outlines the order of these three spiritual disciplines, and according to Rabbi Lazarus, places them in priority of importance.

In the Book of Tobit (c. fourth century B.C.), the same three actions Rabbi Lazarus identified

appear, but in a different order of priority: “Do good and evil will not overtake you. Prayer with fasting (i.e., repentance) is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. . . . It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin” (*Tobit* 12:7–9; cf. Matthew 19:21; Luke 19:8,9). For the author of *Tobit*, although prayer and fasting (repentance) are good, almsgiving supersedes them. Not only, then, was it common among Jesus’ contemporaries to identify the biblical verses that summarize the whole Torah, but for people to identify foundational spiritual practices and prioritize them.

### The Three Pillars of Jesus

In the same manner, we find Jesus articulating the three pillars of His faith. In Matthew 6:1–18, Jesus outlines three spiritual disciplines: righteousness (almsgiving), prayer, and fasting (repentance). With each practice, He warns not to practice before people, but rather before “your Father, who sees what is done in secret” (verses 4,6,18), who is the one who rewards: “Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men (verse 1). . . . But, when you give to the needy. . . . Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you (verses 3,4). And when you pray. . . . But when you pray. . . . Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you (verses 5,6). . . . When you fast. . . . But when you fast . . . and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (verses 16–18).

The repetitive nature of Jesus’ language shows the internal unity of Matthew 6:1–18. Like Simon the Just, Jesus identified three spiritual disciplines He viewed as foundational to His faith: righteousness, prayer, and fasting. These are the same three actions identified both by Rabbi Lazarus and the author of *Tobit*. Did Jesus, like His Jewish contemporaries, assume a prioritized order among these three? The evidence from contemporary Judaism suggests that Jesus ordered His three pillars according to the priority He gave to each. Like the author of *Tobit*, Jesus identified *righteousness* (almsgiving) as the principal spiritual discipline desired by God, followed by prayer and fasting.

### The First Pillar (Righteousness) Within the Teaching of Jesus

Jesus rejected the idea that a person could have a

relationship with God without first showing mercy to others. At the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, He clearly taught, “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your heavenly Father will *not* forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14,15; emphasis mine). Jesus embraced the developing Jewish humanism that read Leviticus 19:18, “love your neighbor who is like yourself” (author’s translation), and saw every person as having value because all humanity bears the image of God.

Jesus recognized that my relationship to others defines my relationship to God: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23,24). For Jesus, the most concrete action of my care for another like myself is the act of charity.

## Jesus recognized that my relationship to others defines my relationship to God.

In two places in the Gospels Jesus interprets Leviticus 19:18 with almsgiving. In response to the question of the rich man concerning which commandments he needed to keep, Jesus identified the last of the Ten Commandments (all of which pertain to how we relate to others) and added Leviticus 19:18: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 19:18,19). When the young man asked for clarification on these commandments, Jesus responded, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure” (Matthew 19:21). Likewise, in Matthew 5:43–48, Jesus interprets Leviticus 19:18 saying, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (5:48). The parallel in Luke 6:36 reads: “Be merciful, just as your Father in heaven is merciful.” Jews used the term *mercy* within contemporary Judaism as a euphemism for *charity* (cf. t. *Peah* 4:21); thus, “Be charitable, as your Father in heaven is charitable” (cf. Matthew 5:7; 2 Corinthians 9:6–12).

Jesus told His disciples, “Unless your righteousness (almsgiving) surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

Almsgiving, especially among some groups like the Pharisees, was an essential part of Jewish piety. Jesus embraced this and identified almsgiving as the cornerstone for His faith because God, himself, was charitable (cf. Matthew 6:19–21; Luke 11:41; 12:33,34; 19:8,9; James 2:15,16; 1 John 3:17; and *Didache* 4:5–8).

### Conclusion

Look at your list. What three spiritual disciplines did you identify? In what order of priority did you place them? Does the first one pertain principally to direct contact between you and God? Maybe prayer or Bible study?

For Jesus, the principal spiritual act depends on how I relate to others, for in relating to others, I relate to God. In fact, almsgiving provides the foundation on which my prayers and repentance stand. Some may counter, but Jesus said the first commandment was “Love the Lord your God” and the second “Love your neighbor.” Jesus, like

many of His contemporaries, saw Deuteronomy 6:5 as a verse needing interpretation: How do I love God with my heart, soul, and strength? So He sought another verse that could interpret it, namely, “Love your neighbor.” In other words, if you want to love God, whom you have not seen, then love those created in His image. ☺

### NOTES

1. Jewish sages usually connected passages of Scripture together based on common vocabulary between the two passages. Jesus connected Deuteronomy 6:5 with Leviticus 19:18 because these are two of only three places in the Old Testament that have the Hebrew phrase *ואהבת* (“and you will love”). Incidentally, the third passage, Leviticus 19:34, “Love him (i.e., the foreigner) as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt,” provides the backdrop for the parable of the Good Samaritan.
2. By the first century A.D., the term *righteousness* (*צדקה*) had become a euphemism for *almsgiving/charity*.



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## From Creation to Creativity: Where Are God's Big Ideas in Your Ministry?

**T**he iPad, GE's Reveal CFL light bulb, Garden of Eatin' Goldfish snacks, Godiva's Truffle-inspired coffees, Duracell's "D" battery with a visual gauge on the side indicating the remaining charge, American Greetings' digital slide show greeting card, Belkin's Bluetooth music recorder that can play music wirelessly from an iPhone, and Landis+Gyr's ecoMeter P250 that wirelessly monitors home electric use are all new, big commercial ideas in the last 2 years.

What have been God's big ideas to grow His kingdom in your ministry in the past 2 years? This is a fair question.

The world we speed through every day is constantly heaving with heady creations of the profit-possessed. The church, at the same time, often seems to be mumbling from the curb, "1953 . . . now that was the year God was doing a new thing among us . . . what happened to the altar services, camp meetings, and CA rallies?"

Poking through the fragile, discolored pages of our past spiritual journeys may be inspiring and instructive, but we cannot camp in the comfort of our chronicles. It is time to renew our Pentecostal heritage and rummage through our Pentecostal theology that screams, "God, through His Spirit, is past, present, and very future."

### The Covenant of Creativity

The confluence of God's creativity through His Holy Spirit cascaded into Genesis 1 and will spill into the thunderous choruses of Revelation 19.

It was God's Spirit (Genesis 1:2) that "hovered over" the primordial waters of our planet's birth canal and created a new spinning home.

It was God's Spirit, *ruach* (the breath) that breathed new life into a motionless human being (Genesis 2:7).

It was God's Spirit who made living by the rules a new, realistic expectation (Ezekiel 36:27).

It was God's Spirit that blew into an Upper Room and fashioned a new corporation of the called: the Church (Acts 2).

The covenant community of Christ, especially for Pentecostals, should be a ripe environment for God, the Creator of the universe, to billboard His creativity. Doing "a new thing" is normative for the Spirit-infused expression of the body of Christ.

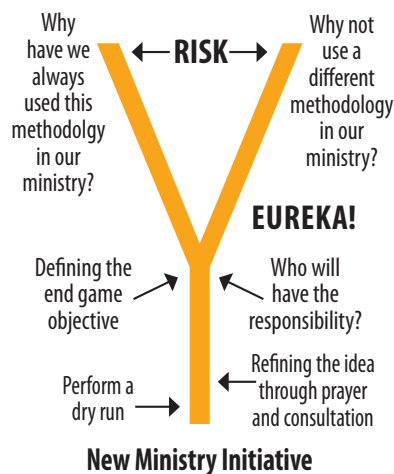
### The Process of Creativity

Creativity does just happen. A fabulous new ministry idea lights up your cranium at 2 a.m. and ends up on the back of an envelope at breakfast. But most creative ideas are the result of purposeful, hard work.

In the world of commerce, creative ideas producing millions of customers and billions of dollars are often not accidents. Below you will find a visual paradigm I created for my corporate clients when they want to birth and nurture a new idea into a wildly successful new business opportunity. I have edited "The Y Factor" for a ministry setting.

### The Y Factor

© Executive Enrichment Inc., Dr. Cal LeMon



The process begins with asking two important questions: "Why have we always used this methodology in our ministry?" and "Why not use a different methodology in our ministry?"

Here is the challenge. Look carefully at the word *risk* nestled between each question. The first risk is the homesteaders in your ministry who were probably the originators of your present paradigms and will emotionally have a problem tampering with the past. They may ask, "Why are you fooling around with my (or 'God's') idea?"

The second risk is someone in the ministry stoically stating, "Excuse me, God did not call us here to play around with the future of this ministry. If this worked in our past, it will survive tomorrow. This is serious business."

The *eureka* only takes place when we ask both questions at the same time. It is the confluence of questioning the safety of history and celebrating the future that provides a launching pad for God's big new ideas.

After the eureka moment, due diligence is essential. Refining the ministry methodology, running a beta test (trying the new methodology for a specified period of time), and evaluating the change based on sound data will offer credibility to this Spirit-led new approach.

### The Peril of Creativity

New Coke, Microsoft Web TV, and Apple Newton were all colossal failures. While these are all a corporate embarrassment to this day, at one time they were all new, promising, creative ideas.

Our worst fear, especially in the ministry, is failure. And failure happens even to the cheerleader of the saints.

To fail when providing ministry carries heavy psychological and spiritual baggage. Many believe that people who handle holy things should be close to perfect.

I want all error-free spiritual leaders to stand. If you are standing, I have another column for you, devoted to the spiritual practice of humility.

When we honestly track our poverty of piety, we rediscover grace. Every creative idea drags behind it the noisy potential of failure, and failure does not intimidate the spiritual leader. When we fail, we can accumulate emotional hurt, physical exhaustion, vast quantities of frustration, and even confusion, but not intimidation.

I regularly observe how failure in business destroys some. All of their eggs were in one

basket, and when the new product rollout, new customer service initiative, or new department went bust, so did they.

The peril of a failed creative idea for the spiritual leader is erased in the continuous Pauline mantra, "I die daily." If I am continually realigning my self-image with how my Lord sees me, the threat of failure loses its ability to intimidate me. I will persevere — for the cause of the gospel



**I am convinced it is better to be exhausted and excited tracking God's big ideas than slowly dying an agonizing death by religious boredom.**

and building the kingdom of God — to profusely populate my mind and ministry with His new big ideas. My ministry initiatives may fail, but I am not a failure.

One practical way to mitigate the effects of failure becoming personally destructive is to make creative brainstorming and decisionmaking in, and with, a spiritual community. When everyone in the community of faith shares responsibility for the new direction, everyone also shares the responsibility when the new crashes and burns.

### The Payoff of Creativity

Five positive consequences result for actively practicing spiritual creativity. First, a creative, new idea keeps everyone in a spiritual organization from spiraling down into mediocrity.

The worst adjective to slap in front of an expression of the body of Christ is, *mediocre*. To stand on the outside and observe an inert community of faith is akin to chewing 3-day old oatmeal at a church supper in Laodicea. The gravity of John the Revelator's words, "I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16) is a graphic physiology of divine disgust.

I am convinced it is better to be exhausted and excited tracking God's big ideas than slowly dying an agonizing death by religious boredom.

Second, creative problem-solving in a ministry is a safe way of openly confronting what everyone knows is not working. Instead of open warfare between competing forces in the church,

how about blurting out, "Wow, I have a new approach to our entire Christian education program that will keep people engaged and spiritually growing."

Third, when a church is mobilized to be creative with new ideas generated from prayer and discussion, the saints become engaged. In other words, the larger the context for creativity to flow up, down, across, and inward,

the more the adherents care about the status of the ministry in their immediate community.

When was the last time your ministry aggressively taught, fostered, and collected creative spiritual ideas for the future? Do you think those who were sitting in creative brainstorming sessions on Wednesday night would worship differently on Sunday?

Fourth, the payoff for creativity is the liberation of spiritual gifts. Our theology honors the priesthood of the believer. It recognizes that the responsibility of the Holy Spirit is to breathe divine life into words written on an electronic screen, to give us the patience to sit in a hospital room waiting for both birth and death, the time to prepare a meal to defeat hunger, and the ability to declare God's Word with power and grace. Creative believers are people who regularly stir and rediscover their gifts for their King and His kingdom.

The final payoff is the sublime ecstasy when someone realizes God, the Creator of the universe, just planted one of His big ideas between this person's ears. ☺



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## Don't Shirk the Dirty Work

How do you implement tough decisions in humane ways?

Consider these four questions and seven keys to doing the dirty work of leadership cleanly.

**W**hen I was small, my mother prided herself on keeping my clothes and me clean. One day she left me with my aunt who decided it was time for me to get dirty — very dirty. She let me play outside — not in dirt, but in a pile of coal. When my mother picked me up, I was covered in coal dust.

Sometimes, as leaders, we want to shirk the dirty work of leadership. Every leader must do things that upset and hurt people — even in the church. As the leader, it is your job to discipline employees, terminate employment relationships, initiate organizational change, confront issues holding the organization back, and deny budget requests. Call it dirty work, heavy lifting, or making a tough call with an employee; leaders must do the hard things.

A leader who refuses to complete the dirty work of leadership can be guilty of *emotional embezzlement*.

Most leaders never consider financial embezzlement — stealing dollars from the organization. But, many leaders consistently commit emotional embezzlement — stealing the future of the organization by not doing the dirty work of leadership. We do not want to pay the penalty of upsetting people, so we refuse to do the required heavy lifting.

The best leaders do not delay or duck the difficult; instead, they confront problems directly and quickly. The most challenging question is often what to confront and what to leave alone.

Years ago I heard a chapel speaker at Central Bible College assert that the hardest task of ministry is knowing the difference between what to confront and what to leave alone. After 20 years of pastoral ministry, I believe he was right. So, before you make decisions your team is not going to like, what questions do you need to ask?

### Is It Necessary?

Reprimands, dismissals, changes in direction, and other moves are often the most effective choice when dealing with difficult staff situations. But before you pull the trigger, make sure it is absolutely necessary. The effective leader asks, "Why am I doing this? Am I doing it because it is right or because I have not thought of another solution?" If there is a way to achieve the same result without having to throw a boulder in the water and deal with the waves, can you do it? Or, is it necessary to make the tough call and deal with the staff consequences?

### Do You Have the Power and Resources To Carry Out Your Decision?

Unfortunately, sometimes leaders who have every justification to make difficult decisions simply do not have the power to do it the right way. They may lack the support of key board members. There may not be the organizational energy to complete the needed transformation. They may not have the change in their pockets to see the decision through to the end. As Jesus reminded us, it is good to find out if we have all it takes to finish the task before we start building the tower (Luke 14:28–30).

### Is the Culture on Your Side?

Whether by design or by default, every organization has a culture. Culture consists of the unspoken rules of how



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we relate to one another in the organization. Church culture can be an interesting and confusing place to work. For example, most churches want the pastor and worship leader to present excellent worship services, but may recoil at the idea that people must audition for the choir. After all, does not God see our hearts and just ask us to make a joyful noise?

Before you plot your course, look at the culture. Is it on your side or is it going to work against you? You may need to work on the culture before you can work on the problem.

### Are You in It for the Long Haul?

If you are going to cut and run when the heat turns up, then you are not ready to do the dirty work of leadership. If you duck out at the first sign of a struggle, you may need to find a different kind of work. But, if you are ready to outlast the critic, follow the course God has laid out, to stay until the dirty work is done, then it is time to make the tough calls involving your team.

If you can answer in the affirmative, then you are ready to do the dirty work of leadership.

### Seven Keys To Doing the Dirty Work of Leadership Cleanly

How do you implement tough decisions in humane ways? After all, you are the shepherd to those on your team, not just the boss.

### Get key leaders on board

Who are the major influencers in your organization?

Who are the stakeholders? Before you get your hands dirty, it is important to make sure these influencers are behind you, but not that far behind you.

### Implement wisely

Leaders think sooner, deeper, and longer than others in the organization. When you need to make tough staff or leadership decisions, think about who these decisions will affect, who will oppose them, who will be for it, what are the unintended consequences, and a host of other questions. In addition, you need to create an implementation plan to answer those questions before people ask them.

### Communicate, communicate, communicate

When you are doing something the team or volunteers might find upsetting, communicate early and often the necessity of the choice you have made. Key volunteers, other staff members, and board members all need to know why, not just what. It is often not the first meeting that matters. It is the second and third meeting — after they have talked to their spouses or friends about the issues, after they have had time to think about it. The effective leader does everything possible to communicate to everyone who will be affected by the decision — not just in a way that spins the positive results, but also in a way that details some of the negative issues that might arise.

### Care about people

Sure you must do the heavy lifting; but as you do, remember: never humiliate, belittle, or bad-mouth staff or volunteers on the other side of the issue. If you set a tone that does not honor and respect others — even in conflict — then others will follow your lead in creating a culture of backbiting and name-calling. Then, you will have a real staff infection on your hands. Finally, remember the skunk theory of conflict. If you get in a fight with a skunk, nobody can tell who the skunk is.

### Keep your mouth shut

The temptation to share confidential information to buttress your position lurks around every corner as you do the dirty work of leadership. But divulging sensitive or confidential information can harm employees, volunteers, your organization, and the trust others have in you as a leader.

### Break the cycle of revenge

When you meet opposition to your choices, the tendency will be to shut out that staff member in the future, paint that volunteer in an unflattering light, or worse. If you take up the urge for revenge, you have made yourself the issue, instead of the solution. When you make it personal, you lose the moral high ground and abdicate your spiritual authority.

The best leaders learn the fine art of emotional separation — how to divide the event from the person. As you make the tough decisions of leadership, keep forgiveness close by your side. It not only breaks your own vicious cycle of revenge, but it helps staff members and volunteers you may have hurt to let go of their anger.

### Do not delay

Delay can cause more problems. Hope is not a strategy. Just hoping things change never makes the problem go away. The effective leader refuses to delay painful decisions and actions. You need to decide nobody else is going to do your dirty work for you. You cannot hire a consultant to do it or blame it on the board; you must do the hard work of leadership. That is why you are the leader.

So, where do you need to get your hands dirty? What decision are you putting off? What program needs to be started or stopped? What key volunteer needs to be confronted? What staff member needs to be let go? Before you do the dirty work of leadership, make sure you are ready. Then, if you follow the seven commandments, maybe you will not get too dirty. My mother will be proud. ☺



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## He Sets the *Lonely* in Families

Five questions that will change the health, direction, and longevity of your church family.

**W**hen Jesus invited a nobody thief to be forever with Him in paradise, He firmly established the vibe and values of the church community. The church is supposed to be family-centered, not factory-driven.

The cry "Remember me" said it all. With time waning, one thief decided to stiffen his neck. The other chose to soften his inner life. That move enabled his receptivity to relationship. It gave him heaven.

Here was the Christ, the Head of the Church, somehow finding the space for grace while simultaneously carrying the universal weightiness of human depravity on His own personhood.

In this moment Christ was teaching us far more than soul winning; He was teaching the power of *soul withing*. "You will be with Me" (Luke 23:43).

The hope of any pastor is to grow a relationship-centered church, a place where the lonely can find a home.

Few churches in America think in these terms.

# Building a church is more than having the right pieces; it is about having the right pieces in place.

We expose our sublimely hidden value-and-reward system every time we gush over leaders whose attendance tallies are at the top. We then deem them a voice to their generation with little-to-no auditing of the quality of their pastoral work.

A family uses a different set of metrics to measure its success as opposed to the metrics used by a factory. Factories are about volume and repetition. The bottom line for the factory is to increase value for ownership. Families focus on the quality of relationship, not the quantity of reputation. Developing sons and daughters into adulthood is the passion of a family.

People do not build a great family on fragments. Neither do we build a great church on fragments. Building a church is more than having the right pieces; it is about having the right pieces in place. For the church family to receive the lonely there must be a legitimate wholeness and completeness under way. We find the definition of that completeness in the five gifts distributed by Christ following the Day of Pentecost. "It was he who gave some to be apostles, ... prophets, ... evangelists, ... pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11).

More than individuals, these gift offices and their leaders were to ensure these five Kingdom initiatives became established in each church. These initiatives stand like five pillars on which we build the church. The absence of one pillar creates the potential for collapse. These five pillars are not the personality traits of a church; they are the DNA of Christ's body — indisputable elements we must present if we are claiming Christ's body as ours. In other words, no matter what church, no matter what continent, these five elements must be present for that church to be a theologically accurate refuge for the lonely.

I have organized these initiatives in the form of five questions. As a church-planting pastor, I repeatedly ask myself these five questions when I think about the quality of the church I serve. You cannot neglect any of these as you evaluate

your ministry. Certainly, there are seasons where you answer one question more clearly than the others, but a faithful pastor will make whatever adjustments

are necessary so he or she maintains balance and effectiveness in all five areas.

## The Relationship Question

*"It was he who gave ... some to be pastors."* An effective New Testament church feeds and cares for its people the way a shepherd feeds and cares for his flock. In times of crisis and suffering, people need strong ties to other believers for support, guidance, and strength.

Are people loving and caring for each other like a genuine family? Are people establishing thriving personal friendships? Do people in need receive practical help from others in the Body? These are the questions I pray over as a pastor. It is not whether we have a pastor in the office; it is about God's heart for people and His desire that we love and care for every member.

## The Presence Question

*"It was he who gave ... some to be prophets."* An effective New Testament church constantly pursues the presence of God and His power to meet every need. The presence of prophecy is not the goal; the goal is the presence of God.

We must never despise prophecy; but more than a prophet and his prophetic word, I ask myself, *Is the presence of God and spiritual presence alive in the church? Are people on fire for God? Are people being baptized in the Holy Spirit? If people are sick, are we offering the prayer of faith for their healing? Do people feel dry in the church?* More than a prophet in the office, is God's presence alive and evident among the people?

## The Learning Question

*"It was he who gave ... some to be teachers."* An effective New Testament church helps people understand God's Word and how to apply it every day. Classes and teachers and comprehensive discipleship structure are not enough. The pastor must honestly ask if people are learning the Word of God, or if he is just presenting it to them.

Are you and your teachers creatively presenting God's Word? Are people applying biblical principles to their situations? Are people engaged and curious about Bible study opportunities?

It is not whether there is a teacher in the office; the deeper question is whether or not people are learning the Word of God.

## The Sharing Question

*"It was he who gave ... some to be evangelists."* An effective New Testament church is radically committed to sharing the gospel to every person no matter how difficult the barrier. No one by proxy can take my place in demonstrating the gospel. Even when I schedule an evangelist to speak at my church my questions are about the flock, not the guest.

Are people feeling personally engaged in the Great Commission? Is reaching new people a clear priority? Are people using their gifts and talents to present Christ in the marketplace between Sundays? The office of the evangelist is important and necessary, but it is not enough; the deeper question is whether or not my congregation is boldly sharing Christ in their city.

## The Influence Question

*"It was he who gave ... some to be apostles."* An effective New Testament church constantly multiplies new churches and new leaders. Without a missional aim, your church is incomplete. Like a listless family, the church lacks the strength and subsequent influence God designed it to have when it tries to operate without mission.

Do you see mobilizing new leaders as essential for the future success of your church? Do you view multiplying new churches as a command or an option? Are you setting aside money and time so the next generation will have a thriving church in their neighborhood? The apostolic vision, which is the vision for expansion and influence, tends to be the most neglected. The call of leadership is to align the congregation alongside the priorities of Christ's heart.

When I feel suffocated by the demands of daily ministry or the loss of traction in my leadership life, these five questions have helped me see more clearly again.

Lead strong. Lead long. 🌟



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## Why Is the New Testament Silent on Slavery — or Is It?

In my previous two essays (spring 2011/summer 2011), I focused on Old Testament debt-servitude. This article focuses on slavery in the New Testament — a much different world of institutionalized chattel (property) slavery. I discuss this in more detail in *Is God a Moral Monster?* (Baker, 2011).

During the first century, 85 to 90 percent of Rome's population consisted of slaves in both lowly and prestigious positions. This was a step backward from the Old Testament, but this was Rome's fault.

### Slaves as Persons

The New Testament presupposes a fundamental equality because all humans are created in God's image (James 3:9). Yet, an even deeper unity in Christ transcends human boundaries and social structures: no Jew or Greek, slave or free, no male and female, as all believers are all "one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28; cp. Colossians 3:11).

Some critics claim, "Jesus never said anything about the wrongness of slavery." Not so. He explicitly *opposed* every form of oppression in His mission "to proclaim release to the captives . . . to set free those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18<sup>1</sup>; cp. Isaiah 61:1). While Jesus did not press for some economic reform plan in Israel, He did address attitudes such as greed, materialism, contentment, and generosity.

New Testament writers addressed underlying attitudes regarding slavery: Christian masters called Christian slaves "brothers" or "sisters." The New Testament commanded masters to show compassion, justice, and patience. Their position as master meant responsibility and service, not oppression and privilege. Thus, the worm was already in the wood for altering social structures.

New Testament writers, like Jesus their Master, opposed the dehumanization and oppression of

others. In fact, Paul gave household rules in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 4 not only for Christian slaves but for Christian *masters* as well. Slaves are ultimately responsible to God, their heavenly Master. But *masters* are to "treat your slaves in the same way" — namely, as persons governed by a heavenly Master (Ephesians 6:9). Commentator P.T. O'Brien points out that "Paul's cryptic exhortation is outrageous" for his day.<sup>2</sup>

Given the spiritual equality of slave and free, slaves even took on leadership positions in churches. Paul's ministry illustrates how in Christ there is neither slave nor free, when he greeted people by name in his epistles. Some of these people had commonly used slave and freedman names. For example, in Romans 16:7,9, he refers to slaves such as Andronicus and Urbanus

(common slave names) as "kinsman," "fellow prisoner," and "fellow worker." The New Testament's approach to slavery is contrary to aristocrats and philosophers





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such as Aristotle, who held that certain humans were slaves by nature (*Politics* I.13).

Paul reminded Christian masters that they, with their slaves, were fellow-slaves of the same impartial Master. Thus, they were not to mistreat them but rather deal with them as brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul called on human masters to grant “justice and fairness” to their slaves (Colossians 4:1). In unprecedented fashion, Paul treated slaves as morally responsible persons (Colossians 3:22–25) who, like their Christian masters, are “brothers” and part of Christ’s body (1 Timothy 6:2).<sup>3</sup> Christians — slave and master alike — belong to Christ (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). Spiritual status is more fundamental and freeing than social status.

### The Silence of the New Testament Writers on Slavery

Though critics claim New Testament writers keep quiet about slavery, we see a subtle opposition to it in various ways. We can confidently say that

Paul would have considered antebellum slavery with its slave trade to be an abomination — an utter violation of human dignity and an act of human theft. In Paul’s vice list in 1 Timothy 1:9,10, he expounds on the fifth through the ninth commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5). There Paul condemns “slave traders” who steal what is not rightfully theirs.<sup>4</sup>

## Early Christians undermined slavery indirectly, rejecting many common Greco-Roman assumptions about it and acknowledging the intrinsic, equal worth of slaves.

Critics wonder why Paul or New Testament writers (cp. 1 Peter 2:18–20) did not condemn slavery and tell masters to release their slaves. We need to first separate this question from other considerations. New Testament writers’ position on the negative status of slavery was clear on various points: (a) they repudiated slave trading; (b) they affirmed the full human dignity and equal spiritual status of slaves; (c) they encouraged slaves to acquire their freedom whenever possible (1 Corinthians 7:20–22); (d) their revolutionary Christian affirmations, if taken seriously, would help tear apart the fabric of the institution of slavery, which is what took full effect several centuries later — in the eventual eradication of slavery in Europe; and (e) in Revelation 18:11–13, doomed Babylon (the world of God-opposers) stands condemned because she had treated humans as “cargo,” having trafficked in “slaves [literally ‘bodies’] and human lives” (verse 13). This repudiation of treating humans as cargo assumes the doctrine of the image of God in all human beings.

Paul, along with Peter, did not call for an uprising to overthrow slavery in Rome. On the one hand, they did not want people to perceive the Christian faith as opposed to social order and harmony. Hence, New Testament writers told Christian slaves to do what is right. Even if they were mistreated, their conscience would be clear (1 Peter 2:18–20). Yes, obligations fell to these slaves without their prior agreement. So the path for early Christians to take was tricky — very much unlike the situation of voluntary servitude in Mosaic Law.

A slave uprising would do the gospel a disservice — and prove a direct threat to an oppressive Roman establishment (e.g., “Masters, release your slaves”; or, “Slaves, throw off your chains.”). Rome would quash flagrant opposition with speedy, lethal force. So Peter’s admonition to unjustly treated slaves implies a suffering endured *without retaliation*. Suffering in itself is not good;

but the *right* response in the midst of suffering is commendable.

Early Christians undermined slavery indirectly, rejecting many common Greco-Roman assumptions about it (e.g., Aristotle’s) and acknowledging the intrinsic, equal worth of slaves. Since the New Testament leveled all distinctions at the foot of the cross, the Christian faith — being counter-cultural, revolutionary, and anti-status quo — was particularly attractive to slaves and lower classes. Thus, like yeast, Christlike living can have a gradual leavening effect on society so oppressive institutions such as slavery could finally fall away. This is, in fact, what took place throughout Europe: Slavery fizzled since “Christianized” Europeans clearly saw that owning another human being was contrary to creation and the new creation in Christ.<sup>5</sup>

President Abraham Lincoln, who despised slavery but approached it shrewdly, took this incremental strategy. Being an exceptional student of human nature, he recognized that political realities and predictable reactions to abolition required an incremental approach. The radical abolitionist route of John Brown and William Lloyd Garrison would (and did) simply create a social backlash against hard-core abolitionists and make emancipation more difficult.<sup>6</sup>

### Returning Onesimus: A Throwback to Hammurabi?

Was Paul’s sending Onesimus back to his alleged owner Philemon a moral step backward? Was it more like the oppressive Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, which insisted on returning fugitive



slaves to their masters — something prohibited in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 23:15,16)? Some charge that Paul was siding with Hammurabi against the Old Testament.

thing, the epistle contains no “flight” verbs, as though Onesimus had suddenly gone AWOL. And Paul revealed no hint of fear that Philemon would brutally treat a returning Onesimus, as Roman

## New Testament writers, like Jesus their Master, opposed the dehumanization and oppression of others.

Reading a New Testament epistle such as Philemon is like listening to only one party in a phone conversation. We only hear Paul’s voice, but plenty of gaps exist that we would like to have filled in. What was Paul’s relation to Philemon (“dear friend and fellow worker” and “partner” Philemon 1,17)? What debt did Philemon owe Paul? How had Onesimus wronged Philemon (if he even did)?

Many interpreters have taken the liberty to help us fill in the gaps. The typical result? They read too much into the text. The common fugitive-slave hypothesis (that Onesimus was a runaway slave of Philemon’s) is quite late, dating back to the church father John Chrysostom (347–407 A.D.). However, genuine scholarly disagreement exists about this interpretation. For one

masters typically did when they caught their runaway slaves.

Some have plausibly suggested that Onesimus and Philemon were *estranged Christian (perhaps biological) brothers*.<sup>8</sup> Paul exhorted Philemon not to receive Onesimus as a slave (whose status in Roman society meant alienation and dishonor); rather he was to welcome Onesimus as a beloved brother: “that you might have him back for good — *no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother*. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord” (Philemon 15,16, emphasis added).

Notice the similar sounding language in Galatians 4:7: “Therefore you are *no longer a slave, but a son*; and if a son, then an heir through God” (emphasis added). This may shed further

light on how to interpret the epistle of Philemon. Paul wanted to help heal the rift so Philemon would receive Onesimus (*not* a slave) back as a *beloved brother in the Lord* — not even simply a biological brother. To do so would follow God’s own example in receiving us as *sons and daughters* rather than *slaves*.

Even if Onesimus were a slave, this still did not mean he was a fugitive. If a disagreement or misunderstanding had occurred between Onesimus and Philemon, and

Onesimus had sought out Paul to intervene or arbitrate the dispute, this would not have rendered Onesimus an official fugitive. And given Paul’s knowledge of Philemon’s character and track record of Christian dedication, the suggestion that Onesimus’ coming back was Hammurabi revisited is off the mark. Again, if Onesimus were a slave in Onesimus’ household, Paul’s strategy was this: Instead of forbidding slavery, impose fellowship.<sup>9</sup>

In summary, Jesus and New Testament writers opposed oppression, slave trade, and treating humans as cargo. The earliest Christians were a revolutionary, new community united by Christ — a people transcending racial, social, and sexual barriers — which eventually led to a slavery-free Europe a few centuries later. ☺

### NOTES

1. Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission (www.Lockman.org).
2. P.T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 454.
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4. See Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC 13 (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1988), 45, 46, 49n.
5. Jonathan Hill, *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2005), 176.
6. See Ronald C. White, *A Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2009), which explores these themes in detail.
7. For a fine general discussion, see David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2007), 237–41. I also borrow insights from Allen Dwight Callahan, “Paul’s Epistle to Philemon: Toward an Alternative Argument,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 86.4 (October 1993): 357–76; Sarah Winter, “Paul’s Letter to Philemon,” *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987): 1–15.
8. See Callahan, “Paul’s Epistle to Philemon.”
9. James Tunstead Burtchell, *Philemon’s Problem: A Theology of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 21.



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## Bioethics by the Bedside: Principles for Pastoral Care

Knowing the four basic principles of bioethics helps ministers understand the way doctors approach ethical problem solving.

**B**ioethics — the equitable distribution of limited health care resources, research policies governing human subjects, and bans on reproductive cloning — often involves choices that affect society as a whole. Yet sometimes the practice of bioethics involves conversations shared around a bedside, involving the patient, his or her family, doctors, and minister. In this case, applying the guiding principles that undergird bioethics as an academic discipline becomes intensely personal. Principles that are easy to articulate with clarity in a seminary classroom may appear to conflict and suddenly a haze of uncertainty can cloud the hospital room.

Putting bioethical principles into practice involves understanding what guidelines apply to the situation at hand, defining any principles in conflict, and assigning appropriate weight to each principle to achieve a balanced and sound decision. Pastors and chaplains encountering bioethical issues during bedside ministry may find themselves coveting Solomon's wisdom as they seek a comforting word to share with the family. Knowing the four basic principles of bioethics, however, helps ministers understand the way doctors approach ethical problem solving. We respect these four principles for autonomy (letting the patient or his health care proxy decide), nonmaleficence (protecting the patient from harm), beneficence (improving the well being of the patient), and justice (being fair to all patients). Here are the first three principles that deal with the needs of an individual patient.

### Letting the Patient Decide

When doctors diagnosed my maternal grandfather with lung cancer in 1953, many physicians believed doctors should not tell patients they had cancer since there were few effective cancer treatments

available. Physicians tried to protect the patient from feelings of shock and loss of hope. Instead of informing the patient of his diagnosis, the doctor spoke with close family members. My grandmother, my mother, and her two brothers and three sisters learned of my grandfather's diagnosis directly from the doctor. This left my grandfather uninformed until he eventually surmised the truth of his condition on his own. Today we would call such an approach to medicine paternalistic.

As medical research in the 1960s and 1970s brought significant progress in cancer treatments, early cancer diagnosis and treatment became important for patient survival. By the end of the 1970s, physicians had shifted from paternalism to shared decision-making between patient and physician. When doctors diagnosed my father with head and neck cancer



in 1995, the physician disclosed the diagnosis directly to my father. The doctor could disclose information about my father's medical condition to my mother and me only after he obtained my father's written permission.

Today, doctors try to emphasize the importance of advanced directives (living wills and durable power of attorney for healthcare decisions) to allow patients with incapacitating medical conditions to continue to have a voice about the course of their treatment. Yet, many patients fail to have important discussions about their medical wishes with family members while they are still in relatively good health. Pastors can encourage patients to have such conversations to ease the burden for family members who may face difficult decisions should the patient's condition deteriorate.

Another situation in which pastors can promote healthy communication between patient and family members is when cultural and family dynamics create a clash between well-meaning adult children and their aged, yet fully competent, parent. Adult children may desire to protect their aged parent from medical information they feel will be detrimental to their parent's emotional well-being. The principle of patient autonomy includes the possibility of a patient deciding how much information he can handle and how much he would rather have shared with a close family member. The doctor, however, must determine that the patient is making a decision about how much information to receive without any coercion from family members.

Chaplains and pastors can provide valuable assistance in such circumstances by helping well-meaning, but potentially misguided family members, understand that a competent individual has the right to choose how much medical information he receives and to make decisions about his health based on that information. Additionally, a minister might be able to help a patient sort through his feelings about the type and extent of medical information he is comfortable receiving.

### Protecting the Patient From Harm

The paternalistic approach to medical care that convinced physicians in the 1950s to withhold information about a cancer diagnosis from their patients arose from the desire to protect patients from harm, which is another basic bioethical principle. The phrase, *first do no harm*, is central

to understanding the covenant relationship between a physician and patient. When a physician is unable to cure a patient, the physician must be careful not to place unnecessary burdens on the patient that would result in more harm than benefit. Today we often find application of this principle in discussions of medical futility and the doctrine of double effect.

With the shift away from paternalism to a consumerist approach to medical care, patients and their decision-making surrogates may demand treatments that a physician views as having little benefit. By labeling such treatments as *futile*,

the patient's life. If so, then the good of easing the patient's intolerable pain outweighs the need to protect the patient from the harm of a shortened lifespan.

Pastors can help prevent unwarranted feelings of guilt in family members by helping them understand this doctrine. The concept of double effect also applies to procedures such as treatment of an ectopic pregnancy. When an embryo implants outside a woman's uterus, there is not enough room or a proper environment for the embryo to develop into a baby. If doctors leave an ectopic pregnancy in a fallopian tube untreated,

## A pastor can help family members understand how respect for human life applies to the medical situation at hand.

particularly those that prolong the dying process, physician authority regains the ground lost to patient autonomy. While a caring physician can offer a needed perspective that prevents modern technology from prolonging suffering of an imminently dying patient, the danger exists that cost management or value judgments about the patient's quality of life drive such determinations.

A pastor can help family members understand how respect for human life applies to the medical situation at hand. When grief and guilt issues motivate family members to continue to seek treatment that may not be in the best interest of the patient, the wise words of a discerning pastor may help resolve the conflict between the family and medical professionals.

### Improving the Well-Being of the Patient

In addition to seeking to do no harm, a physician must endeavor to improve the well-being of a patient. Sometimes the physician must choose between bringing neither benefit nor harm to a patient and administering a benefit that contains a foreseen harm. In such circumstances, the physician resolves the dilemma by employing the doctrine of double effect.

The doctrine of double effect describes situations when a good action, such as administering medication to relieve a patient's pain, leads to a bad effect, such as hastening the patient's death. The physician must determine if the benefits of pain relief outweigh the detriment of shortening

both the woman and the developing embryo will die. Although termination of the ectopic pregnancy destroys the developing embryo, loss of one life prevents the loss of both lives. Understanding this doctrine may ease the grief experienced by a woman over the loss of an ectopic pregnancy.

The bioethical principle of beneficence also applies to mental health and pastoral counseling. Suicidal patients may need to be hospitalized against their will for their own protection. The benefit to the patient of preserving his life outweighs the principle of patient autonomy.

While ministering by the bedside of a parishioner whose future hangs in the balance of the correct application of bioethical principles, a pastor's words carry great meaning for the patient and his or her family. My prayer for every pastor and chaplain who enters a hospital room is that Psalm 37:30 will spring to life in your ministry: "The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just." May proper preparation and the guidance of the Holy Spirit combine together to help you comfort those experiencing difficult times. ☪



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## Carrying Guns on Church Property

**D**oes a state law prohibiting carrying concealed weapons in a church violate the constitutional rights of church members to bear arms and practice their religion? A federal court in Georgia said no. In 2010, the State of Georgia enacted a law making it a misdemeanor offense for a person with a concealed weapons permit to carry a concealed weapon “in a place of worship.” Several plaintiffs, including a church and its pastor, filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of this law.

### First Amendment Guaranty of Religious Freedom

The plaintiffs claimed that the statute violated their First Amendment right to freely exercise their religion because it imposed an impermissible burden on their ability to attend or conduct worship services by prohibiting them from carrying a firearm on their person for self-defense while doing so. The individual plaintiffs did not contend that their religious beliefs required them to carry a firearm into a place of worship, nor did the church allege that its members’ religious beliefs required them to carry a firearm into their church. Instead, the plaintiffs claimed that attending worship services is a sincere religious belief that has been impermissibly burdened by the statute’s requirements.

The court noted that the Georgia statute prohibiting concealed weapons licensees from bringing weapons onto church property “does not prohibit anyone from attending services at a place of worship. Instead, any burden on attending worship services is attenuated and tangential because the law only requires that persons either not carry a weapon to a place of worship, leave their weapons secured in their vehicles, or notify security or management personnel of the presence of the weapon and follow directions for removing, securing, storing, or temporarily surrendering the weapon.”

The court noted that “laws imposing substantial burdens on religious practices” need a “compelling government interest” to survive a First Amendment challenge. It concluded, however, that the Georgia statute “does not pressure religious conduct enough to constitute a substantial burden” on religious practices: “No criminal sanctions forbid plaintiffs from attending a place of worship. The law does not

force them to decide between attending worship services or supporting themselves and their families. Instead, plaintiffs only risk criminal sanction if they refuse to comply with the law’s mandates about carrying firearms in a place of worship, an activity they do not attach to any sincere religious belief. The burden of complying with the law’s requirements does not prohibit them from attending worship services, nor does it place an

‘unmistakable’ pressure on them ‘to forego religious precepts.’ Accordingly, the court concludes that any burden posed by the law is too insubstantial and too attenuated to any of plaintiffs’ sincere religious beliefs to state a claim under the [First Amendment].”

The church also claimed that the Georgia statute violated the First Amendment’s guaranty of religious freedom since it “encroaches on the church’s ability to manage its internal affairs.” The church cited a case in which the United States Supreme Court observed that “there exists a spirit of freedom for religious organizations, an independence from secular control or manipulation, in short, power to decide for themselves, free from state interference, matters of church government as well as those of faith and doctrine.” *Kedroff v. St. Nicholas Cathedral*, 344 U.S. 94 (1952). However, the Georgia court noted that the Supreme Court’s ruling makes clear that the First Amendment guaranty of religious freedom is “only implicated when the state interferes with matters of church government, faith, or doctrine. The law at issue here does not touch on such ecclesiastical matters. The church does not allege that the safety concerns or security protocols of a place of worship involve issues of religious faith or doctrine, as opposed to purely secular issues. Consequently, the law in this case does not encroach on the church’s ability to manage



its internal affairs in a way that violates the First Amendment.”

### **The Second Amendment Right To Bear Arms**

The plaintiffs also claimed that the Georgia statute impermissibly burdened their right to keep and bear arms secured by the Second Amendment. The Second Amendment provides: “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” The plaintiffs relied on a 2008 decision by the United States Supreme Court, *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570 (2008). In the *Heller* case, the Supreme Court ruled that several statutes in the District of Columbia which, taken together, amounted to a total ban on possessing a handgun in the home, violated the Second Amendment. But the only conduct that the Supreme Court clearly located within the Second Amendment right was the possession and carrying of a handgun by an otherwise qualified person within his home for self-defense. It carefully noted that “the right secured by the Second Amendment is not unlimited,” and that “historically, the right had never been viewed as a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose.”

The Georgia court concluded that the Supreme Court’s decision in *Heller* did not address or resolve the question of whether the Georgia statute prohibiting citizens with a concealed weapons license from bringing their weapons onto church property violated the Second Amendment right to bear arms. The court concluded that the Georgia law was constitutionally valid since it was “substantially related to an important governmental objective,” namely, protecting the free exercise of religion. The court observed: “Although the Constitution protects a person’s right to free exercise [of religion] only against governmental intrusion, it is clear that the protection of religious freedom against private bias or coercion is also an important governmental goal. Prohibiting the carrying of firearms in a place of worship bears a substantial relationship to that important goal by protecting attendees from the fear or threat of intimidation or armed attack.” *In other words, the court concluded that the constitutional guaranty of religious freedom was better served by prohibiting guns on church premises than by allowing them.*

## **The court concluded that the constitutional guaranty of religious freedom was better served by prohibiting guns on church premises than by allowing them.**

The court clarified that the Georgia statute’s ban on allowing concealed weapons on church property did not extend to church-owned parsonages, and therefore pastors who live in a parsonage are not prohibited from having a weapon on the premises.

The court also clarified that the statute would not bar pastors from carrying or possessing a concealed weapon while in their church office for security reasons. The court observed: “Although the statute generally prohibits persons with valid Georgia Weapons Licenses from carrying a firearm in a place of worship, the statute also provides that the prohibition on carrying in the unauthorized locations . . . does not apply to . . . ‘a license holder who approaches security or management personnel upon arrival and notifies such security or management personnel of the presence of the weapon and explicitly follows the security of management personnel’s direction for removing, securing, storing, or temporarily surrendering such weapon.’” *O.C.G.A. § 16-11-127(d)(2)*.

As a result, the statute would allow [a pastor] to keep a firearm in his office if he obtained permission from security or management personnel of the church and kept it secured or stored as directed. If management or security personnel at the church, which presumably includes [the pastor] as CEO, did not grant him permission to secure or store a firearm in his office, then that would be at their discretion. Plaintiffs do not argue, however, that they possess a constitutional right to carry a firearm onto private property against the wishes of the owner or controller of the property.

### **Application**

This case is important, for it is the first case to address the constitutionality of state laws barring holders of concealed weapons licenses to bring their weapons onto designated properties, including churches. According to this court, such restrictions do not violate either the First Amendment

guaranty of religious freedom, or the Second Amendment right to bear arms. However, the court clarified that such restrictions do not extend to church-owned parsonages.

The court’s analysis of the Second Amendment right to bear arms is interesting. The court noted that the Supreme Court’s 2008 decision in the *Heller* case, which struck down D.C. statutes prohibiting the possession of firearms in one’s home, was limited to the principle that the Second Amendment protects the right of private citizens to own firearms in their homes for the purpose of self-defense. This narrow ruling did not directly apply to the scenario in this case, which involved a state’s attempt to restrict the carrying of firearms on church property. It also is interesting to note that the court concluded that the Second Amendment right to bear arms was not violated by the Georgia statute since the statute was “substantially related to an important governmental objective” — namely, the protection of church members’ right to freely exercise their religion by alleviating their fear of armed attack. Of course, this conclusion naively assumes that crazed assailants will comply with the law’s requirement that they not bring their weapons onto church property. It also fails to note that many church members’ fear of armed attack will be enhanced by the law’s prohibition of the carrying of weapons on church property by law-abiding members. Ironically, the court concluded that the constitutional guaranty of religious freedom was better served by prohibiting guns on church premises than by allowing them. *GeorgiaCarry.Org, Inc. v. Georgia*, 2011 WL 240108 (M.D. Ga. 2011). ☞



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## I'm Feeling Spiritually Dry

**Q.** I always wanted to be a pastor's wife since I was a little girl. My dream came true, and my husband and I have been ministering together for the past 7 years. For most of that time we have been involved in youth ministry. I partner with my husband in every way I can even though we recently had our second child. I mentor girls in the youth group, plan events, and occasionally speak at the youth service. Lately, however, I have become spiritually dry. I do not feel like praying; I do not feel God's presence, and I am growing resentful of the people to whom we minister. This is embarrassing to admit, but sometimes I secretly question whether God exists. Everybody expects me to be the same as before, but they do not know my inner struggle. I feel like a fraud.

**A.** First, let me thank you for your honesty and vulnerability. Your struggle is not uncommon, yet not often revealed because of its sensitive nature. It seems that full-time ministry and service requires a solid foundation of unwavering faith and belief. Admitting anything less seems wrong. At times, however, we all wrestle in various ways in our faith. This kind of wrestling brings us to deeper levels of trust if we walk through it without giving up. Your struggle is not an indication of the end of something. Rather, it can be the beginning of something new and deeper in your walk with Jesus.

Commit yourself to walking it out. Uncomfortable and disconcerting as it may be, keep moving forward. The walk of faith is a walk of trust. Faith is not so much about clarity as it is about trust. (Brennan Manning examines this in his book *Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffin's Path to God*.)

In your spiritual walk there are times when you may have great clarity about your faith and your relationship with Jesus. There will be other times when you simply do not. At those times it comes down to simple trust. Your stance could be, "At this moment, I may not have great clarity about anything spiritual, but I choose to trust my God."

Be honest about your struggle, but use wisdom. Faking it is stressful and doing so over a period of time can eventually lead to burnout or a desire to escape. On the other hand, avoid arbitrarily baring your soul to anyone and everyone, especially if you are in leadership of younger, less mature people. Share as honestly as you can, keeping in mind the maturity level of the listener. Find

people who can handle your blunt honesty and share your heart in an environment of safety. God already knows, and the mature listener will not be surprised. In







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**There are times when you may have great clarity about your faith and your relationship with Jesus. There will be other times when you simply do not.**

might just say to someone, "Would you pray for me? I'm struggling right now with some things having to do with my faith." Inevitably there will be a quiet nod, a heartfelt glance, and a hug. This is enough to start the prayer wheels turning on your behalf. Take advantage of this. Allow others to minister to you.

You mentioned that you just had a second child in addition to all you do at church. Your life sounds very full and busy. I am wondering how much this is affecting your state of mind. Add together full-time ministry, a husband, and two small children and you have a recipe for burnout. Reexamine your involvement and ask where you might be able to set limits and boundaries. Sheer exhaustion and weariness can cause spiritual angst. (Remember Elijah in 1 Kings 19.)

Consider setting aside time for solitude. This could be a day without interruptions, preferably in a quiet place. Spend this time to simply rest and be still. Avoid trying to accomplish a list of spiritual things or reach certain goals. Take time to *be* and ask God to meet you there.

You are not a fraud. You are a believer in process. God knows where you are and is not surprised. His love toward you is as it always was: unconditional, lavish, persevering, and far-reaching. Walk out this season of your life without fear, and trust that the God who called you will fulfill everything He promised. ☺

fact, you will find healing in that kind of interaction. You may be surprised to find that someone else has felt the same. Such a person may be at your church, or you may need to go outside of your immediate circle to a counselor or mentor.

Hopefully, your husband can be a safe place for your struggle. Share as honestly as you can if he is able to listen compassionately. However, if your struggle threatens or disturbs him, extend grace. He himself is working out his own faith and his response to you will depend on where he is in his own journey.

Ask someone to pray for you. This is one of the most powerful things you can do. In my own ministry journey, I have always kept my eyes open for spiritually sensitive, prayerful, mature, confidential women in our congregation who proved their stability to me over time. At certain times I would quietly approach them and ask them for prayer. I would disclose certain levels of vulnerability, depending on the issue. In this case, you



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## EURASIA *Experience*

We stand in line at customs, waiting. Even though we've flown to the far side of the world, we aren't guaranteed entry into this country. As we watch others being turned away, I become more uncertain. What will I tell the official when he asks why I've come? Will my answer be good enough?

I exhale as my passport is stamped and handed back to me, giving me permission to leave the airport. But then, looking up, I brace myself. Blocking the door is a group of beggars. They call out: "My children! I need to feed my children!" How do I know the money will help these people, and not a boss who takes most of it for himself? Should we give money?

Even though the beggars push and crowd in, my friends and I manage to pass. But our biggest challenge might still be ahead. Outside the doors of the airport is a long corridor of makeshift shops. Each vendor desperately tries to sell her items: tea and scarves and Turkish Delight, plus a lamb's head and things I can't identify. I'm overwhelmed by the smell of burning incense and strange spices.

I don't want to look the vendors in the eye, but the narrow space is so cramped; contact is inevitable. Even if I wanted to make eye contact with some, it would be impossible. Many of the women wear burqas. I know they can see me, but their faces are hidden. Who are these faceless people?

Finally getting to the end, we stumble out the door. I heave a sigh of relief. I don't know how much more of the strange smells and sounds and people I can handle. But wait! I've just arrived. Is this what I'd signed up for?

Actually, I'm not in another country. I've been invited by friends to attend the Eurasia Experience—a cross-cultural journey that brings the sights, sounds, and smells of Eurasian life to my local church. Here, we've stepped into missionaries' shoes and heard real stories of what God is doing in the 44 countries and territories of Eurasia, home to more than 4,700 unreached people groups.

**Is your heart stirred?  
Mine is.**

If you are a pastor or missions director of a church and are interested in hosting a Eurasia Experience event, send an e-mail to [eurasiaexperience@sqmd.org](mailto:eurasiaexperience@sqmd.org) to receive an information packet!



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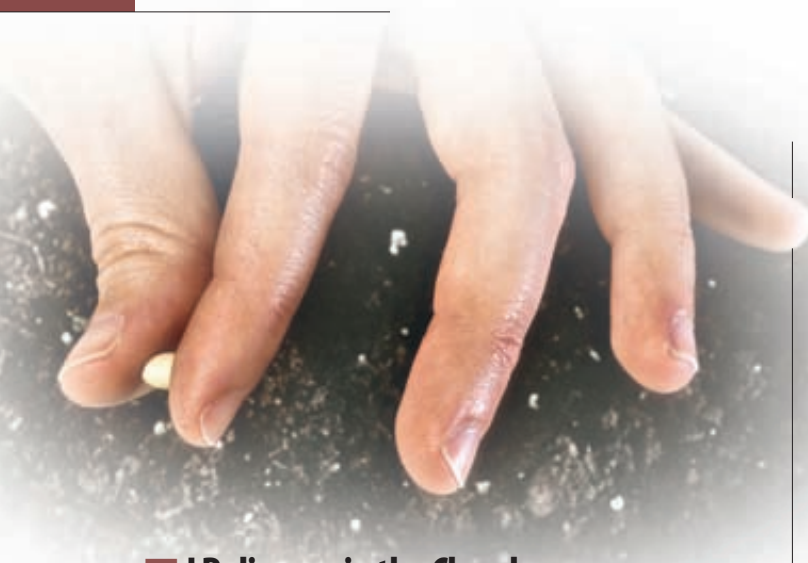
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## I Believe ... in the Church

GALEN F. HERTWECK, Baguio City, Philippines

**TEXT:** Ephesians 2:19–22; 4:11–16; 5:21–33

### INTRODUCTION

The Church is the center of God's activity in the world. In Ephesians, we find the Bible's most extensive teaching on the nature of the Church. We will look at this teaching from three aspects: the building (Ephesians 2:19–22), the Body (Ephesians 4:11–16), and the Bride (Ephesians 5:21–33).

### MESSAGE

#### 1. The building (Ephesians 2:19–22).

1. In Ephesians 2:11–18, Paul explained how Jesus Christ through His death on the Cross has united Jews and Gentiles into one new people in Him.
2. The Gentiles also are now citizens of God's kingdom and entitled to all the privileges of living there. They are members of God's own household, treated with the love reserved only for sons and daughters.
3. Paul then spoke of the Church as the house of God in the sense of a building. The foundation of the building consists of the apostles and prophets; the cornerstone is Jesus Christ; and every Christian is a brick in the building. This building grows into a temple of the Lord, a process energized by the Spirit of God.
4. In this passage we see four indispensable characteristics of the Church:
  - a. Jesus Christ must be central. Christ is the cornerstone — the stone that holds it all together. If Jesus Christ is not central in the life of a group of people, then the group cannot properly be called the Church.
  - b. The Church is based on the divine revelation of the apostles and secondarily on the ministry of the prophets. The Church must conform itself to the witness of the apostles who were commissioned as organs of revelation by Jesus Christ himself. The prophetic ministry applies the message of the apostles to the Church's circumstances.
  - c. The Church is to grow. It "rises to become a holy temple in the Lord." The verb rendered "to rise" refers to an increase of every kind — in size, number, age, maturity, glory, and power. The

Church should be going through a continuous revitalization of every facet of its existence. Further, it is to grow into a holy temple. Holiness (sanctification) is at the heart of the growth.

- d. There must be strong unity. The materials of the building were "built together," a term used to describe the unity between believers and Christ and the Church.

#### 2. The Body (Ephesians 4:11–16).

1. After stressing the unity of the Church and the fact Christ gave gifts to her, Paul listed the gifts in verse 11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.
2. When these fulfill their calling, the result is that Christians are equipped to do the work of the ministry so the body of Christ is built up, harmonious, matured, and united to Christ, the Head of the Body.
3. From this passage we learn that:
  - a. The offices of the Church are to equip the laity for the work of the ministry. Ministers are really equippers to help the laity be ministers.
  - b. The work of the ministry results in the building up of the body of Christ. Each activity of the ministry is to be judged by this criterion — does it build the Body? It is truly a proper function of the ministry only when it does.
  - c. The goals of the ministry are unity in and the maturing of Christ's body. God's plan is to unite all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). The Church as the prototype of God's will for the universe must also be united in Christ. Thus as God's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10), the Church demonstrates tangibly that God is interested in breaking down barriers between men. The Church is also to get beyond the immaturity shown in factions and to reflect the image of Jesus Christ.
  - d. This maturity takes place in a lifestyle characterized by truth and love. Truth (the objective aspect) and love (the subjective aspect) are to characterize the members of Christ's body. The verb "speak the truth" means more than just uttering correct words. It means dealing truthfully or being truthful. Thus, it encompasses one's entire lifestyle. The edification of the Body takes place only when love is present.
  - e. Jesus Christ is central to the growth of the Body. He is the Head of the Body, without whom the Body is dead and meaningless. It is to Christ's full stature that the Body is growing, and through Him that bodily growth takes place.

#### 3. The Bride (Ephesians 5:21–33).

1. Here Paul interwove his theology of the relationship between Christ and the Church and that of a husband and wife. He gave us these insights into Christ's relationship with the Church:
  - a. Christ and the Church are united in a deep relationship of submission and love. Just as a wife is to be in submission to her husband, so the Church is to be subjected to Christ. Just as a husband is to love his wife, so Christ loves the Church. There should be a perfect balance of the two elements.
  - b. Christ's sacrifice on the Cross was to create a sanctified, clean, glorious, and whole Church. Just as Christ's love for the Church was demonstrated in His sacrifice on the Cross, so the Church's submission to Christ is demonstrated in her progress of

sanctification. The Church is to be holy as a grateful response to Christ's love.

- c. Christ continually feeds and takes care of the Church. The verbs "feed" and "care for" are in the present tense, denoting continual or repeated action. Christ's concern for and sustaining of the Church did not cease with His sacrifice on the Cross, but is a present reality.

## CONCLUSION

The Church is a united, growing, maturing community of people where Christ is central and members minister to one another as they speak the truth in love.

## Food That Fills

NATHANIEL RHOADS, Winnemucca, Nevada

TEXT: Matthew 4:1–4; John 4:31–35

### INTRODUCTION

Approaching a corporate fast there are two activities necessary to sustain, energize, and guide us: the Word and work of God. Meditating on God's Word and participating in God's work will enable us to be fed and be fruitful in this season of fasting (and any season).

### MESSAGE

#### 1. Meditate on God's Word (Matthew 4:1–4)

- a. Satan will tempt during seasons of spiritual renewal.
- b. Resist temptation with the truth of God's Word.
- c. Scripture is the food for a fast, providing substance by which to live.
- d. You will grow away from immature dependency on material things and grow closer to God through mature communion through the Word.

#### 2. Participate in God's Work (John 4:31–35)

- a. As food provides essential sustenance, doing God's will provides satisfaction and strength.
- b. As food provides joyful pleasure, doing God's will is our highest pleasure, filling us with true joy.
- c. Rather than depleting strength, doing God's work is an energizing activity.
- d. God's will is salvation and His work is proclaiming the gospel, building the Kingdom in all the earth.

## CONCLUSION

Fasting is daring: it loosens our dependency on physical, material things and extends our dependency on God. Two things will help you: God's Word (read, meditate, memorize, and pray it) and God's work (keep your eyes open to observe where God invites you to participate in His harvest). As you let God's Word fill you, to every person to whom He leads you, to every place where He takes you, and to every task to which He calls you, let God's work proceed from you.

## God's Eternal Kingdom

JAY HERNDON, Elk Grove, California

TEXT: John 15:18–25; 16:1–4; 17:14–18

### INTRODUCTION

The disciples believed that Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom that would win over society. They were in for a rude awakening.

Jesus explained to the disciples that the world (including the religious world) would hate, excommunicate, and kill Christians. Nevertheless, Jesus has not removed believers from the world, but sent believers to the world on a mission.

### MESSAGE

#### 1. Jesus has established a new Kingdom.

- a. The Christians are the called out ones. Believers have a new loyalty.
- b. Christians have a dual citizenship. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21). But what is Caesar's, and what is God's?

#### 2. There is conflict between the kingdom of God and the world.

- a. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness" (Matthew 5:10–12). "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).
- b. The Romans believed Christians were disloyal citizens. Instead of "Caesar is Lord," Christians said, "No king but Christ."
- c. The world will always hate those who do not conform.

#### 3. Jesus asks believers to be distinct from the world.

- a. "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:15,16).
- b. The Christian is fundamentally not a part of this society. Do not get too comfortable with it.

#### 4. Jesus sends believers to minister to the world.

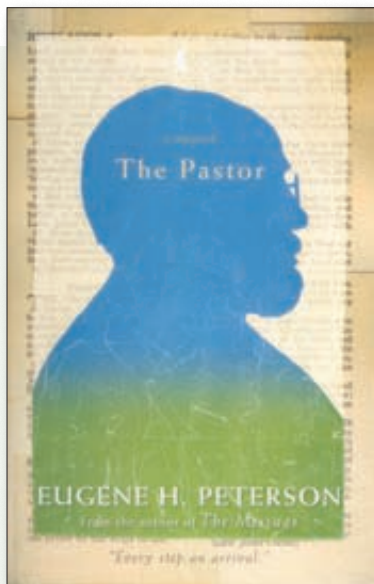
- a. Separation from the world is only part of the requirement. Jesus sends the believer back into the world to be a witness.
- b. In the world and of the world?  
Not in the world, but of the world?  
Not in the world and not of the world?  
In the world, but not of the world?  
In the world and not of the world, but sent to the world.
- c. Having a right relationship with the world does not mean you abandon it, but that you are an ambassador to it.

## CONCLUSION

When believers understand their obligations to the world, and fulfill them, revival will break out in their hearts.

For additional sermons, visit <http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org>.  
Look under Resources for Practical Ministry.





**The Pastor: A Memoir**

## The Pastor: A Memoir

EUGENE H. PETERSON (*HarperOne, 336 pp., hardcover*)

**W**ithin moments of his introductory statement, "This book is the story of my formation as a pastor and how the vocation of pastor formed me," Peterson opens up your imagination through his outstanding gift of story telling. As he journeys through his Pentecostal upbringing, aversion to pastors/pastoring, educational pursuits, stumbling into Presbyterianism, 30 years of pastoring (the same church), and ultimate commissioning to write *The Message*, this book is a must-read for pastors looking for deeply relevant, spiritual truth.

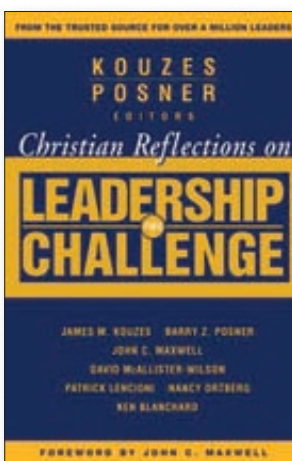
Cutting across the pragmatism of common pastoral helps today, Peterson weaves his theme throughout his book: "Pastoral tradition is not someone who 'gets things done' but rather the person placed in the community to pay attention and call attention to 'what is going on right now' between men and women, with another, and with God — this kingdom of God that is primarily local, relentlessly personal, and prayerful 'without ceasing.'"

Peterson's collaborating with God is refreshing. He trusts God. He allows God to work in His time in the hearts of his parishioners and the community he seeks to reach. Amidst the stresses of personal life and public ministry, you sense an abiding, confident rest to his life and ministry.

Peterson reveals his personal journey of forging his own pastoral theology. He tells of struggles, shifts, and epiphanies along the way: "the Badlands" where he questioned his effectiveness, to his awakening that a pastor's call is "not to fix people. It is to lead people in the worship of God and to lead them in living a holy life." He is troubled by church leaders today who turn "each congregation into a market for religious consumers, an ecclesiastical business run along the lines of advertising techniques, organizational flow charts, and energized by impressive motivational rhetoric." He weaves an alternative philosophy of ministry throughout the book.

Like a spiritual father leaving his most personal thoughts to his children, *The Pastor*, should be a well-received legacy by today's pastor.

— Reviewed by Jeff Peterson, senior pastor, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.



**Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge**

## Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge

JAMES M. KOUZES AND BARRY Z. POSNER, ED.  
(*Jossey-Bass, 152 pp., paperback*)

James Kouzes and Barry Posner have taken experiential data from their thousands of "Leadership Practice Inventories" and discovered that regardless of level, place, discipline, style, race, age, gender, religion, or personality, leaders show similar behaviors. They call these behavior patterns "The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership." Leaders:

1. model the way.
2. inspire a shared vision.
3. challenge the process.
4. enable others to act.
5. encourage the heart.

This book is about how Christian leaders might apply these five practices in mobilizing

others to get extraordinary things done. Kouzes and Posner asked five recognized Christian leaders to reflect on these five practices: John Maxwell, David McAllister-Wilson, Patrick Lencioni, Nancy Ortberg, and Ken Blanchard.

Five strong themes weave together these Christian reflections on the leadership challenge. They give us a deeper appreciation for how faith informs and supports leadership. They also demonstrate that Christian leaders have an important contribution to make to our understanding of the dynamics of the leadership relationship.

One of the more compelling teaching points of the book is found at the end of each chapter, where the author creates five questions for reflection. The questions are meaningful, thought provoking, and establish an entirely fresh aspect of the book.

The most significant contributions leaders

make are not to today's bottom line, say these authors, but to the long-term development of people and institutions that adapt, prosper, and grow.

These authors are worth reading. They bring an invaluable wealth of expertise to the subject of leadership and communicate with excellence and passion.

— Reviewed by T. Ray Rachels,  
former district superintendent,  
Southern California District of the Assemblies of God, Irvine, California.

## Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ

ROBERT M. BOWMAN, JR. AND J. ED KOMOSZEWSKI  
(Kregel, 392 pp., paperback)

In recent years, opponents of Christianity have attacked Jesus' divine status by claiming that Christians never worshiped Jesus as God until the time of Constantine. Bowman and Komoszewski's book, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ*, shows that the divinity of Christ was not an afterthought of the fourth-century church, but was the firm belief of the first-century biblical writers.

The authors use the acronym HANDS to communicate the Bible's teaching about Christ's deity: Jesus shares the honors, attributes, names, and deeds of God; and occupies the seat of God's throne. Rather than relying on a handful of proof texts, the authors show that throughout the New Testament, the writers reveal Jesus as divine while upholding the Old Testament commitment to monotheism. *Putting Jesus in His Place* also includes 74 pages of extensive content notes, a convenient review table of the main points, and a helpful Scripture index, making it a valuable reference.

The book's strengths lie in its readable style and detailed examination. Its chief weakness is that the authors framed most of the arguments to answer Jehovah's Witnesses, rather than secular opponents. More space devoted to explaining the relevance of this debate for everyday Christian living would be welcome. Notwithstanding these minor drawbacks, the book makes a useful reference for pastors, a valuable study tool for those desiring a better grasp of Christology, and a profitable text for small-group discussions.

— Reviewed by Tim Lord, M.Div.,  
student, Global University, Springfield, Missouri

## Has Christianity Failed You?

RAVI ZACHARIAS (Zondervan, 240 pp, hardcover)

How should Christians respond to those who have: (1) stumbled and fallen in their faith? (2) been affected by hypocrisy in the church? (3) unanswered intellectual questions? (4) been tripped up by challenges to biblical teaching?

When Ravi Zacharias spoke at Atlanta's renowned Fox Theatre addressing the theme, "Has Christianity Failed You (and What Does That Say About Jesus)?" organizers were astonished as over 5,000 people packed the auditorium. Following this event, Zacharias began writing, according to him, "one of the most important books I have written."

While containing apologetic material, numerous anecdotes allow the general reader entrance into helpful truths. I found myself highlighting many sentences and paragraphs.

Chapters include, "Who is Jesus?"; "What Does It Mean to Be a Christian?"; "Points of Tension"; Does Prayer Make Any Difference?"; and "What Difference Does Christianity Make?" Readers need to know that the issue of eternal security is not a theme of this book.

A recent Pew Research study reveals that 67 percent of those surveyed believe religion is losing its influence. Writer Anne Rice recently made headlines by "quitting Christianity." Pastors today only dream of what size their church would be if those who prayed the sinner's prayer continued in their walk with Jesus. This book will help alert readers to see the broken person in every pew, and know how to respond.

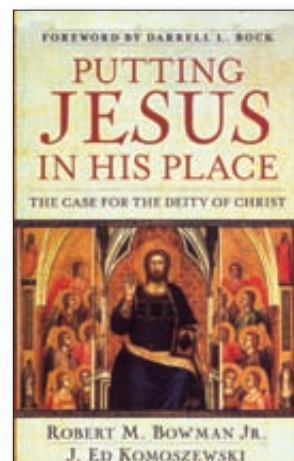
— Reviewed by Guy Fisher, lead pastor, First Assembly of God,  
Atlantic, Iowa, and executive secretary of the Iowa Ministry Network.

## The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism

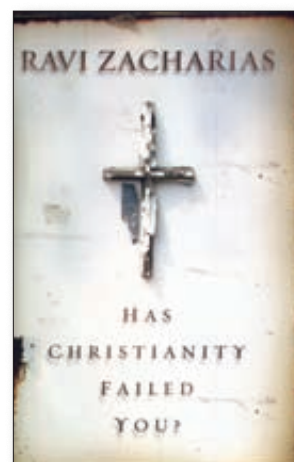
MARGARET M. POLOMA AND JOHN C. GREEN (New York University Press, 259 pp., hardback)

Margaret M. Poloma and John C. Green, professors at the University of Akron, specialize in the sociology and politics of American religion. Poloma has been a long-time student and a sympathetic observer of the Assemblies of God. She has written copiously about the denomination.

Poloma and Green categorize the various



Putting Jesus in His Place:  
The Case for the Deity of Christ

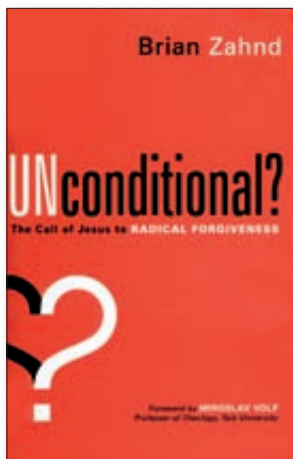


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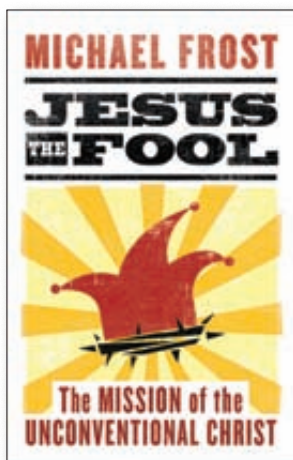


The Assemblies of God: Godly Love  
and the Revitalization of American  
Pentecostalism





UNconditional? The Call of Jesus to Radical Forgiveness



Jesus the Fool: The Mission of the Unconventional Christ

Assemblies of God congregations they studied into four groupings: "traditional," "evangelical Pentecostal," "renewalist," and "alternative." "Traditional" churches identify with classical Pentecostals and embody a strong emphasis on the supernatural. "Evangelical Pentecostals" have a strong identification with classical Pentecostals, but not scoring as high on the presence of the supernatural. "Renewalist" churches, although not as numerous, affirm the supernatural, but are less interested in their identity as Pentecostals. "Alternative" congregations tend to avoid labels. They contain within their ranks seeker-sensitive groups and so-called "emergent" congregations. Their goal seems to be to reach the unreached by such means as meeting in nonchurch locations.

The authors make a strong case for providing these categories. However, this writer wishes the authors had better named the label "evangelical Pentecostalism." This label implies that, by identifying with traditional evangelical theology and hermeneutics in later years, the Assemblies of God churches in this classification have tended to substitute rationality for personal experience. This is an unfortunate conclusion.

The underlying thesis of this project was to demonstrate the various ways Pentecostal experience embodies "Godly love." This was somewhat baffling. The central focus of the Pentecostal experience has been to see baptism in the Spirit as empowering for Christian witness — not primarily for cultivating interior holiness, or "Godly love." It is expected that sanctification will follow this empowering, but, it is not the primary objective.

The book is well supplied with an abundance of documentation and statistical data. It is a positive affirmation about the Assemblies of God and is optimistic about its future. This is a penetrating and useful study which laymen and pastors alike will enjoy.

— Reviewed by William W. Menzies, Ph.D.,  
longtime Assemblies of God educator and missions consultant,  
Springfield, Missouri.

## UNconditional? The Call of Jesus to Radical Forgiveness

BRIAN ZAHND (*Charisma House, 229 pp., hardcover*)

*UNconditional* is a clear expression of a pastor who believes that being a follower of Jesus requires some serious reprioritization for the average

Christian. From the biblical themes Zahnd chooses to his historical examples, the author reminds the reader that Christianity in America is contributing significantly to its own increased impotence.

The foreword by Miroslav Volf provides a glimpse into why this eminent theologian, with Pentecostal roots, found Zahnd's book so appealing. Volf describes the book as an urgent summons to give up on consumerism and hostility toward those who differ from us and begin to practice generous and forgiving grace.

This book may cause discomfort to the reader (as it did for me) because it reveals the subtleties of assumptions that American Christians have which they have not critiqued. But far from being some trendy effort at reconciliation and peace that has little biblical substance, Zahnd weaves together biblical theology and its contextual application in a clear and concise manner. Zahnd is thoroughly engaged with such elements as philosophy, film, and literature that become a rich contextual backdrop for his biblically rooted conceptual framework. Zahnd develops the central event of the Cross as foundation for the daunting challenges he delivers to the reader. The juxtapositioning of the power of the Cross and the resulting forgiveness is one of the strengths of this volume.

*UNconditional* is not an easy read. It will leave you uncomfortable because we all have areas in our lives we need to yield to the spiritual discipline of forgiveness. But if you are ready for a daunting spiritual challenge, *UNconditional* may be just the book to move you toward new spiritual horizons.

— Reviewed by Byron D. Klaus, D.Min., president,  
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

## Jesus the Fool: The Mission of the Unconventional Christ

MICHAEL FROST (*Hendrickson, 208 pp., paperback*)

*Jesus played the fool.* This is a shocking thing to say, yet this is what Michael Frost claims in his provocative book, *Jesus the Fool: The Mission of the Unconventional Christ*. Before we jump to unfair conclusions, let me be clear: Frost writes with a deep love for Christ. He simply believes we need to rediscover the Jesus of the Gospels.

Frost reminds us that in Jesus' life and ministry He defies the conventional wisdom

and expectations of the Messiah. He then takes His "foolishness" a step further by consciously playing the fool. At times, Christ assumes a role similar to a court jester.

With insightful exegesis of five parables from the Gospel of Luke, Frost demonstrates how Jesus plays the fool to reframe the way we see forgiveness, our brokenness, our relationship with God, our view of others, and our attitude toward the poor. By changing the frame in which we see events, Jesus changes the meaning of those events. In changing the meaning, He changes our responses and behaviors.

With relatable stories and masterful explanations of the social and cultural setting behind each parable, *Jesus the Fool* is surprisingly practical and theologically rich. Frost has not only given us a stimulating book to read, but also a refreshing picture of our Savior — Jesus.

— Reviewed by Brian Thomas, M.A., senior pastor,  
Good News Assembly of God, Falls City, Nebraska.

## Managing the Millennials — Discover the Core Competencies for Managing Today's Workforce

CHIP ESPINOZA, MICK UKLEJA, CRAIG RUSCH (Wiley  
Publishers, 172 pp., hardcover)

When I first heard about *Managing the Millennials — Discover the Core Competencies for Managing Today's Workforce*, the title grabbed my attention. I was intrigued because I work with churches and ministries assisting them in their journey to impact young adults for the kingdom of God. I work hard "sounding the alarm" for ministry to Millennials (described in the book as those in their twenties). Pastors and leaders often ask, "Yeah, but how?"

This book helps answer the how. While the authors speak from a secular perspective, pastors can easily translate the principles into the church community.

On page 4, the authors state, "Businesses are struggling to keep pace with a new generation of young people entering the workforce who have starkly different attitudes and desires from employees over the past few decades." Allow to me adjust this quote for church leaders: "Ministries are struggling to keep pace with a new generation of young people entering the church who have starkly different attitudes and desires from members over the past few decades."

This book informs the reader of the core

competencies of this generation. It also provides practical and proven management practices that pastors can transfer to church leadership. For example, the authors show how to address issues of entitlement, autonomy, and constant social connectivity, to name a few.

My wife and I read a few chapters every night and then discussed ways we could apply this material. The authors help answer more questions than any book I have read on this subject.

This book could potentially change your ministry, and I highly recommend it for any pastor, staff pastor, volunteer leader, board member, or church attendee. If you desire to connect with college and twentysomethings at a higher capacity, this book is fantastic. It is well written, an engaging read, very informative, and full of value for you to grow your ministry.

— Reviewed by Ryan Moore, Assemblies of God young  
adult ministry coordinator, Springfield, Missouri.

## Against All Gods: What's Right, and Wrong About the New Atheism

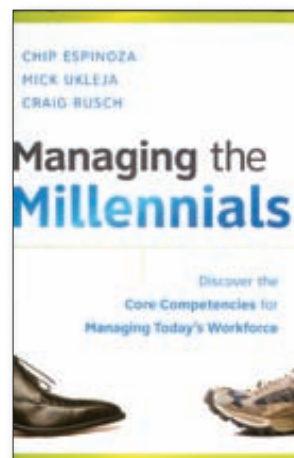
PHILLIP E. JOHNSON, JOHN MARK REYNOLDS (Inter-  
Varsity, 119 pp., paperback)

*Against All Gods* is a great introduction to the new atheism for any student planning on attending a secular college. This book introduces many of the names and difficult topics of the new atheist movement. It reads easily and puts many of the concepts in terms people can understand.

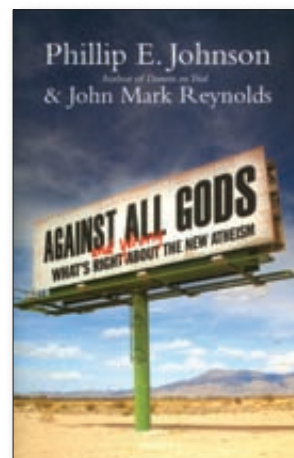
The authors present some of the topics every student needs to consider before entering college: How will my faith mix with reason and education? How should I approach a Darwinian worldview that dominates secular education? What is the purpose of being educated? While learning new things in college, how should I consider my Bible — an ancient book — compared to the new textbooks I must read?

Pastors need to consider buying this book for every young person in their church who will start college in the fall. After a student has read it, the pastor could then meet with him or her to discuss the material. While the stated purpose of the authors is to fairly address modern atheists, pastors could use it to give a strong foundation to Christian students entering a secular college.

— Reviewed by Paul Scheperle, senior pastor, First  
Assembly of God, Washington, Missouri, and adjunct instructor of  
Humanities at Missouri Baptist University.



Managing the Millennials —  
Discover the Core Competencies for  
Managing Today's Workforce



Against All Gods: What's Right, and  
Wrong, About the New Atheism



## National Girls Ministries Introduces Luna the Lamb

**N**ational Girls Ministries is committed to the Acts 2 model of ministry to girls. Missions education is a key element of a girl's spiritual growth and at the root of all that Girls Ministries is about. An important part of this missions focus for the elementary-age girls is the annual Coins for Kids project.

Each year NGM selects a project that specifically affects the well-being and spiritual development of children. Project videos have taken girls to India, Native American outreaches in Arizona, Bolivia, Romania, Thailand, Belgium, and Hillcrest Children's Home, Hot Springs, Ark.

To help girls connect with the purpose of Coins for Kids, NGM created Luna the Lamb, a character who introduces girls to missions in general and to the annual projects. Luna the Lamb will be the mascot for Coins for Kids, providing a more kid-friendly way to teach about the importance of missions and the annual projects. This character will allow the Sleepover theme and Coins for Kids project to be more closely connected by incorporating Luna the Lamb into the Sleepover resources. She will guide girls through the project information and leaders will have resources featuring her that will help them emphasize missions education.

For more information about Luna the Lamb and Coins for Kids, visit [ngmevents.ag.org/cfk](http://ngmevents.ag.org/cfk).



## 2011 National Girls Ministries Week and Nationwide Sleepover

**The national Girls Ministries Department offers churches two resources to emphasize and celebrate all girls.**

The 2011 NGM Week is Sept. 11–17. The annual theme is "Beautiful in His Season," supported by Ecclesiastes 3:11. Churches can use this theme as a focus for the entire year or for an event during NGM Week or other Girls Ministries events. The purpose is to help church leaders mentor girls with God's truth in the midst of an over-sexualized culture, teaching girls to



take time to develop their relationship with God and recognize their true source of beauty.

The annual Nationwide Girls Ministries Sleepover for elementary-age girls is Sept. 23, 24. This year's theme is "Themba Safari." Each year NGM

selects a theme to correspond with the Coins for Kids missions project so girls learn about the project in a variety of ways. This year Coins for Kids funds will help bring hope to South African children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS by establishing Children's Resource Centers. The centers will offer healthy meals, tutoring, activities, ministry, and if needed, counseling. All Coins for Kids funds sent to the national Girls Ministries Department will be included in your

church's total BGMC giving. To find out more about the current Coins for Kids project, visit [ngmevents.ag.org/cfk](http://ngmevents.ag.org/cfk).

Planning materials for NGM Week, Sleepover, and Coins for Kids resources can be found on the NGM website, [ngmevents.ag.org](http://ngmevents.ag.org). These materials will also be mailed to all churches that purchased Girls Ministries product during the previous year. For more information, contact the national office at 1.417.862.2781, ext. 4074 or e-mail: [ngm@ag.org](mailto:ngm@ag.org).



Melanie Griffin, Pastor Kevin Griffin, Wes Bartel, John Johnson, and Lena Johnson

## 2011 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

**National Discipleship Ministries Agency awarded John Johnson the 2011 Teacher of the Year.** Johnson teaches a third through fifth grade boys Sunday School class at Cornerstone Church, Winnie, Tex. Pastor Kevin Griffin praised Johnson for living the life, as well as sharing the message. Pastor Griffin said, "What a joy to serve with a man like this." One member of Johnson's class stated, "Our teacher is the coolest guy I know."

Johnson is a teacher at East Chambers School where he serves as basketball coach. Cornerstone Church receives \$1,000 in resources from Assemblies of God publications, and national Discipleship Ministries Agency is sending the Johnsons on a cruise.

To nominate your teacher for the 2012 Teacher of the Year, visit [discipleship.ag.org](http://discipleship.ag.org) and click on Teacher of the Year Nomination Forms. Deadline for the 2012 nominations is Oct. 3, 2011.

## Assemblies of God Bible Alliance Bible Sunday

**Each year on Bible Sunday, churches and individuals from across the nation join with Assemblies of God Bible Alliance** to help provide the *Fire Bible*, a Pentecostal study Bible, in one or more languages for overseas pastors and lay workers.

The theme for Bible Sunday 2011 is "Persecuted, But Not Abandoned," taken from 2 Corinthians 4:8,9.



This Bible Sunday's goal is to provide the *Fire Bible* in 12 languages for countries where Christians are being persecuted, including Burma, the Philippines, Iran, India, Cambodia, Russia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Vietnam.

A conservative estimate of the number of martyrs for Christ each year is 150,000. Through this Bible Sunday project, Assemblies of God Bible Alliance is sending a message to Christians around the world that though they are persecuted, they are not abandoned. Start planning your Bible Sunday emphasis for Dec. 11 or another Sunday that works best for your church calendar.

To order free Bible Sunday theme materials visit [BibleAlliance.org](http://BibleAlliance.org) or call 800.532.0440.



## Scholarships Available for Graduates of AG Schools

**September 15, 2011, is the application deadline** for the 2011 AG Next Generation Fund Scholarship. The application form, qualifications, and requirements are at [agtrust.org](http://agtrust.org).

The AG Next Generation Fund helps graduates of AG colleges/universities/seminary repay their student loans while participating in full-time ministry. Sponsored by the Assemblies of God Trust and the Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education, the fund pays a portion of the graduate's monthly loan payment, with award amounts made on a case-by-case basis. Recipients agree to provide at least 5 years of full-time ministry service.

"We are investing in the next generation of our Fellowship through this fund," says George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, "because we believe these young people will effectively reach multiplied thousands of people for Christ."

A committee of the Alliance for AG Higher Education, chaired by Robert Cook, executive vice president, awards AG Next Generation Fund scholarships annually. To date, 45 graduates (23 graduates in 2009 and 22 graduates in 2010) are recipients of AG Next Generation Fund scholarships.

## MISSION: 20/20 — The Optical Focus of HealthCare Ministries



**MISSION: 20/20 is the optical focus of HealthCare Ministries.** Optical care is an important part of our medical evangelism. When HCM teams present sight-impaired patients with a pair of eyeglasses, they experience instant results that lead not only to physical sight, but often to an immediate openness to the gospel.

Millions of people around the world cannot see well and do not have access to optical care. HCM's optical teams bring eyeglasses and basic eye care to parts of the world where many have no hope. While they receive eye care, they receive an expression of Christ's love through our touch and an explanation of His saving grace through our testimony. Many accept Christ during this encounter. Often, seeing leads to believing.

HCM's goal is to deliver 2 million and 20 glasses to people who need them by year 2020. You can get your church involved by donating gently used eyeglasses for MISSION: 20/20 or by sending a financial gift. For more information, contact HCM at mission2020@healthcareministries.org or visit us on the Web at [healthcareministries.org/mission-2020](http://healthcareministries.org/mission-2020) to order a promotional packet and donation drop box.



**Coined by U.S. Missions Executive Director Zollie Smith, the "We Are There" campaign** encompasses our mission "to fulfill the Great Commission in the United States through missionaries, chaplains and project volunteers." Through our Seven Windows of ministry, U.S. Missions missionaries serve an extremely diverse group of communities and individuals throughout the United States.

"We are there" is a dynamic statement that reflects our mission, vision, and ministries. From urban neighborhoods to rodeos, hospitals to bike rallies. . . . We are there so none perish.

To learn more about Seven Windows of ministry, visit [usmissions.ag.org](http://usmissions.ag.org).

## U.S. Missions Candidate Orientation

**Just as Jesus commissioned early Christians** to reach Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the world, U.S. Missions is dedicated to reaching America for Christ. We embrace the same commission and want to start in our own Jerusalem — the United States.

U.S. Missions hosts two orientation sessions each year for new missionary candidates who share this

missional vision. Candidate orientation consists of interviews, training, evaluation, and preparing candidates for the emotionally and spiritually challenging aspects of mission work. The week concludes with the Candidate Launch Service.

### 2012 Candidate Orientation Dates

- Spring application deadline: December 12, 2011
- Spring orientation: March 17–23, 2012
- Fall application deadline: June 18, 2012
- Fall orientation: September 15–21, 2012

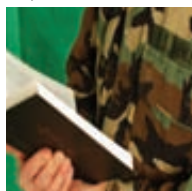
For more information, contact Paul Curtis at 417.862.2781, ext. 3269.

## U.S. Missions Chaplaincy Ministries

**The ministry of chaplains extends beyond the military or hospitals.**

While these are two of the most common ministries associated with chaplains, they are not the only areas. Chaplains also minister to the lost and hurting in prisons, corporations, police and fire departments, and even at bike rallies, rodeos, racetracks, and disaster sites.

On Nov. 7, AGTV's program *Seven Windows to America* features Chaplaincy Ministries. Look behind the curtain and understand the unique and sometimes surprising ministry of Assemblies of God chaplains at [agtv.ag.org/seven-windows-to-america](http://agtv.ag.org/seven-windows-to-america).



## New Online Discipleship Tool

**eBible Learning is a new discipleship tool** developed by the Assemblies of God Discipleship Ministries Agency. Similar to online college courses, *eBible Learning* classes are completely online. The convenience and flexibility of *eBible Learning* surpasses other discipleship methods. Users enjoy interactive learning components: video lectures, life-application journals, Scripture-memorization tools, and review quizzes.

Assemblies of God Discipleship Ministries Agency Director Wes Bartel says, "The great thing about *eBible Learning* is that the courses are ready no matter what time it is or where you are. Pastors and leaders can connect to small groups, track the learning progress of group members, and communicate with them via e-mail." Along with basic discipleship courses, *eBible Learning* also allows churches to create customized materials for their membership.

Currently, discipleship and training materials in *eBible Learning* are available through a convenient sliding-scale subscription based on church size and number of users. Churches that subscribe will receive access to 12 topical studies, with additional studies set to release in coming months.

Subscriptions will be available by General Council 2011. Visit [ChurchTrainingNetwork.com](http://ChurchTrainingNetwork.com) for more information.

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# SANCTIFIED AND CALLED TO BE HOLY

BY GEORGE PAUL WOOD



**E**very morning as I get ready for work I look in the mirror and see a perfect image of myself — in reverse. I part my hair on the left, but in the mirror my part appears on the right. Unfortunately, the mirror does not reverse my male-pattern baldness.

The church in Corinth was a church in the mirror. Everything was in reverse. The Church is supposed to be united, but the Corinthian church was divided (1 Corinthians 1:10 through 4:21). The Church is supposed to be sexually moral, but the church in Corinth was sexually immoral (5:1–13; 6:12–20). The Church is supposed to resolve conflicts, but the Corinthian church was driven by lawsuits (6:1–11).

should be: “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours” (1:2).

Notice four things:

First, the church is God’s church. The Corinthian church was a partisan bunch that proudly lined up behind their favorite apostle, and then fought over which of those apostles was most important. One group upped the spiritual ante by lining up behind Jesus, but evidently even they were acting out of pride and partisanship (1:10–12). The apostles, like Paul, no doubt frowned on these antics. Why? Because the church at Corinth does not belong to Paul or Peter or

are clear on this basic point.

Second, the church is *in* but not *of* the world. Gordon Fee describes Corinth as “at once the New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of the ancient world.” It was a center of commerce, entertainment, and loose living. The historian Strabo coined the term *corinthianize* to describe the gross sexual immorality of old Corinth. (The city may have changed by Paul’s day.) But instead of resisting the city’s sins, the church perpetuated them. It was both *in* and *of* Corinth.

Third, the church both *is* and *in* process of *becoming* holy. In Greek, the words *sanctified* and *holy* are related: *hagιάzō* and *hágios*. In Christ Jesus, God has made — past tense — the Church holy. But in Christ Jesus, He also calls — present tense — the Church to be holy. We must become what, in Christ, we already are. Holy people must become holier, without getting holier than thou.

We cannot overemphasize this third point. Our deeds do not make us holy. God makes us holy in Christ Jesus and through the Holy Spirit. Our deeds express, manifest, and embody the sanctifying work God has already performed. We do not work toward our holiness; we work from it. If we get this point wrong, we inevitably begin to pursue a works- and rules-based version of holiness that is doomed to Pharisaic self-righteousness and total spiritual failure.

And finally, the Church is universal. The church is in Corinth, but it’s also in New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas. Our little corner of the world has not cornered the Jesus market. He does not belong to us; we belong to Him, and to everyone else who calls on His name.

God sanctifies us, and He is calling us to be holy. So, let’s be the Church God intended, not its mirror image. ☪

**Our deeds do not make us holy.  
God makes us holy in Christ  
Jesus and through the Holy Spirit.**

First Corinthians was Paul’s response to problems he had either heard about from friends (1:10 through 6:20) or read about in a no-longer-extant letter from the Corinthians (7:1 through 16:12). Morally and theologically, the church in Corinth was the mirror image of what it should have been.

And so, at the start of his letter, Paul reminded the Corinthians of who they

Apollos (the three leaders Paul specifically named). It belongs to God. There can be no end to the divisions that still plague the church until we



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