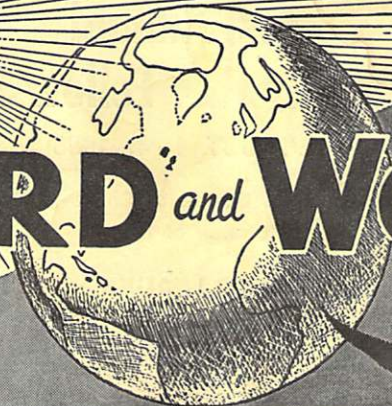


"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."



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"Holding forth the Word of life."

JUNE, 1988

STRONGER LOVE, STRONGER HOMES

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41st Annual Louisville Christian Fellowship Week

AUGUST 1 - 4, 1988

Day Sessions: Portland Avenue Church of Christ

Evening Sessions: Sellersburg Church of Christ

THEME: "GOD'S PLAN FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH"

MONDAY

7:30 - 8:00 SINGING
8:00 - 8:45 "God's Plan for Leadership in the Church" Orell Overman

TUESDAY

"THE RESPONSIBLE ELDER"

9:30 - 10:00 PRAYER TIME
10:00 - 10:50 "The Qualified Elder" (Acts 20:17-35; I Tim. 3) Victor Broaddus
10:50 - 11:00 BREAK
11:00 - 11:50 "The Elder as a Leader" (1 Pet. 5:3) Dale Offutt
12:00 - 1:00 LUNCH
1:00 - 1:50 "The Elder as a Protector" (John 10:11) Doug Broyles
1:50 - 2:00 BREAK
2:00 - 2:50 "The Elder as an Exhorter" (John 21:16) Ken Stockdale
7:30 - 8:00 SINGING
8:00 - 8:45 "Follow the Leader" (1 Tim. 5:1) Paul Kitzmiller

WEDNESDAY

"THE RESPONSIBLE DEACON"

9:30 - 10:00 PRAYER TIME
10:00 - 10:50 "The Qualified Deacon" (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13) Victor Broaddus
10:50 - 11:00 BREAK
11:00 - 11:50 "The Deacon as a Servant" (Phil. 2:5-7) Harry Coultas
12:00 - 1:00 LUNCH
1:00 - 1:50 "The Deacon as a Steward" (Matt. 25) Mike Elaman
1:50 - 2:00 BREAK
2:00 - 2:50 "The Deacon as an Evangelist" (Acts 7, 8) Steve Smith
7:30 - 8:00 SINGING
8:00 - 8:45 "A Servant's Reward" (2 Tim. 4:7) Robert Garrett

THURSDAY

"THE RESPONSIBLE MINISTER"

9:30 - 10:00 PRAYER TIME
10:00 - 10:50 "The Qualified Minister" (1 Cor. 3:5-11) Victor Broaddus
10:50 - 11:00 BREAK
11:00 - 11:50 "A Good Minister—Preaching the Word" (1 Tim. 4:1-6) Paul Heid
12:00 - 1:00 LUNCH
1:00 - 1:50 "A Good Minister—Practicing the Word" (1 Tim. 4:7-12) Jesse Wood
1:50 - 2:00 BREAK
2:00 - 2:50 "A Good Minister—Progressing in the Word" (I Tim. 3:13-16) Nathan Burks
7:30 - 8:00 SINGING
8:00 - 8:45 "Organized to Evangelize" (Matt. 28:18-20) Earl C. Mullins, Jr

Dennis Kaufman will lead young people's sessions on Tues., Wed. & Thurs. nights.

THE WORD AND WORK

"A monthly magazine set to declare the whole counsel of God."

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

The Word and Work (USPS 691-460) is published monthly except December for \$6 per year, bundles of 10 or more to one address \$5.50, by the Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, Ky. 40212. Second class postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, Ky. 40212

Vol. LXXXII

JUNE, 1988

No. 6

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THEME:

Stronger Love, Stronger Homes

Love—So Amazing, So Divine

Alex V. Wilson



“Ah, sweet mystery of life, at last I’ve found thee,” said a famous love song of perhaps fifty years ago. Indeed, love is mysterious, and a many-splendored thing; who can fully explain it? This month we explore some of its different facets. As an *emotion*, love’s flames need to be kept fueled, so James Dobson shares hints for keeping the fire burning brightly. But as a chosen path of conduct—a *freely-willed attitude* or principle—love needs to be followed, acted on regardless of the emotional temperature within. If the fire does fade, the marriage vows are still binding and call upon us to live by principle, not passion; by conviction, not convenience. Sheldon Vanauken, author of *A Severe Mercy*, expounds this theme for us.

Fires can get out of hand, and so can love—erotic love, that is. A short article tells about the very destructive effects of unbridled passion. We should not be surprised that fire blazes out of control when gasoline is poured on it! But at the same time, we Christians must make it clear that God, not Satan, invented sex. The Biblical view is not “NO, because it’s bad,” but “WAIT, because it can be so good.”

But how can our strong impulses (not just sexual, but of all kinds) be harnessed? How can we control them? Read the article, “Recurring Sin.” And regarding the whole issue of emotions and their place in the Christian life, see what R.H.Boll has to say.

Going the 4th Mile

An old French tale portrays the depths of motherly-love. A young man became passionately infatuated with an insanely jealous young woman. To test his love, she demanded before she would marry him that he bring her the heart of his mother. Crazy with desire, he killed his mother and cut out her heart. Carrying his monstrous token of love, he dashed back to his lover; but in his haste he stumbled and fell headlong on the cobblestones. As he lay there bruised and bleeding, his mother’s heart cried out, “Oh my poor son, are you hurt? Are you hurt?”

What a picture of Calvary-love that tale presents! But true stories illustrate this point better than fiction. From church history

we take three examples of incredible love. First, from the times of the Reformation: "Facing arrest as an Anabaptist, Dirck Willems fled for his life across a frozen lake. When his pursuer broke through the ice, Willems gave up his chance to escape by turning to save his persecutor. He was then captured, imprisoned, and burned at the stake in 1569" (*Christian History* magazine). Love is costly.

The following incident occurred during the Korean War. Communists raided the home of a believer, and shot and killed his wife and father. They thought they had killed him too, but he recovered from his critical wounds. Upon regaining his health and strength, he went to the home of the leader of the raid—but not with soldiers, police, or a gun. Instead he took the gospel of forgiveness and new life through Christ, and led the man to faith in that loving Savior.

From the same land and era comes the book entitled *The Triumph of Pastor Son*. While the Communists controlled the region where he lived, two young Communists beat up and killed the son of this Christian minister. Shortly after this, the democratic army retook the area. But instead of having the two killers punished, the minister interceded to have their lives spared. And because their relatives had all been killed in the war, he even adopted them as his own sons! What a picture of our Heavenly Father's grace.

Such stories are valuable as reflections of divine love. Yet most of us will never face circumstances like those, so perhaps the following illustration will be a more practical challenge. During the 1960's a long-haired, straggly-bearded, barefoot hippie entered a nice, middle-class church meeting one Sunday morning, about halfway through the service. It was crowded, so he ambled down the aisle looking for a seat. But no seats were available, at least near the aisle. He kept getting closer to the front of the auditorium—every eye on him by now. Finally he reached the front without having found a seat, so he sat down on the floor.

Everyone held their breath as the head usher started walking down the aisle from the rear. Could he convince someone to move over and give the hippie a place? Or would he try to get the fellow to move to a seat in the rear—or even ask him to leave entirely? And how would the hippie respond to the usher? Would he resist and make a scene?

Finally the usher reached the front . . . and sat down on the floor beside him. What creative love was expressed in that action. Lord, give each of us more of Your Calvary-love.

* * * * *

Keeping The Fire Alive

Dr. James Dobson

The Great Creator, when designing the blueprints for human beings, could have made us tough-minded, independent and secure. He could have made us impervious to emotional pain, even in response to rejection and ridicule. But he didn't. He designed us to be

sensitive and vulnerable to one another, even resembling a flock of insecure sheep.

Indeed, self-esteem, the cornerstone of a healthy personality, is largely dependent on *external* forces and influences. It cannot be bought or manufactured. Approval of ourselves is generated primarily by what we see reflected about us in the eyes of other people and in the eyes of God. There are a few individuals who are so secure and confident that they don't need the affirmation of their peers, but they are rare individuals. Furthermore, I doubt that they have an advantage over the rest of us. As Barbra Streisand expressed in her popular song, "People who need people are the luckiest people in the world."

Not only do we need each other, but males and females differ significantly in the way that need is manifested. A man derives his sense of worth primarily from the reputation he earns in his job or profession. He draws emotional satisfaction from achieving in business, becoming financially independent, developing a highly respected craft or skill, supervising others, becoming "boss," or being loved and appreciated by his patients, clients or fellow businessmen. The man who is successful in these areas does not depend on his wife as his *primary* shield against inferiority. Of course, she plays an important role as his companion and lover, but she isn't essential to his self-respect day by day.

By contrast, a homemaker approaches her marriage from a different perspective. She has less access to "other" sources of self-esteem commonly available to her husband. She can cook a good dinner, but once it is eaten, her family may not even remember to thank her for it. Her household duties do not bring her respect in the community, and she is not likely to be praised for the quality of her dusting techniques. Therefore, the more isolated she becomes, the more vital her man will be to her sense of fulfillment, confidence and well-being. He must be that primary source of romantic affection for her, and if he is not, she may find it difficult to fulfill her basic needs.

Let's reduce it to a useful oversimplification: men derive self-esteem by being *respected*; women feel worthy when they are *loved*. This may be the most important personality distinction between the sexes.

This understanding helps explain the unique views of marriage as seen by men and women. A man can be contented with a kind of business partnership in marriage, providing sexual privileges are part of the arrangement. As long as his wife prepares his dinner each evening, is reasonably amiable, and doesn't nag him during football season, he can be satisfied. The romantic element is nice—but not necessary. However, this kind of surface relationship frustrates his wife. She must have something more meaningful. Women yearn to be the special sweethearts of their men, being loved and appreciated with tenderness. This is why a homemaker often thinks about her husband during the day and eagerly awaits his arrival at night; it explains why their wedding anniversary is more important to her, and

why he gets clobbered when he forgets it. It explains why she is constantly "reaching" for him when he is at home, trying to pull him out of the newspaper or television set; it explains why *absence of romantic love* ranks so high among married women as a source of depression, whereas men would rate it somewhere in the vicinity of last place.

Unfortunately, women often find it difficult to convey their needs for romantic affection to their husbands. One fellow listened carefully as I explained the frustration his wife had expressed to me; he promptly went out and bought some flowers for her and rang the front doorbell. When she opened the door, he extended his arm and said, "Here!" Having met his marital responsibilities, he pushed past her and turned on the television set. She was not moved by his generosity.

Another man said, "I just don't understand my wife. She has everything she could possibly want. She has a dishwasher and a new dryer, and we live in a nice neighborhood. I don't drink or beat the kids or kick the dog. I've been faithful since the day we were married. But she's miserable and I can't figure out why!" His love-starved wife would have traded the dishwasher, the dryer and the dog for a single expression of genuine tenderness from her unromantic husband. Appliances do not build self-esteem; being somebody's sweetheart most certainly does.

THE 5000-YEAR-OLD SOLUTION

There is still no substitute for the biblical prescription for marriage, nor will its wisdom ever be replaced. A successful husband-and-wife relationship begins with the attitude of the man; he has been ordained by God as the head of the family, and the responsibility for its welfare rests upon his shoulders. This charge can be found in the early writings of Moses in the Old Testament, returning at least 3500 years into Jewish history. Deuteronomy 24:5 (TLB) reads: *A newly married man is not to be drafted into the army nor given any other special responsibilities; for a year he shall be free to be at home, happy with his wife.*

Imagine the luxury! Newlyweds were given one full year in which to adjust to married life, with no responsibilities or duties during that period. (I must admit that I don't know what they did with their time after the first three weeks, but it sounds like fun, anyway.) Compare it with the first year of marriage in this day, when the man and woman are both working, going to school, and all too frequently the bride is facing the biological, emotional and financial tensions of a pregnancy. But my point in quoting this scripture is better illustrated by the last sentence as stated in the King James version. It reads, "And he (the husband) shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken."

Early Mosaic law made it clear that the emotional well-being of a wife was the specific responsibility of her husband. It was his job to "cheer" her. It still is! This message should be especially relevant for the man whose own ego needs have drawn him to achieve super success in life, working seven days a week and con-

suming himself in a continual quest for power and status. Many marriages have been destroyed by this pattern of self-absorption and overcommitment.

Now if we appear to be blaming all marital and family woes on husbands, let me clarify the point. For every complaint women have against men, there is a corresponding charge on the other end of the line. And I'm certain that I've heard them all. Women can be just as selfish and irresponsible as their men. How many wives have "let themselves go," looking like they spent the night in a tornado? How many husbands come home every night to a wrecked house, dirty kids, and a nagging, groaning, overindulged wife? King Solomon must have known such a sweetheart, for he wrote: "It is better to live in the corner of an attic than with a crabby woman in a lovely home" (Proverbs 21:9, TLB). Obviously, neither sex has a monopoly on offensive and selfish behavior.

But for those who accept God's design for the family, it is clear from Ephesians 5 that husbands bear the *initial* responsibility for correcting the problem. This obligation is implicit in the role of leadership assigned to males. Where does it begin? By men treating their wives with the same dignity and attention they give to their own bodies, "loving them even as Christ loved the Church, giving his life for it." What a challenge! If this be male chauvinism, then may the whole masculine world be swept by its philosophy.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Some of the women reading this article are married to men who will never be able to understand the feminine need for romance that I have described. Their emotional structure makes it impossible for them to comprehend the feelings and frustrations of another—particularly those occurring in the opposite sex. These men will not read an article such as this, and would probably resent it if they did. They have never been required to "give," and have no idea how it is done. What, then, is to be the reaction of their wives? What would *you* do if your husband lacked the insight to be what you need him to be?

First, it is extremely important that you seek to meet your social needs through meaningful contact with other people. Resist the temptation to pull within the four walls of the house, focusing all of your expectations on one man. Get involved in your church and community, and work hard at developing deep, satisfying friendships with other women. This will ease the pressure on the marital relationship.

With regard to your husband, my advice is that you change that which can be altered, explain that which can be understood, teach that which can be learned, revise that which can be improved, resolve that which can be settled, and negotiate that which is open to compromise. Create the best marriage possible from the raw materials brought by two imperfect human beings with two distinctly unique personalities. *But for all the rough edges which can never be smoothed and the faults which can never be eradicated, try to develop the best possible perspective and determine in your mind to accept reality exactly as it is.* The first principle of mental health is to accept

that which cannot be changed. You could easily go to pieces over the adverse circumstances beyond your control, but you can also resolve to withstand them. You can will to hang tough, or you can yield to cowardice.

Someone wrote:

Life can't give me joy and peace;
It's up to me to *will* it.
Life just gives me time and space;
It's up to me to fill it.

You may have to accept the fact that your husband will never be able to meet all of your needs and aspirations. Seldom does one human being satisfy every longing and hope in the breast of another. Obviously, this coin has two sides: You can't be his perfect woman, either. He is no more equipped to resolve your entire package of emotional desires than you are equipped to meet all of his emotional wants. Both partners have to learn forbearance for human foibles and faults and irritability and fatigue and occasional nighttime "headaches." A good marriage is not one where perfection reigns; it is a relationship where a healthy perspective overlooks a multitude of "unresolvables." Thank goodness my wife, Shirley, has adopted that attitude toward me! —*Christian Focus*

* * * * *

FADING FIRES, BINDING VOWS

Sheldon Vanauken

"I don't even know how it happened," said John. "The kiss I mean. But when it did . . . Well, perhaps, you won't believe this—I was just amazed!—it simply seemed so *good*, so *right*, that I *knew* we had to go on together. Betty felt the same way. It was what love and marriage are all about." We were discussing, or rather John was, his pending divorce from Sue, who had now left town with the children, and his intention of marrying Betty. Knowing my fondness for Sue, John had drawn me into a deserted corner of the club to say how sorry he was about her and to explain. Now he looked at me earnestly and, with a light punch on the arm of his chair, he said, "It's the one thing I'd like you to understand: that it seemed so good and right. That's when we both knew we'd have to get the divorces. We belonged together."

I don't recall what I said. I suppose I said that I quite understood. And in a way I did, or at least I was beginning to glimpse something. I was remembering some almost identical words a few months before. A former student of mine, Diana, had come to see me. She had read a book I'd written about my own marriage, and she was, I think, troubled at what I might be thinking of her divorcing. He was a rather gentle lad who had been quite shattered by the sudden loss of his wife and little girl. I heard later that he had quit his job and joined the navy. "It wasn't Paul's fault," Diana said. "It was just that it felt so good and right with Roger that I knew it

would be wrong to go on with Paul when I love Roger. You can tell when something is right."

That *feeling* of goodness and rightness: both Diana, Paul's wife, and John at the club had invoked it; and because of it they believed themselves justified in breaking up the marriages they had vowed to be faithful to. On the other hand, John's wife, Sue, and Diana's husband, Paul, both of whom perhaps had trusted their mates' promises, almost certainly felt no goodness and rightness at all in what had happened, though of course they were not in a position to judge their spouses' feelings. Yet Diana at my house and John at the club had both urged that goodness and rightness with evident sincerity. And they were decent people, not at all the sort who understand only farmyard relations. They wanted me to understand that they wouldn't have done it—broken their vows and brought pain to their spouses and children—if something (they didn't ask what) were not telling them it was meet and right so to do. They were, in fact, invoking a higher law: the *feeling* of goodness and rightness. A feeling so powerful that it swept away—swept away in an instant, according to John—whatever guilt they would otherwise have felt at being commitment breakers, and whatever uneasiness they felt about the children. And it was something they didn't expect—a feeling that *surpassed* them. A feeling so powerful and unexpected deserves examination.

Divorce, to speak moderately, is not uncommon in Western society, even among Christians. But how should it be otherwise in a society dedicated, not to duty or reason or God but, increasingly, to pleasure and above all to sexual pleasure? A spouse's falling in love with somebody else is, to be sure, not the only cause of divorce, but it is certainly one of the great causes and has been all through history. The marital vows, even when they are not regarded as a meaningless form of words, are taken lightly, not because of an intention of breaking them but because lovers are so sure they will never wish to break them. So unhesitatingly they speak the strong words of their promise—"forsaking all others . . . for better, for worse . . . till death do us part . . ."—and they know in their hearts that of course it will be so. Nevertheless, unconsciously there is a reservation: If they could conceive that love might die, their reservation might be expressed as "till failing love do us part." But the vow is not, "till love dies" but "till *we* die"; that is the promise. Indeed, what the lovers are saying is: "As long as I feel towards you what I now feel, this high and holy thing, which of course I always *shall* feel, I will keep this vow."

Yet John had ceased to feel that "high and holy thing" for Sue, Diana for Paul; and each had come to feel it for another. That is, it wasn't a person *qua* person they had been in love with, but a person as evoker of a feeling, a thrill. Their true vows had been to the feeling. Presumably they didn't think of it so, but they had, in effect, merely *transferred* their vows to others. And why not, if vows are but feelings?

At all events, as I reflected upon the identical words they both had spoken, I began to think that I was onto something—something I

straightway dubbed "The Sanction of Eros." To sanction something is to make it sacred; it is, as it were, a sacred approval, a divine okay. And John and Diana in speaking of the goodness and rightness were clearly not referring to any thoughtful judgment of right and wrong. They were appealing to something higher than judgment, higher even than their own desires. But, equally clearly, the sacred approval they felt could not possibly have come from the Father of Jesus Christ whose disapproval of divorce is explicit. It is Eros, the ancient pagan god of lovers, who confers this sanction upon the worshippers at his altar. It is a false sanction that deceives his followers into calling the bad and the wrong right. Inloveness may indeed be an innocent and lovely gift to those heart-free, but is is not innocent—it is, in fact, sin—when it leads to betrayal of spouse or friend or child. The pronouncement of Eros that *this* love is so good and so right that all betrayals are justified is simply a lie, as is his specious promise that this new love will go on forever. Indeed, Eros may descend upon John or Diana yet again, and again, with the same pronouncement and the same promise. And they will again believe it: "This time it's for keeps."

Diana's vows to Paul, John's to Sue, had undoubtedly been utterly sincere. I remember Paul and Diana then: their faces had been alight with love, and they couldn't take their eyes off each other. They had *meant* "forsaking all others" and "till death do us part." What, then, had gone wrong? What brought them, all the loveliness broken, to the divorce courts?

Their misunderstanding was of what vows are. They thought the vows perhaps an expression of their feelings, a confident *prediction*, as it were, of what they would feel forever. So of *course* "till death do us part"—nothing else could possibly part us. Of *course* "forsaking all others"—have we not found, each in the other, incomparable perfection? They were utterly sincere. They believed their prediction. They do not understand that the vows are their *promise*—to God as well as to each other—for the times when they are *not* feeling the ecstasy of inloveness. No vows are necessary for those in love; nothing can separate *them* but force. The vows are a gift from one to the other; not a protestation of love. That's what they don't understand. Here and now they should be saying, each to the other: "This is my *promise*. This you can trust. This you can lean on in the bad times and as long as life shall last: whatever I may *feel* at any given moment. I will be faithful. Never fear. You have my word."

The shattering loveliness of being in love will not—*cannot*—go on at every moment forever: this is one of the things they didn't know. Some ministers do warn of this, but the lovers, hugging their secret assurance, often will not believe. They expect "the high mood that makes the rest seem pale" to go on forever. But we are human (that is, fallen). Self (what *I want*) re-asserts itself. The beloved, shockingly, is perceived to have faults, and lover snaps at lover. This may, the first time, seem like the end of the world, but it is not. With *wisdom* (a little) and *charity* (a lot), love deepens and becomes

whole, including the humanness and faults. It is charity (agape) that sustains love; inloveness cannot do it alone. But if inloveness is, so to speak, taken up into charity, then—only then—inloveness returns as a frequent sudden joy through all the years. This is what hadn't happened with John and Sue, Diana and Paul. The deep charity—wanting nothing so much as the good of the *other*—had not redeemed their loves.

And, far worse, they were not prepared (almost no one ever is) for the amazing Sanction of Eros. When the voice of the god pronounced their new loves *uniquely* right and good, they were bewildered and awed but accepting. Whatever it might appear to the world, *they* knew that these loves were different, sacred. *They did not dream that every other lover has the same assurance.* Perhaps John had intended to be faithful to Sue and Diana to Paul. No doubt Diana had more than once rejected the advances of frisky males at parties and John ignored, with a thought of Sue, many a bright-eyed flirtatious glance. They were perhaps confident in their strength to resist temptation. Too confident as it turned out. One moment they were merely playing, a little more gaily than usual, because they really like the playmate. Perhaps at one point little alarm bells sounded; I'm convinced there's always an instant, fleeting as it may be, when one knows he is playing with fire and senses he should draw back. But confident in their strength, they ignored the warning; and then, suddenly, Eros had overshadowed them. They looked at each other with shocked and adoring eyes, and then bewilderingly, not to be resisted, came the Sanction of Eros—*this* love, unlike all others, is good and right and forever—and they were undone.

We all know that countless marriages are wrecked by one of the spouses falling in love with what used to be called the Other Woman or her male counterpart. And, since art follows life, the modern novels and films are full of triangles and betrayals. But let us notice how often the storyteller sets it up so that the betrayed spouse more or less deserves it as being unkind, unloving, or a bit of a bore. Our sympathies are with the lovers, not with the betrayed spouse. And never—never once in any novel or film I can think of—does the betraying spouse seriously think of the meaning of broken promises. Both duty and the given word are merely wretched remnants of the "middle ages."

The Spirit of the Age—not the Holy Spirit—ceaselessly proclaims sexual love (or even barnyard sex) to be the ultimate good; and, therefore, anything that stands in its way—solemn vows, duty, loyalty, the words of our Lord—is seen as chains upon the soaring human spirit.

All thoughtful observers of our society see it to be sex-saturated, and Christians, at least, lament the erosion (or *Erosion*) of marriage and the family. But almost no one—neither clergymen nor novelists—really understands this deadly Sanction of Eros: the overwhelming feeling that *this* particular love, unlike all others, is right and good and blessed. The married man or woman who falls in love with another feels that Sanction, invariably forgetting that it is exactly what he once felt for his spouse, invariably feeling that this new love is

"the real thing at last." And so, because of the Sanction, the seeming blessing from on high, he becomes ruthlessly determined on divorce and remarriage. The Sanction "proves" to him that he is right to break his vows.

If my friends, John and Sue, or my former pupil Diana and her Paul, had been carefully and explicitly warned that if they ever *did* fall in love with another (however unthinkable) they would *certainly* feel what would seem a sacred approval, granted to that new love *alone*, they would have been less likely to be taken in by it. If they had known long before it happened that it was to be expected, that it would not be unique to them, surely they would have at least entertained some serious doubts as to whether the feeling of goodness and rightness was to be trusted. Only by understanding the lie that Eros proclaims in the accents of truth can marriages of people like John and Sue, Diana and Paul, be saved.

—*Fidelity Magazine*

* * * * *

TO HONOR YOUR PARENTS: The Chance for a Lifetime

Alvera Mickelsen

Our friend looked up with troubled eyes. "I'd always thought the age between 45 and 55 would be relatively carefree. After all, we're past the baby-sitting and orthodontist periods. My husband's job is secure, and we're making fairly good money.

"Yet I don't think I've ever faced such difficult days. Trying to help our children through late adolescence and finance them through college is tough. Now add menopause to that. But one thing is far more difficult—trying to figure out what is best for our parents, both my mother and my husband's father. They are both widowed. They need all kinds of help. What do we do?" Then she added ruefully, "I sometimes think God's planning for my age bracket is a bit questionable."

Hers is a common problem. Most of us are not prepared for the changing roles advancing age thrusts upon us. Our parents often thoughtfully supported us during difficult years of young adulthood and marriage. And they were loving helpers of our children as they grew.

But now, perhaps because of the normal effects of aging, or because of some illness, they are no longer self-sufficient. Or perhaps Dad has died, and now Mom is desperately lonely; she may even seem unable to function without her husband. Perhaps she can no longer maintain the family home and must move.

What should be done? Who is responsible for deciding? Some say the aging parents; some say the adult child who lives nearest; some say all the adult children.

Should we make the decision on the basis of the aging parent's

preference? Or do we make it on that of the adult children and their families?

These questions are being asked every day by thousands of middle-aged adults and their elderly parents.

HONOR AND SERVICE

The Bible says a lot about families, both by laying down principles and describing actual situations. And it also presents norms of a general sort, which we can use to measure our acts and attitudes. Let us consider what the Bible says, interlacing it with the present-day situation, and then focus on the question of living arrangements.

We start with two biblical teachings that lie beneath many others. The first is the fifth commandment, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gave you" (Exod. 20:12). The same idea with a reverse twist appears among the proverbs that deal with this relationship: "Do not despise your mother when she is old" (Prov. 23:22).

The second teaching comes from the New Testament, where a great emphasis falls on serving as exemplified by Christ: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. . . . For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:44-45, NIV).

Keeping these fundamentals in mind, let us look at the Bible's point of view specifically toward the elderly. It is stamped with realism, in contrast to some of the "Let's pretend" ideas common today. For instance, it frankly faces the debilitating effects of old age, appropriately using the subtleties of metaphor. Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 candidly describes infirmities that sometimes come with old age. The writer pictures an aging person as a house that is decaying: "... the keepers of the house (arms and hands) tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders (the teeth) cease because they are few . . . one rises up at the voice of a bird (insomnia) . . . the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because man goes to his eternal home . . . and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."

At the same time, the Bible stretches a parallel line that says old age can be marked by beauty: "The glory of young men is their strength, but the beauty of old men is their gray hair" (Prov. 20:29). "A hoary head is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life" (Prov. 16:31).

To this blend of infirmity and beauty the Bible adds other ingredients, also subtly held in tension, such as wisdom and foolishness. Adult children in our day often suffer a sense of guilt if they do not visualize their parents as wise, loving counselors who will enrich their homes if the aged parents come to live with them. But the Bible is more realistic and less sentimental about old age. True, some old people are revealed as good and wise, like the elderly counselors of King Rehoboam who advised him to lower taxes and relieve the burden of the people. (Rehoboam, of course, chose to obey younger counselors, who told him to get tough. His action resulted in the divided kingdom from which Israel never recovered.)

Other older people, however, are described as foolish. "Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who will no longer take advice" (Eccl. 4:13). And Eli, the priest at the time of Hannah, was a morally weak 98-year-old whom God chastised for his sins.

In our day, as in Bible times, most people in their old age have about the same qualities they had when younger. Old age does not by itself make people more patient, lovable, or easy to get along with. The gracious, loving 40-year-old usually becomes the gracious, loving 80-year-old. The cantankerous, selfish 40-year-old becomes the cantankerous, selfish 80-year-old. Some people, however, who were loving and kind when young may suffer brain damage from Alzheimer's disease or other illnesses that tragically change their personalities.

Yet our elderly parents must be cared for regardless of whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, some of both, or suffering from personality changes. How we are to do this varies from situation to situation. In Bible times, older people nearly always lived close to their adult children. An extended family of children, parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles were usually within the same town or county because of the method of land inheritance. This is somewhat like the present-day situation where adult children bring their parents to live near or with them. The extended family in Scripture often formed a large, stable, social support group that could share the responsibility of caring for an elderly, sick family member.

However, that extended family system did not always work well. The prophet Micah decried the family conflict when "the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are those of his own house."

Of course, in our society, adult children may live hundreds of miles from their elderly parents or from brothers and sisters. Although this poses special difficulties regarding care, the principle that God wants to help aging parents through their adult children still applies.

WIDOWS

Other problems the Old Testament records concern inheritance, and focus especially on widows. In those days, the eldest son inherited double that of other sons. Wives did not inherit land; daughters inherited it only if there were no sons. The eldest son, with the double portion, was probably expected to provide for his mother and other family members who needed help. But sometimes the eldest son died in war, or of disease, or could not or did not take responsibility for his widowed mother.

And sometimes the father died when the widow still had young children. Then she was apparently left to her own limited resources and to the charity of other people. Widows were powerless and often exploited so that throughout the Bible, "widow" is almost a synonym for poverty.

Time has not changed that. In the United States today, 72 percent of the elderly poor are unmarried women. In 1977, the median

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income for women over 65 years of age was \$3,088, while men over 65 had a median income of \$5,526. Current statistics indicate that the average wife outlives her husband by at least seven years.

In biblical times, widows were dependent on charity. In our times, elderly women are also often dependent on charity, supplemental social benefits, general welfare, Medicaid, and so on.

The Mosaic law said that part of the tithe given the Levites was to feed the widows and fatherless. When a field was harvested, owners were told not to go back and pick up the stalks of grain the reapers overlooked, but to leave them for the widows and fatherless. (It was in such gleaning that Ruth met Boaz.)

In the Gospels we see that Jesus was particularly aware of the poverty of widows. He raised from the dead the only son of the widow of Nain, thereby providing for her material as well as emotional needs. He commented on the widow in the temple who gave to the treasury "all that she had," two pence.

The first century boasted no social security system, no Medicaid. Many widows in the early church had no one to care for them—partly because, as in our day, family members ignored their needs.

Perhaps because of this Paul wrote Timothy that widowed women of child-bearing age *should* remarry so that they would not become dependent on the church for material needs. However, old women who did not have relatives who would care for them were to be cared for by the young church.

In this context, Paul states that adult children are responsible to care for their elderly parents. "If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. . . . If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. . . . If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her assist them; let the church not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are real widows" (1 Tim. 5:4, 8, 16). Paul apparently speaks of "real widows" as those who have no family to care for them.

Some signs of family breakdowns today are battered wives, abused children, and abused elderly parents. Many of these same sins were present in Old Testament Judaism and in the time of the early church. Psalm 71:9 shows that being cast off in old age was a familiar experience. Part of the message of John the Baptist as a forerunner of Christ was that he "will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers."

Abuse of elderly parents is not limited to non-Christians. It takes many forms, in addition to the violent ones of actual beating or slow starvation.

We can see one abuse in the effort to gain control of the elderly parent's assets. They do not belong to the children unless the parent chooses to assist them during his life, or through his will. The Bible speaks specifically to this point: "He who robs his father or his mother and says, 'That is not transgression,' is companion of a man who destroys" (Prov. 28:24).

Sometimes a parent is clearly unable to manage his or her financial affairs, and an adult child (or someone else) must take over this responsibility, either as a court-appointed conservator, or in an informal arrangement. Unfortunately, the adult child occasionally moves the parent's assets into his own account and then places the parent on welfare. The way an adult child uses the assets of an incompetent parent is a true test of his integrity. By law, such assets are to be used only for the care and support of the parent.

Neglect is another kind of abuse. This may involve leaving the care of a needy parent to neighbors or friends or to the one adult child of the family who is willing and compassionate. This kind of neglect is surely what Paul was talking about when he wrote, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Adult children who live a long distance from their parents (a phenomenon almost unknown in Bible times) may not be able to be *with* their parents in times of failing health, but they can help in other ways. They can share expenses. They can frequently phone the parent or those who are caring for him. They can write often; they can visit as often as possible. Sometimes the only real interest adult children seem to show in a parent comes after the funeral, when they are eager to make sure they got equal treatment in the will with the family member who may have spent several years physically and financially caring for him!

Treating the elderly parent like a child is also abuse. "Honoring our father and mother" surely involves helping them maintain some control over their lives as long as possible. We do not honor our parent when we make all the decisions about care without letting them participate. We can openly discuss their feelings about where they are living, their fears for the future, their possible options for the future; these matters all contribute a great deal to our parents' dignity. Sometimes an adult child must make a hard decision about care because the aged parent is not mentally able to participate, or because the parent refuses to accept the necessity for additional medical care. This is not so likely to occur if they have all openly discussed the options over a period of time.

We can also hurt the elderly by cutting them out of family and church activities. Peter at Pentecost indicated in quoting the prophet Joel that all age groups were to participate in a Spirit-filled church: "Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). Often extra effort is necessary to keep older persons active in church life when they are no longer totally self-sufficient. Someone may need to drive them to church and home. Churches have not been quick to conform to laws regarding access for the handicapped. Wheelchairs are not difficult to transport in cars, and every church should have at least one easy access route. A loving, responsible, adult child will make extra effort to get his elderly parent to church as long as the parent wants to go.

Modern medicine is now saying that satisfying social contacts are essential for good health and mental alertness. Dr. James Lynch of

the University of Maryland School of Medicine says that lack of contact with other people can lead to serious illness, especially heart disease.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

The question many adult Christians are facing is, "How can I meet the needs of my elderly parents and still handle my other responsibilities? How do I honor my father and mother when a change in their living arrangement has to be made?" Is the loving and honoring course always to take the aging parent into the home of the adult child?

In some families, the presence of a grandmother or grandfather within the family circle is a blessing to all, but this is not always so.

I once asked a college friend about her home life. "What home life? We didn't have any," she replied. She explained that her grandmother had lived with the family all during her childhood and youth. "All our activities were determined by 'How will Grandma feel about it?' If it would have annoyed Grandma, it couldn't be." All the children in the family left home at the earliest possible time, largely to get away from Grandma.

No doubt my friend's mother would have felt guilty if she had not taken in her mother when she was widowed. Yet both grandmother and the rest of the family would probably have been better off if they had made some other arrangement. Grandma may have been as miserable as the children, but thought living with her daughter the only respectable thing to do. And perhaps for financial reasons she had no other choice.

Not every older person wants and is emotionally equipped to live in the middle of a busy family of children and teen-agers. Many would be happier in the peace and quiet of their own apartment in a building reserved for senior citizens, or in a retirement center where they can build a circle of their own friends and maintain some independence. However, almost every older person needs and wants frequent contact with his children and grandchildren.

Some elderly parents hesitate to pay the fee to enter a retirement community because they want their children to inherit as much of their resources as possible. Or they may fear that their money "won't last as long as we do." The children should recognize and discuss such factors with them freely.

My husband's father lived alone until he was 86—ten years after his wife died. We were living 400 miles away and my husband was an only child. We were uncomfortable with the situation. We called him every week, went to see him a few times a year, and had him visit us once or twice a year. After he had surgery at age 86, the doctor advised us that he should not go back to his home to live alone.

In considering what to do, we knew he would find it difficult to adjust to life in our household with active teenagers. For example, he liked to go to bed at 8 and get up at 5 A.M. (He also thought all of us ought to go to bed at 8 and get up at 5!) He loved us and our children—in small doses. But we knew he needed a lot of solitude, as he always had.

We found a place for him in a lovely retirement center only three miles from our home. There he had his own room and private bath and TV set. He went to the dining room for three nourishing meals a day and could visit with people when he wanted to. There was a chapel service on Sunday. He could sleep when he desired. I visited him almost every day and the rest of the family visited often. We took him shopping when he was willing, brought him to our home as often as he would come. He did not want to come often because he was much more secure with a definite routine—where everything happened at an exact, specified time of day. He lived there for six years, until his death at 92.

We think he was much more content there than he would have been in our home, and those six years were among the best in his life. He needed to be in control of his space—however small.

How to honor our mother and our father is an intensely personal matter, to be worked out between the parents and adult children, taking into consideration the welfare and resources of all. Love and honor for our parents often demand sacrifices of time, money, and emotional energy to find the most Christian way to meet the needs of all concerned.

But following God's commands has its own rewards. "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8, NIV). —Reprinted by permission from *Christianity Today*; ©1981.

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Fear No Evil

Elizabeth Erlandson

In fifth grade I had two great ambitions: to get straight A's and to sell more candy bars in the annual fund drive than any other kid in the class. I got my A's, but I didn't win the contest. Midway through the campaign, something happened.

One afternoon after school, I toted my box of candy up to a door at the far end of our long city street. A man answered and told me to come in. As I handed him the chocolate bar, he grabbed me and started kissing me. I felt sick. I pushed him away, picked up my box of candy and ran out of the house.

That was the last day I went out selling. Gone were the dreams of winning. Fear replaced enthusiasm. I blamed myself for what happened, and awful feelings from the ugly encounter often returned unbidden.

A few years later, I started babysitting. One night, after putting my charge to bed, I sorted through a stack of magazines looking for something to read. Tucked between a few respected periodicals were copies of *Playboy*. I flipped through the pages. What I saw both repelled and fascinated me, and although I looked only briefly at the pictures, the images remained for years.

I entered college at the end of the 60's, the beginning of the sexual revolution. In my desire to shed inhibitions and be accepted by

my peers, I agreed to go to an X-rated film. By today's standards, it would probably be considered tame, but five minutes into the movie I told my date I was leaving. To his credit, he left with me, but after that, whenever I saw him on campus, my cheeks burned with shame. Those five minutes replayed for years in my mental cinema.

All this and more was part of the heavy load I was carrying when I met Jesus.

After that, though I knew I was completely forgiven, these and other images continued to haunt me. I studied God's Word, memorized Scripture and diligently prayed. And I wondered—*Can these pictures ever be erased?*

"A picture is worth a thousand words." Advertisers know the value of visual images. So does the Devil. Nothing is more difficult to reprogram than a mind filled with depraved sexual imagery.

Today, the damage has been undone. I have reason to praise God. My mind is no longer filled with ugly thoughts and awful images. I am a Christian, a pastor's wife and happy mother of a three-year-old girl.

But what about the children? What can we do? We can warn them. We can watch them carefully. We can keep track of who they're with and where they go. We can petition and picket, if necessary. Above all, we can live above reproach ourselves.

But one thing I will not do: I will not teach my daughter to fear. At night, when I'm sure she's asleep, I slip into her room, kneel beside her bed and pray that she will never face the kinds of temptations I had or fall into sexual sins. I pray she will know God personally, that she will love, trust and glorify Him. These are high hopes; yet I have every reason to believe they will be realized.

Yes, I weep for myself as a terrified 10-year-old, a troubled teen and a confused young woman. Yet I rejoice, for triumph has come, even out of trial. This is what enables me to teach my child to trust the One who is greater than any temptation.

(From *AFA Journal*. The American Family Association, formerly the National Federation for Decency, is headed by Donald Wildmon. It promotes Christian values and opposes secular humanism, abortion, pornography, etc. Its *Journal* carries important articles re: these and related issues, plus evaluations of current movies & TV shows, and information re: important bills before Congress and cases in the courts. Address: A.F.A., P.O. Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803.)

* * * * *

Dear Nieces:

Complaints I have heard from the Women's Liberation Movement directed at the Christian view of marriage show that they have little knowledge of what the Bible teaches on the subject. One lady whose husband worked for me told me that she did not want to be "submerged" into her husband's personality, that she wanted to be an individual in her own right—meaning of course that she wanted her "own" career, and desired to develop "her" potentialities, etc.

Actually, although there are scriptures that indicate a wife's place in the home, we should be aware of the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs which describes an "ideal" wife in terms of the society of Solomon's day: See for yourself that this woman dealt in real estate, home manufacturing, managed a large household of servants and children, burned midnight oil and worked, and worked, and worked . . . and still had great respect for hubby!

But the difference between what she did and what the "Libbers" talk about is crucial. The Libbers want the woman to concentrate on self, to be independent of a potentially undependable husband, to pursue career goals without regard to the welfare of the family. I have met two such women who thought they wanted to be married but also pursued their "own career" to the detriment of their marriage; they are now divorced and less happy.

But notice that the woman in Proverbs worked at her projects not for her own fame and career standing, but for her family. Her home came first, and her success was a direct result of her dedication to serve others rather than self. Her husband trusted her, and he was honored in the community at least in part because of her devotion to him and to their children.

As Jesus said, If you try to "save" your life, you will lose it, but if you lose it (for others sake), you will save it. It is true in marriage.

Love from Uncle Cecil

SELECTED VERSES FROM PROVERBS 31

The Capable Wife

How hard it is to find a capable wife! She is worth far more than jewels!

Her husband puts his confidence in her, and he will never be poor.

As long as she lives, she does him good and never harm.

She keeps herself busy making wool and linen cloth.

She brings home food from out-of-the-way places, as merchant ships do.

She gets up before daylight to prepare food for her family and to tell her servant-girls what to do.

She looks at land and buys it, and with money she has earned she plants a vineyard.

She is a hard worker, strong and industrious.

She knows the value of everything she makes, and works late into the night.

She is generous to the poor and needy.

She doesn't worry when it snows, because her family has warm clothing.

Her husband is well known, one of the leading citizens.

She is strong and respected and isn't afraid of the future.

She speaks with a gentle wisdom.

She is always busy and looks after her family's needs.

Her children show their appreciation, and her husband praises her.

He says, "Many women are good wives, but you are the best of them all."

Charm is deceptive and beauty disappears, but a woman who honors the Lord should be praised.

Give her credit for all she does. She deserves the respect of everyone.

—Today's English Version

Building Better Christian Families

by Fred W. Schott



LISTENING HOLDS IT ALL TOGETHER

“The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds persuasiveness to his lips.” Proverbs 16:23

At first glance the verse above may seem to have less to do with listening than it does with speaking. The preceding verse helps shed some light. “The wise in heart will be called discerning” (vs. 21). Not only is listening a wise thing to do, but listening helps us to *become* wise.

According to the dictionary to discern means to “recognize as separate and different.” In other words, to be able to tell right from wrong, to separate good information and bad, to distinguish between fact and fiction, good counsel and bad. Unless we are wise enough to listen, we will most often not have enough information to be able to discern anything. Because we listen, we gather information, insight, and understanding. With these we are able to make wise decisions. Armed with information, insight, and understanding we are able to speak persuasively.

There are many good ways to listen. Much depends upon the situation and how involved the listener is or should become. For example, it is one thing when my neighbor tells me that she is distraught with her marriage and considering divorce. It is another if my married daughter tells me the same thing. Both situations call for a lot of listening before I allow “my heart to teach my mouth” what to say in this situation. My heart will need information to discern before it can offer good, sound, and persuasive advice.

But obviously, with a member of the immediate family we will be more involved and to some degree have more responsibility than with a neighbor. In both cases, with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, I will hopefully have opportunity to help. Both cases call for a great deal of listening. The situation with my daughter calls for **EVEN MORE** listening than with my neighbor. I have more at stake. I’m more involved. I’m more likely to say something that will not be helpful and that I will regret. More than ever, I must be quick to listen, slow to speak, and in touch with my emotions if I want to help (speak persuasively).

In a short space there is only so much that I can share about listening. But, there are a few things that are so important that they can make almost any situation better. The following tips—as

important as they are—are much easier said than done. But, they are a starting point.

First, if we are to be good listeners, we must take the time and be attentive. Undivided attention is called for. The more serious the situation, the more important this is. But it is true for informal social gatherings as well.

Notice at the next church social how people listen. Conversations are usually dominated by people with the “gift of gab.” They love to tell stories and most of us like to listen—most of the time. The story tellers listen, but usually for the first opportunity to get in their own stories! Many times they jump in on each other’s stories. Sometimes they will even all talk at the same time.

Meanwhile, shy people feel very inadequate at keeping up with this verbal game. They smile politely and usually feel uncomfortable because they do not know what to say. At the next social gathering make it a point to really focus on what people are saying. Really listen. Others like to be around such sensitive people. Those who are shy find that they have an easier time finding things to say when they focus on what others are really saying rather than worrying about what they will say next.

The next tip I call “moaning and groaning appropriately!” It is quite easy to do and very effective. It is a good habit to get into. Notice when people talk, especially when they are full of emotion and may be having trouble saying what they mean. They will look all around the room, perhaps pace if they are standing up, but occasionally they will pause briefly and make eye contact. In that instant they are looking for nonverbal permission to continue. At that point it is helpful to smile or nod our heads encouragingly. It also helps to groan a little, “aaah” if we understand, or “wow!” if we are surprised, or “ha” if it’s humorous. (The reader appreciates that it is difficult to put appropriate moaning and groaning into print. I’m sure you get the picture, uh?) This is an important tip. It encourages the talker to keep talking. When others talk our hearts gather more information from which to discern.

“Check it out” is the last tip I’ll give you. When we spend a lot of time listening we gather a lot of information. There is another step that must take place before we can give wise counsel or respond effectively in other ways. We have to make sure what we heard is what was intended. We have to make sure that what was said is what was meant. We have to make sure we understood correctly. A good listener gives the hearer accurate information so that he can do a good job of discerning. Some people call this “giving feedback.” This stage involves feeding back the information we have heard *before* responding directly to it.

“Let me make sure I understand” is a good phrase for getting us into this stage of listening. Then in our own words we simply feed back or check out what we heard. Other phrases that help are: “In other words,” “If I hear you right,” “I think what you are telling me is,” or “You seem to be saying.” Here is another one that really helps me get into the feedback stage. “It’s important to me that I

understand what you are saying. Let me feed it back to you in my own words, OK?"

This feedback stage is not at all easy sometimes. It can also get very involved and sometimes difficult. But, the phrases I gave you will help you get started. You may find that it really does help you to understand and gain more insight into the people you love. Some report that at first they seem awkward, almost phony, trying to "check it out." With time and practice and sometimes some good training it will come much more naturally.

There are some people who do this naturally without any training at all. I call them "born listeners." Other people have had good training and through practice have become good listeners. Think about people that you know who are good listeners. You can learn by observing them. They are usually people whom others like to be around. They put people at ease. Others often seek them out for counseling. Study them, perhaps at a social gathering. You will probably notice that they make good eye contact, they are attentive, they will moan and groan appropriately, and they naturally give good feedback. You can learn these things as well.

One final concept that helps us to become good listeners. It helps to keep in mind that understanding and agreement are not the same thing. When we listen to people who are distraught, for example, or teenagers who are testing new values, they are likely to say some things that do not make sense. Sometimes they say things that are simply not true. Still we must be quick to listen and slow to speak. To understand why someone is so distraught that they are seeking a divorce is not to agree that it is the right thing for them to do. To seek to understand why a child screams, "I hate that teacher!" is not to agree at all. To listen to your spouse who says, "You just don't care anymore" means that you want to get below the surface, to understand, before trying to say the right thing or to resolve the issue.

After we have worked hard at listening, we have the right to expect to be heard. When it is necessary for us to speak, we want to make sure we give ourselves the best chance to speak wisely. If like the wise man Solomon we let our hearts teach our mouths, we have to provide our hearts with enough information to be discerning. That is only possible if we do a good job of listening.

(Do you have questions about parenting? Beginning in the Sept. Word & Work Fred will have a question-and-answer column related to Christian parenting. His address: 1404 'N' Ave., Omaha, NE 68107.)

REPRINT:

Emotions: Don't Seek But Don't Kill

R. H. Boll, 1939

It is not good to try to work up religious emotion. Emotion is right and good in its place, and there is a place for it. But emotion is always a secondary thing, an effect consequent upon a cause, a

sequel to a reason, and it is on no account to be sought after for its own sake. A brother who rose up after a sermon and said, "We have heard what the preacher has told us; we are fully convinced that he spoke the *truth*; and we *feel* that we ought to *do* something about it"—had the order of things exactly right. It is always *facts* first; then testimony, hearing, faith; then feeling and action. The Bible rests upon facts, and makes much of facts. They are for the most part facts that lie beyond our observation—some historical, some future, some having to do with things spiritual and unseen, but facts. The knowledge of these is put within our reach by the Divine testimony, and received by faith. The things revealed to us in God's word can not but stir the emotions of those who hear and believe them—feelings of fear, penitence, of sorrow, of distress, of indignation, of joy, of love. These feelings are all contingent upon faith in the truth of God's word; and we need not and must not try to produce them or even analyze them when they arise in our hearts. We can take a right, humble, thoughtful attitude, and give the Word full place in our hearts. Further than that we need not go: all necessary feeling will come itself.

"Twas grace that taught my heart to hear,
And grace my fears relieved:
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed."

ATTEMPT AT EMOTION IN PRAYER

With all good intentions we blunder badly along this line. We make prayer a burden for ourselves, for instance, by efforts to call forth high and holy feelings, such as we think we ought to have when we talk to God. And that is an attitude we can't keep up for long: the strain of the effort quickly wearies us and we are glad to say Amen and quit. If we but knew, we do not have to do that at all. We can and should be quite natural with God—full of emotion if the emotion is there; but, if not, simple, straightforward, confident in the knowledge that He hears and cares and knows all our matters, understands perfectly, and is lovingly concerned in all that we tell Him. We need not try to be eloquent or fervid; we can be commonplace, even dry—just so we mean what we say. Just as a loving child talks to a parent, or a friend to a congenial, sympathetic friend—reverent, to be sure, but wholly at ease, we may talk to the Father in heaven. In times of stress we may indeed make supplication "with strong crying and tears," but we must not and need not try to force or fabricate such an emotional state. With growing realization of our need and weakness and with deepening concern for others, our prayer will be emotional enough. Sincerity, simplicity, and directness is all we need to aim at.

THE EMOTIONAL APPEAL OF THE CROSS

Nothing so much appeals to emotions as the story of the Cross. Yet it was not given for that. The story of the Cross is first of all a simple statement of facts. Its emotional appeal is secondary and incidental. The fact that God so loved the world; that Christ left the realm of heaven; emptied Himself of His Divine glory; became

man; the facts of His earthly ministry (how "he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil"); and how, in the end, of His own will and in obedience to the Father, He went to the cross, bore our sins, laid down His life for us—these are statements of fact. The student of the gospels will be impressed with the straightforward and almost prosy account given. Never an exclamation in the whole narrative; no rhetorical outburst or attempt to climacteric arrangement, no attempt to impress; no catching at effect. All the way through simple facts simply told. Indeed the harrowing details of the scourging and the crucifixion are hardly touched upon. This is not meant to be an appeal to emotion. The suffering Christ does not ask for our pity. Here all is addressed first of all to our understanding. But as we view the facts and see their background and meaning—will not our hearts be moved within us and our eyes filled with tears? Yet—if not, do not be troubled, and above all do not try to produce the proper emotions artificially, as it were. Stay with the facts—it is enough: get them, believe them, take your stand upon them, act upon them. Let the feelings follow as they may; do you for your part "trust and obey," and all will be well. And so with the glorious account of His resurrection, His exaltation, yea, and His coming again. It is the great distinctive feature of the gospel that it is not an abstract theory or philosophy, but that it stands upon a foundation of concrete historical facts. And all salvation rests upon the acceptance of its facts by faith.

"WHY CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL?"

Often we find Christians who mourn the loss of happy times gone by, the days of their earliest love, when their hearts overflowed with joy and Jesus was to them "the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." In vain do they try to bring back that sweet peace and joy of fellowship with the Lord. Their Christian life seems drab and dreary. Regretfully they sing.

"Where is the blessedness I knew when first I found the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus in His word?"

Sometimes they conclude that they have backslidden and departed from the Lord. This may really be so in some cases, and if it is, should be remedied at once. It is bad to go on in alienation with God—most especially when help and healing is so nigh. But often this state of mind is due to living too much in our feelings. "I looked at Jesus," said Spurgeon, "and the dove of peace flew into my heart. I looked at the dove of peace, and she flew away." There is a deep truth in that. Our blessedness does not come from looking within, but by looking away from ourselves to Christ. What He is and does, not what we are and can do, makes up our salvation. On the other hand it is also true that the joy of Christian life dies by neglect of communion with God, in reading and prayer and worship. And especially because of fruitlessness. As the boy-scouts aim each day to do someone a good turn, the Christian should make it a point never to let a day go by without having done something for Jesus—in His Name, for His sake:

“Some work of love begun,
Some deed of kindness done,
Some wand’rer sought and won—
Something for Thee.”

You may not be so situated that you can do any great or notable thing; but do the little thing you can do, whether it be a kindly word, a little loving deed, whatever it may be. As for the rest—remember that the love of God does not fluctuate with our feelings. It remains constant and true; and so does Christ’s intercession on our behalf. (Heb. 7:25; Jude 21.)

AN OPPOSITE DANGER

It should be added, however, that some in some quarters are in opposite danger—not the danger of seeking emotion, but of unduly suppressing it, as though it were a thing to be ashamed of. To say “Amen,” or to utter an exclamation of joy, or to break down in tears, would seem a most reprehensible break of decorum and good manners to them. These same folks can and do get greatly excited over almost anything else—a game, a contest, a political rally, a meeting of farmers or workers, a picnic; or get wrought up remarkably over even the rise and fall of the market; but when the tremendous truths of God are preached, on which the eternal interests of their souls and the souls of others depend, they think they must choke and smother any feeling that arises in their hearts and struggles for expression. Soon they succeed so well in this effort that they can sit through a meeting as stolid as blocks of wood, with hardly an expression on their faces, and their songs and prayers ring dead and mechanical. That could hardly be pleasing to God. There is indeed a lack of self-control that results in disorder and confusion and which should be sternly curbed; but there is also a false sense of order and decorum which patterns after the cemetery. Fervor and emotion should be controlled, but not killed.

RECURRING SIN

A. R. Stevenson

It’s one of those evenings that has an air of depression and boredom about it. A Christian student is sitting alone in his room trying to persuade himself to get to work.

His two non-Christian roommates are at a basketball game, but he had too much work to do so he stayed at the room. His eye lights upon a sexy magazine lying on the table in front of him. His hand reaches for it. He carefully thumbs through it. His Christian life has been woefully depleted by this kind of temptation in past years and now, though he’d thought he was done with it, he has fallen again.

The next day the old doubt and despondency return. Why did he fall? He knows the answer. Simply because he wanted to yield to the impulse. Even now honest repentance is difficult, for the sin holds a certain latent attraction as he remembers the incident.

He wonders whether he is really a Christian. The Great Deceiver has won again.

On another campus a Christian girl eagerly accepts a second helping of delicious cherry pie. She is 5'8" tall and weighs 180 pounds. That same morning she'd told the Lord that she was sick of overeating, that she knew she should reduce, that her inability to exercise will-power in this area was wrecking her testimony with her friends (who were able as non-Christians to take better care of their bodies than she).

But now she finds she has fallen again. Does God really answer prayer, she wonders. She is despairing and disgusted with herself.

To some, accepting a piece of cherry pie may seem too trivial to produce such truculence. But she well knows that no dieting begins without that first, though seemingly minor, refusal of food.

Scenes like these aren't uncommon on the college campus, and many kinds of sin can have this effect. Laziness, irritability and anger, sexual sin, gluttony and bad habits are all sins into which Christians tend to fall over and over again. The question raised as a result is the same, no matter what the mode of the sin: what is a Christian to do about recurring sin in his life? Often the struggle reaches the point where he wonders if he really has a will of his own at all. His sinning seems almost compulsive.

Usually this kind of problem only occurs in the life of those who desire to be holy, who take Biblical injunctions to obedience seriously, who desire to "lead a life worthy of God" (I Thessalonians 2:11, 12). If this article seems to be talking about someone else—that is, not about you—you have either been following God with your whole heart, or you're not very interested in obedience. The Christian must be interested in obedience. More than witnessing, more than giving to missions, more than attending church regularly, Paul exhorts the churches to live holy lives.

When recurrent sins become a problem in a Christian's life, there seem to be three alternatives. The first is despair and eventual recurrence. The life is crippled spiritually. Apathy, a sense of being a hypocrite, lack of faith, even serious doubts about the truth of Christianity, creep in. Christians in this predicament simply cease growing in their Christian life. Profound unhappiness comes—sometimes absolutely crushing unhappiness.

A second alternative is rationalization. Instead of seeing the matter for what it is, the Christian can call the sin just weakness or foible. He can take the attitude "After all, I'm not perfect" and belittle the seriousness of the disobedience. This alternative is hypocrisy inward. The Christian is less unhappy because he feels less guilty. But his rationalization involves dishonesty, and it soon produces a Christian life which is only nominal. The Christian leaves himself crippled.

Third, the issue can be faced squarely and realistically and given to God with earnest desire that He deal with it. The third alternative, then, is clear repentance, and this article is for those who want practical advice about this alternative.

If the Christian honestly repents, how is he to deal with besetting sin?

After his will has been weakened by many failures it becomes almost impossible to will not to sin at the moment of temptation. Sinning seems a matter of sheer slavery. The individual feels that he no longer has the power to will not to sin. And of course this may be the case.

But there is a level on which the Christian is still capable of making the decision not to sin in his problem area. This is on the level of prevention. I have found eight practical measures to use in dealing with desetting sin. All but one are measures of prevention.

(1) Daily prayer and Bible study are the *sine qua non* of prevention. Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Abiding is the basis of the Christian life. Abiding takes time and must be cultivated, just as love in marriage must be cultivated. Periods of prayer need not be long but they must be earnest. Serious prayer for five minutes is better than an hour of daydreaming. And if you are forced to have your main time of prayer later during the day, make sure that you spend a quick five minutes with your Master upon rising. Ask Him to spend the day with you and to help you remember to spend the day with Him.

Pray many times during the day. Short, momentary prayers are sufficient if they are serious and frequent enough to keep you from forgetting Him on whom your life depends. It is easy, so easy, to have a good time of prayer upon rising and yet forget during the day that you are a servant of Jesus Christ. The devil has ready access to those who only abide in their Lord consciously for an hour in the morning.

Regular Bible study is essential in the Christian life, for it is primarily in the Bible that we hear God speaking to us. If your quiet time is a problem, this is the area in which to begin. A good first step is to read the Inter-varsity booklet, *Quiet Time*.

Further, I have another specific suggestion: Once a week set aside a time which is longer than your normal quiet time. During this period look at the trends of your own Christian life with your Father in heaven. You may want to use this time for other purposes as well, but don't fail to spend part of it looking at your Christian life. Recurrences of the same sin often creep up on us slowly. The devil softens us for the kill. Be careful that he's not gaining a series of "minor" victories in your life.

(2) Ask God to give you a prayer partner in whom you can confide. Paul writes to the Thessalonians that they should encourage the fainthearted and help the weak with godly patience (1 Thessalonians 5:14). This is a Scriptural pattern. Sharing your weakness with another Christian can be a great help, though it may be a hard step to take. If it is hard, remember that the Christian with whom you share was saved by grace too.

Make this a full-orbed partnership, one that is reciprocal, with

sharing on various levels. Apart from personal daily prayer and Bible study, this is probably the single most important suggestion that can be offered. Yet because it takes courage and a certain disregard of pride, it is often the first to be disregarded.

(3) Plan action that will help you avoid sin. Plan ahead to flee temptation. Perhaps the fellow whom I mentioned at the beginning of this article should have moved to a single room near his friends to obviate such constant temptation. The girl might have done well to buy a scale in which to weigh herself regularly as an encouragement, since she may lose weight so slowly that she can see no change. If a person is sorely tempted on his job and wouldn't be so tempted elsewhere, perhaps he should change jobs. A person whose problem is irritability might do well to get more sleep. Any measure of this sort won't be wasted.

The Bible says "Flee." Therefore, *flee*. And don't be afraid to use your ingenuity. Take wise, realistic steps to avoid that temptation.

(4) Remember the past. Satan is the Great Deceiver. Speaking to Timothy about controversialists, Paul says, "God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:25b, 26). The implication is that those who are in the devil's snare don't fully realize it. Don't forget the effect that this sin has had on your life in the past. Never allow yourself to be deceived by Satan twice in the same way.

(5) Don't despair. Don't forget that if we confess our sins, God will forgive. His forgiveness is the kind that forgives seventy times seven. He wants you to be holy. (Yet if you don't mean to turn from your sin when you ask forgiveness, this is another matter.)

(6) Pray when the possibility of temptation is high. When you see yourself coming toward a situation in which you may be tempted, pray. Pray before temptation comes. Pray while you still have the will to pray. Don't just bow your head and murmur something, but get out of sight and pray for five minutes. If you're in a busy place, you needn't speak as you pray, or bow your head— but pray.

If you're in the habit of talking with the Lord during the day, you're much more likely to remember to do this. Remember the promises of Scripture and ask for the will which will allow them to be fulfilled in your life. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

(7) Pray when tempted. When temptation comes, remember that all you have to do is bow your head and look to the Lord until it passes. Resist by prayer.

"Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, remembering that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a

little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish and strengthen you. To him be the dominion forever and ever" (1 Peter 5:7-11).

(8) Have a quiet time check list. Make a list of the measures you plan to take against the sins that beset you, and go over it each day before the Lord as a reminder and mark of serious determination. (Whether it's this list or some other one, be sure it's manageable and realistic.)

Start now. And beware if you can't muster the interest to fight besetting sin in your life. Those who tease with temptation tread the broad way that leads to destruction.

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THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

"The Christian and the Government"

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. (Romans 13:1-5, NIV).

I hope you have read very carefully the Scripture given at the beginning of this article. Now remember that it was written when Nero was emperor. And also remember that Herod and Pilate were in leadership over the Jews during the earthly life of Jesus Christ. This passage, then, written as it is in general terms concerning the governments of the world, was intended as a guide for Christians under their double citizenship, our primary citizenship being in heaven. To confirm this and also to see some possible exceptions turn

to Mark 12:13-17, where Jesus answered a question about submission to the Roman government in the sense of paying taxes. He gave a fine general answer—"Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's." Peter gave a specific on this in Acts 5:29 when ordered not to do something the Lord had told the Apostles (and us) to do. "Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than men!'" And, before getting into this study, it would be well to read Daniel, chapters 1, 3, and 6. In chapter 1 Daniel found a way not to disobey an order from the Emperor by proposing a trial to the man in charge. In chapter 3 Daniel's three friends refused to disobey God and worship the emperor and in chapter 7 Daniel refused to quit praying to God. These are the kinds of things that we need to bear in mind in our relationship to any government.

But the problems did not stop in Daniel's day or in Acts 5. Later in Acts Peter was taken from prison by an angel to stop his execution. But the Lord allowed Paul to languish in prison (during some of which he wrote some of our valuable New Testament) for many years and eventually all of the Apostles were executed, most of them by crucifixion, mainly for doing what Daniel and his friends did — refusing to worship the head of the government.

But even in the United States today the ugly head of persecution is being raised against the Church. Our governmental units are trying in many places to take precedence over God. What shall we do as citizens of a government originally "of the people and by the people"? And that brings up another problem. Nothing is said in the New Testament about taking part in government. But, on the other hand, several people in governmental positions are presented in a very good light. So, shall we take part in the government? It seems to me to be obvious that so long as we are obeying God and our influence can be used for good, it is perfectly all right. Many fine Christians over the years have disagreed, but I base this statement on what is in this chapter as well as the examples of both Old and New Testament.

One of the things we need to remember as we read this passage is that even a bad government is better than no government. If every man "did what was right in his own eyes," the results in the days of the judges (from which that statement is taken) would be repeated. Read again the last several chapters of that useful, sad, and interesting book.

Before closing it seems to me that we should go back to the establishment by God of human government. Until after the flood every man lived by his own conscience and you know the results. But after the flood God spoke to Noah and said, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man" (Gen. 9:6). In that He was not giving every man the right to take vengeance into his own hands. He does not say, "His family shall shed his blood." But He did say, "by man shall his blood be shed." That is the basis of all government. I realize that some of my readers may be against "capital punishment,"

but God here established it and said nothing further at that time about organization of a government. It is my firm conviction that every government that fails to carry out this mandate from God is doomed to be a failure. Our passage reinforces this and the right to make war by saying, "he does not bear the sword for nothing." To bear the sword means to have the right, in this case, to take life. And that is "not in vain."

In closing, look briefly again at our five verses. Paul is not saying that particular government heads know they are God's servants any more than Cyrus realized it unless someone showed him Isaiah's prophecy concerning him. Neither is he saying that their actions are always for good. He could not have been blind to the injustices put on himself. But, to say it briefly, he knew that good government was a good thing, established by God and overseen by Him. Even Gorbachev, with all the evil he has perpetrated, is there only because God allowed him to be there, and maybe, even, like Pharaoh, he has been raised up to resist God and eventually show His magnificence.

If you should have any questions about this passage not included in this article, please write me and I will be delighted either to answer directly or to do so in a future article.

May the Lord guide us into all His will in all our relationship to our government, even in these days when men all over the world are trying to get a one-world government that would oppose God and do harm for most men.

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller



Is it wrong to ask the Lord for guidance by the use of a sign—something, for example, like Gideon's fleece?

The Lord once called certain people "an evil and adulterous generation" (Matt. 12:39) for seeking a sign. On the surface this seems to rule out the practice suggested by the question. A closer look however, should make us aware that signs were refused to these people because they already had the greatest of signs in their midst and were unwilling to heed them. A miracle-working Jesus, speaking words such as man had never spoken, was in their midst. He had offered ample evidence as to who He was. They said, "Show us a sign," meaning, in effect, "Give us some evidence so compelling that we have to believe it, whether we want to or not." Jesus refused to do that, though He did promise an outstanding sign, which was fulfilled in the resurrection.

It is assuredly wrong for us to ask for a sign if we are ignoring all of the signs and all of the light the Lord has already given us (Lk. 16:27-31). The Bible provides ample guidance in many matters. The will of the Lord is already so evident in so many matters about which one does not need to ask—just obey. So one should be careful not to ask the Lord for what amounts to walking by sight instead of by faith. One should be careful about laziness in digging out His answers from His revealed will. It is wrong for me to say, “Lord, I don’t like your ways of growth and study, just give me a private answer so I can by-pass all that. (Lord, I deserve preferential treatment.)” I simply must not forget the high place that God has given to His word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Holy Spirit is a very important part of knowing the Lord’s will. He takes the Word and helps us to understand it and, no doubt, helps our infirmity in a number of ways. We should certainly pray for His help and seek guidance from Him. Accuracy of language will serve us well here, however. Some modern Christians talk as though they sort of have a private line to heaven and claim the Holy Spirit tells them this and that, some of it even in clear conflict with the written Word. We must beware of mistaking our own feelings, thoughts, and impressions as an inspired message from the Lord. Speaking presumptuously in the Lord’s name is a serious offense (Deut. 18:20-22). I believe the Holy Spirit can guide our judgments and evaluations, giving us impressions of what we ought or ought not do in certain cases; but, even so, the difficulty of distinguishing between the leading of the Holy Spirit and the desires of the flesh makes this somewhat less than a certain conclusion. I have found that His help is very often given in bringing to mind a “thus it is written,” or in helping me to apply Biblical principles.

There are times when it seems desirable to have a reasonably definite answer from the Lord in matters about which the Word does not speak specifically. I do not believe an enlightened seeking of a sign on the order of Gideon’s fleece (Judg. 6:36-40) to be wrong provided we are careful not to use it wrongly. The early disciples *prayed* and cast lots in choosing a successor to Judas (Acts 1:23-26; Cf. Prov. 16:33; 18:18). Notice their prayer—show us whom *Thou* hast chosen. I believe that prayer removed the element of chance. This type of thing is used often enough in the Bible that I see no good reason for ruling it out; on the other hand, it is used infrequently enough that one should use it with care. Some assign such acts to the old covenant period and before the giving of the indwelling Holy Spirit, but this is not necessarily a valid conclusion. We know too little of how even inspired men such as Paul discerned the Lord’s will to be dogmatic in the matter.

There is an added danger to be avoided. If we would use this, we must choose a sign that allows for a high degree of impartiality. “Lord, if you want me to go to Africa, send me a personal gift of half a million dollars,” hardly qualifies as an impartial sign. We must be after the Lord’s will, not personal gain or benefit.

NEWS AND NOTES

"They rehearsed all that God had done with them . . ."

Louisville:

Twenty-two students graduated from Portland Christian High School on May 27. They were its 61st graduating class. Five of the 22 graduated with highest honors (an average of 3.51-4.00 over 4 years) and four others had high honors (3.00-3.50 over 4 years). PCS continues to offer K-12, and students study Bible and/or attend chapel daily in addition to regular academic subjects.

The school ended this year 4 weeks behind in paying the teachers—a big need, but not nearly so big a debt as last year's. More donations and more regular donors are needed for this important ministry. Does the Lord want you to help? (2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212).

—Alex Wilson

Japan/Louisville/Memphis:

Brother Moto Nomura came for a short visit from Japan. He preached at Highland and Portland Ave. churches in Louisville on May 29. But the main purpose of his trip was to take part in a "Focus on Japan" missions-awareness conference hosted by Union Avenue Church of Christ in Memphis, Tenn., June 3 & 4. Reports by Moto and 2 other Japanese ministers and current and past missionaries to Japan were presented. Pray for more workers to proclaim Christ crucified & risen in that land; the needs are great.

Johnson City, Tenn.:

All of our ladies are reminded of the "Friendship Banquet," to be held on Thursday evening. An interesting program is being planned and you will enjoy the food and the fellowship. The friendship theme is being emphasized this year rather than the mother-daugh-

ter theme. Those who may not have had a mother or a daughter to bring will not feel excluded from the activity. Bring a friend!

—Locust St. Laborer

Belmont Church, Winchester, Ky.:

Last week, a few ladies under Linda Rake's direction, worked organizing our "Clothes Closet." On Saturday, we had "Free Clothes Day," and many garments were given away! We plan to open the clothes closet again for contributed items at the end of the summer season. Many thanks for your cooperation. Also, thank you so much for contributing clothing to this needed ministry, and ladies, we deeply appreciate your hard work!

Inspired by the Ladies' Inspiration Day recently at Southeast Church, our ladies are organizing a prayer chain. Debbie Lawalin will join us as Belmont's secretary. We welcome Debbie and know she will be a helpful addition to our staff. She will also work with our younger children. Watson Caudill is our youth worker now.

Sunday morning, our Belmont Chorus brought us two beautiful messages in song both extolling the precious name of our Lord Jesus. We appreciate the effort behind this special singing both by each member of the group and by Buddy Haggard. Both were very soul-searching and applicable to each of us.

Lilly Dale Church of Christ, In.:

Our revival will be July 27th thru 31st at 7:00 p.m. each evening. Bro. Rick Murphy will be our speaker. On Sunday, July 31, we will have our pot-luck dinner at noon. All are invited.

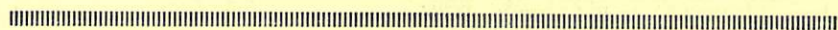
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- Why preachers keep going
- How a minister can cope in a declining church

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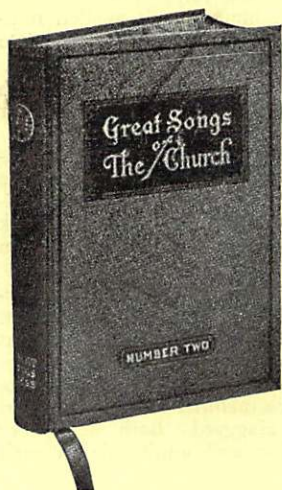
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