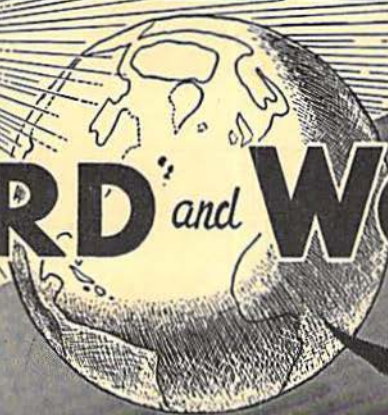


*"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."*



# The **WORD** and **WORK**



*"Holding forth the Word of life."*

MARCH, 1989

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# NEWS AND NOTES

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

## CATCH THE VISION

That's the theme for the Louisville Fellowship Week, August 7-10. Plan now to be there then. A helpful program is being planned, including a number of workshops. There will be emphasis on foreign missions, home missions, education, leadership and fellowship.

## URGENT NEED FOR A PREACHER

The Woodstock Park Church of Christ in Jacksonville, Florida, is seeking a minister. Bro. Johnny Adams has preached there for many years but is now 83 years old. Also, his wife's illness makes it highly desirable for them to move to Tenn. A fulltime worker is sought. For more information, write John Adams, 2934 Lowell Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32205 or call 904-384-0352.

## N.A.C.C. IN LOUISVILLE

The North American Christian Convention will be July 11-14, at the Fairgrounds in Louisville. 20,000 people are expected! Those who have attended formerly say the fellowship is fine, the preaching inspiring, and the workshops practical. This year's theme is HOLINESS—in body, mind, home, & church. Take advantage of its being in Louisville.

## LADIES INSPIRATION DAY

Ladies of Kentuckiana, save Sat. April 22 for the annual Inspiration Day. Place this year: Sellersburg; time: 9:30 - 3:00, with lunch available for \$3.00.

## NEW ALBANY, IND.:

An appreciation reception was held at Cherry St. Church of Christ on Feb. 26, in honor of Bruce and Irene Chowning's many years of faithful ministry there.

## BOOK ABOUT MISSIONARY LIFE IN AFRICA:

Alvin and Georgia Hobby were missionaries in Africa from the late 1930's to the mid-1980's. They now live in Oklahoma, and Sister Hobby has written an interesting book about their years in Northern Rhodesia/Zambia. They were active in preaching, school-

teaching, some medical work, and Bible translation. Chapter titles include "Snakes & Witchcraft," "African Ways & Wisdom," "Growing Up in Africa," etc. A story about roughing it in the Zambezi Valley will make you count your blessings. Other missionaries mentioned are the J.C. Shewmakers (both now in Glory), the W.L. Browns, and Elaine Brittell.

This book would be a good addition to your church library. It has 208 pages, sixteen chapters, and is available in paperback for \$5.00 or hardback for \$7.00. Order from the publisher, J. C. Choate Publications, Rt. 2, Box 156, Winona, MS.

Brother & Sister Hobby's address is 1010 S. Grand, Grove, OK 74344.

—Alex Wilson

## Share AUDIO - VISUAL Resources:

VCRs have become more and more common, and many churches are finding them valuable for teaching and training. We should not make them a crutch, nor use them without discrimination. Yet they can be very helpful.

Many Christian bookstores now rent videotapes for just a few dollars a day. And the purchase price of tapes has gone down too, making it more feasible to buy tapes which you consider good enough to use a number of times.

But it would be even more sensible if several congregations in the same area would cooperate & form lending libraries. The Portland Ave. Church has the following videotapes and would be willing to lend them to other churches in the Louisville area: Moody Institute of Science's "The God of Creation"; David Reagan's "Christ in Prophecy" (3 Tapes with 6 programs, 50 min. each); "America, You're Too Young to Die" (patriotic, with a call to pray & work for revival); James Dobson's "Prepare for Adolescence," and "What Wives Wish their Husbands knew about Women"; and InterVarsity's "To Every People" (4 15-min. segments re: the major unevangelized peoples: Hindus, Muslims, Chinese, and tribal people). You may contact me at 502-897-2831.—The Editor

Continued on page 95

# THE WORD AND WORK

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

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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## THEME:

# *When Christians Gather*

## **Active Adoration, or Spectator Sport?**

Alex V. Wilson

Last month's theme centered on the *scattered* church—Christians at their daily jobs. Now our theme is the *gathered* church—Christians meeting together to honor their God and receive strength to serve Him when they scatter. The gathered church is like a ballteam holding its practice sessions, while the scattered church is like the team playing its official games. Either one without the other is terribly incomplete, an exercise in futility. Try to imagine the absurdity of it! Yet some believers try to opt for one or the other, instead of both.

*How are the meetings in your congregation? Are they meaningful and lifechanging, or "the same old stuff"? Which term more accurately describes the average attender—participant, or passive? Which expression better depicts the overall atmosphere—active adoration, or spectator sport? Is there enthusiasm, or boredom?*

### *Sterile Worship (A Horrible Possibility!)*

A brother who apparently visits many congregations makes the following sad observations. If the shoe fits—and I hope it doesn't—, wear it.

One of the most important factors working against the spread of the gospel is the sterile worship services in most Churches of Christ. The strong emphasis on restoring first century patterns of church worship has not been balanced by a studied effort to bring out the best of people's minds and emotions. Every facet of public worship is characterized by repetitious, hackneyed expression. From opening comments through communion prayers to the closing prayer, the typical congregation experiences a series of commonplace declarations that numb the mind and kill the spirit.

From the general order of worship services down to the songs used in worship, our brotherhood has demonstrated more indifference than thought. Most congregations have hymnals with more than 700 songs, but most will use only about 50 different songs for worship during a year's time. The average public prayer is so generalized that it could be repeated any place in the world and would be equally meaningless. The rote process is repeated again and again.

Often the atmosphere is so cold and impersonal that going to church is much like going to the neighborhood movie. People rush in and out as strangers. Only the leadership and central core of the church enjoy anything close to first century fellowship.

Growing churches know that worship is communication with God and the celebration of spiritual life in Christ. The best minds in the church should be given the responsibility for planning so that the church is edified by every song, every Scripture, every comment, every silence. Intellectual vigor and life must

go into planning worship to keep the church from perpetuating sterile and fruitless worship.

I welcome that writer's emphasis on thoughtful planning and preparation. In fact, I discuss it at length in another article in this issue. But surely even more important is our need to *pray*, to seek the moving power of the Holy Spirit in our meetings. He alone can make spiritual things real to us, and make our gatherings alive and transforming. So may our recurring request to God Most High be, "Revive us again! Fill each heart with Thy love! May each soul be rekindled with fire from above!"

### *"Planned Spontaneity"*

Bob Moorehead uses that term in his book, *The Growth Factor*. It means to balance a meeting so that it has both *structure* and *flexibility*. "So structure your worship that there is room for spontaneous praise times, an additional chorus, scripture or whatever. Spontaneity doesn't have to mean confusion, but it means giving the Holy Spirit the room and the freedom to do what He wants to do when He wants to" (p. 53).

Here are various ways our congregation does this from time to time: 1) During prayer-time, encourage as many brothers as desire to, to lead short, specific prayers or praises. 2) Ask someone to lead a prayer without any requests at all, but entirely worship and thanksgiving. 3) Use responsive Scripture-readings. 4) Have a period when folks can share any Bible verses that God recently used in their lives in some significant way. 5) Have testimonies of recent blessings, especially answers to prayer. (If you fear this may get out of hand, then announce that any time someone has such a testimony, he should let you know ahead of time. Then you can decide if, when and how to call on him to share it.)

6) Have special singing groups (but not to such an extent that you weaken congregational singing). 7) Teach the words of new songs by putting them in your bulletin or by using an overhead projector, so everyone can see them. (Don't infringe on copyrights, however.) 8) Have an extended period of singing *only worship songs*, especially songs sung directly to *God Himself*. The Lord uses such times of praise and adoration to make Himself real to our hearts. 9) Have a period of *silent, directed* prayer. The leader might say, "For the next few moments let's each silently thank God for specific, recent blessings. . . . Now tell the Lord how much you love Him. . . . Now commit to Him any burdens that may be weighing you down and causing you heartaches. . . . Now pray for 4-5 folks who are sick or have special needs. . . . In closing, for a few moments just listen to the Lord, asking if He wants to impress anything special on your heart. . . . Amen." Such times of silent prayer and meditation can be very precious.

May the Lord make our times of assembling before Him so meaningful that we shall look forward to them with intense eagerness, and that He Himself will be overjoyed and will look forward to them too!

# Effective Worship Springs from Prayer, Thought and Work

Bailey B. McBride

Sociological studies of church growth have established the fact that churches growing numerically are characterized by effective worship. The students of church growth typically talk and write about worship as celebration, i.e., large assemblies that have an air of rejoicing and festivity.

Put very simply, evangelistic churches work much harder to make worship periods meaningful, inspiring and God-centered.

## UNDERSTANDING WORSHIP

Not a few churches among our fellowship have settled into an almost mindless routine for conducting worship. No one considers how to improve the quality of worship in singing, prayers are rote cliches, the Lord's supper is a formality and everyone knows exactly what will be done and said because it is exactly like every other worship service the congregation has ever had.

Worship is the meeting of divinity ("Where two or more are gathered together in my name, there am I...") and humanity so that humanity can be empowered *by acknowledging the power of God, by adoring the majesty of God, by glorifying the greatness of God and by absorbing the love of God.*

## IMPEDIMENTS TO WORSHIP

Five common practices within our fellowship have the effect of impeding our worship and making it ineffective.

*First*, many church members are really uncomfortable with anything new or different in worship. Of course, believers rightly recognize that God expects man to worship in the ways God has taught. Jesus stressed the importance of *truth* in worship when he answered the question of the Samaritan woman. The Old Testament is replete with stories of "strange fire" and other kinds of misdirected worship.

Unfortunately, however, many church members cling to songs, procedures and practices originating with men as though they originated with God. As a brotherhood, we need to be open to different tastes in worship, and we should be less rigid about innovation and change in worship procedures.

*Second*, a few church members are really more concerned about innovation and variation than worship. Because so many church members are inflexible, a few have made it a crusade to be different. To them, novelty is more important than touching the hearts and minds of believers.

*Third*, believers do not practice worshiping. The Christians in a large East Coast congregation reported in a Bible class survey that they spent less than 30 minutes per week in private or family worship.

That report suggests that believers are not compelled by an inner desire to adore and to glorify God. It also suggests that believers are not training themselves to meditate and to concentrate on the glorious truths of God's being.

*Fourth*, most churches go through the motions of preparing to worship but ignore the rigorous mental and spiritual efforts required to plan public worship. Many participants in public worship do not pray for God's guidance and direction to their choice of songs, their composing of prayers, their selection of Scriptures for public reading or their efforts to focus and inspire the other worshippers.

*Fifth*, most churches have little teaching about the nature and purpose of worship. Neither through Bible class materials nor through preaching have believers been taught about worship. With so little teaching on the subject, churches settle to the lowest level of practice, and consequently worship only occasionally inspires us to seek a closer walk with God.

#### WHAT IS NEEDED

The pressing need in all our churches is a recommitment by elders, preachers and members to improve and enliven public and private worship.

Each believer needs to commit some time every day to adoring and worshiping God either as a private exercise or as a family devotion.

Every participant in public worship should pray daily about the judgment and the action involved in carrying out his assignment.

Believers should set aside time before public worship to prepare their minds and hearts for communication with God.

(Reprinted by permission from *Christian Chronicle*, September 1988.)

\* \* \* \* \*

## CHARLES SPURGEON IN THE PULPIT

(From Pierson's Biography of Spurgeon)

We had been seated but a few moments when the preacher walked forward and raised his hand to invoke divine blessing. A more unclerical looking man you could scarcely imagine as occupying a metropolitan pulpit. But when he began to speak the physical was forgotten in the intellectual and spiritual. I have known many people who were good-looking until they opened their mouths; Mr. Spurgeon becomes good looking when he opens his.

The service was lengthy but not long; plain but interesting, and Mr. Spurgeon's method of lining out the psalms and hymns is primitive but effective. The music is led by a precentor, without choir or instruments. One part of the audience follows another, out of time, like a duck dragging a lame leg. Nevertheless I have never heard such singing. It was like a great wave of praise surging up against the pillars of the throne of God. No matter how refined your ear, all offenses against the laws of art were forgotten in the impression of music in which there was much devotion. In comparison with it,

all the splendid swell of the grandest organ, all the finished culture of the costliest quartet are a parody of worship.

Mr. Spurgeon's praying was marvellous. I have heard from others more pathetic confession of sin, more fervent supplication, more importunate intercession, but never before such adoration. He seemed to stand before God's throne and see His glory, to feel His power, wisdom and goodness smiting us with insufferable blinding splendor.

The reading of the Scripture occupied half an hour and was interspersed with short, pithy, helpful comments which served to make the meaning plain and practical. Before he came to the sermon we had received a blessing. Everything had been conducted as though it was intended to bring God near. There was no hurrying over preliminaries, as though to sing, to read the Word, to pray were mere forms by which the sermon is approached. Each part of the service was itself a sermon and produced definite spiritual impressions and results.

The sermon was preached indeed—it was the text expanded.

Whatever may be the secret, Mr. Spurgeon has practically solved the problem: how to bring the multitude to the house of God. He is a prince among preachers. He is not a mere machine for talking or marrying, baptizing, and burying people. He evidently aims to bring God's thoughts down to the minds and hearts and consciences of men. Nothing impressed me more than his simplicity and his entire freedom from all artificiality or affectation. He bends every power and purpose to reach and mold men for newness of life. How puerile some of the criticisms of this great man seem. He is the most effective preacher of the century and I rejoice to see a man who dares to know only the grand theme of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" and have such a place filled with thousands of hearers.—Reprinted from *Word & Work*, 1932. Spurgeon preached in London, 1854-92.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Remember, and Expect

Antoine Valdetero

While in an accountant's office recently, I saw a sign that said: "When I do right no one remembers; when I do wrong, no one forgets." That little sign may say more about human nature than many of us want to admit. The good that people do is quickly set aside, but one mistake in life follows a person to his grave. Our Lord Jesus "knew what was in man" and told us that there was one thing above all other things that He had done that He wanted remembered: His death. Jesus did not ask us to remember His miracles, His teaching, His travels, but on the night of His betrayal, He broke the bread, gave thanks and said "this do in remembrance of me."

The Lord's Supper is the one act in our worship each Lord's Day that calls us back to Calvary. A preacher may preach on a variety of good and needed subjects where the death of Christ may not be mentioned often, but the bread and the fruit of the vine on the table calls



us to remember Calvary. The Lord's Supper is an act of importance because it was instituted by Jesus Himself on "the night he was betrayed." The sinless body of our Lord and the blood that He shed come to our minds every time our lips touch the emblems. Its importance was accepted by the early church, for we find the Lord's Supper listed in Acts 2:42 along with the apostle's teaching, fellowship, and prayer.

It should be noted that the Lord's Supper is an act of obedience. "This do" shows that it is not a time honored custom, but a command to be obeyed. It is done "in remembrance of me." That part of the service should have songs, prayers, and comments that call our minds back to Calvary. It is strange indeed, that in many places of assembly, the preaching and the collection are never neglected, but the Lord's Supper is taken more out of convenience than conviction. The argument that "if taken too often it will make it common" is never used in regard to the collection plate. Strange, indeed, how our sense of values can change.

In 1 Cor. 10:16 Paul tells us that the Lord's Supper is an act of communion. We join with the heavenly hosts to glorify the name of Jesus. It is a joint participation in the body and blood of Christ. As we partake and examine ourselves, we should be made to realize that the same blood that cleansed us at baptism is still at work cleansing us "as we walk in the light."

Every Sunday when the Lord's Supper is spread, we bear an act of testimony to the world: "Ye show forth the Lord's death." The spread table is telling a dying world that "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Visitors among us need to know where our hope lies; young children coming up need to be taught where our hope lies!

The Lord's Supper is an act of expectancy. "Ye show forth the Lord's death *till He come.*" As we break bread and sip the fruit of the vine we look back to Calvary and realize anew the horrible price that was paid for my sin. Likewise, behind the shelter of His blood we look forward with anticipation to His soon return. Being faithful at the Lord's Table will enable us to be ready when He comes again. How sad it would be for a child of God to be absent from the communion service and Jesus come at the very hour!

Paul speaks about the Lord's Supper being taken in a "worthy manner." Some speak of that phrase as though we must pump ourselves up into a state of goodness so we can be worthy. I do not believe anything could be further from what Paul is referring to. These Corinthians had turned this sacred occasion into a time of food grabbing. This he rebuked. Your conduct, your mental attitude, your thoughts should all be of such a nature that they will be worthy of the holy moment when the bread and juice are on our lips. It should not be a time of whispering, note passing, and any other type of distracting conduct. Our mind should be on Him, not the world or things. We should discern His body by prayerful preparation. Failure here can lead to judgment. I Corinthians 11:29-30.

The Lord's Supper should be observed "every first day of the week." See Acts 20:7. The first day of the week means every week just as "remember the Sabbath" meant every Sabbath. What a blessing is missed by those who partake every three months or once a year. There should be no holier moment in the life of the church, than having been strengthened by participation in the Lord's Supper and the preaching of the Word, to go out the church door into the world *to be the church!*

People soon forget the things they were taught if they are not reminded of them or if they fail to meditate on them. Dear brother who stands in the pulpit: When did you last speak on this important and needed subject? When did you last plan a service where everything done (the songs, the readings) all centered around the Lord's Supper. Perhaps in our zeal to get "people down the aisle at every service," we starve God's people by neglecting emphasis on doing the one thing Jesus asked us to do: Remember His death until He comes again.

May the Lord use these few words as a means of encouragement and reminder of our responsibility in this area.

\* \* \* \* \*

## WHAT ONE CHURCH DOES ON SUNDAY NIGHTS

# AN EXPERIENCE WITH THE WORD

James M. Wells

"I've learned how important it is to read God's Word. I have developed the habit of reading several chapters each day as a result."

"It leaves a longer and deeper impression in my mind."

"Each time I seem to learn something new and different."

"It has made me realize that I don't read the Bible enough."

"I have found new meaning in the Scriptures I had read for years."

What inspired such wonderful thoughts? They are referring to our church's Sunday night program. Have I been delivering powerful sermons? Have we been bringing in different speakers? Have we employed contests or gimmicks? No, none of the above!

Like most preachers I have struggled with the Sunday evening service. Last year I was having trouble meeting the needs of those disciples who returned for the evening meeting. I felt that our evening time together did not offer much encouragement to the people. What could we do to satisfy their spiritual desires?

One night I could not sleep thinking of this. Finally an idea came—something so simple and beautiful. It should have been obvious. Since the Word of God *is* living and active, since it *does* penetrate our very souls, since it *is* God-breathed, and since it *will* live forever, why not read the Word of God in the presence of His people when they assemble in His name?

In many churches, the public reading of Scripture is limited to

the few minutes before the minister preaches. Certainly, Paul had more than that in mind when he wrote, "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture" (1 Timothy 4:13). Certainly he had more than that in mind when he told the Colossians, "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea" (Colossians 4:16).

Convinced that we should honor God's Word in this manner and that the needs of the church would be met, on the morning of the Sunday we were to begin I used Nehemiah 8:1-9 as the text. That night I read the Word of God to the people, and we have been doing so ever since.

I would like to be able to tell you that our evening attendance has soared, but it has not. It has increased, however. Those who have a hunger and thirst for the Word return, eager to hear it read. According to their own words, they are being blessed, encouraged, and enlightened. They are now studying the Scriptures with greater regularity and appreciation. They are thrilled about hearing God's words instead of the preacher's! What more could a preacher possibly desire! It has been a genuine pleasure and an honor to stand before my people and read the Word of God.

*Helpful hints*—I have found the following to be very helpful in the public reading of the Word:

(1) *Prepare.* Carefully read the selected passage several times during the week. Practice your reading aloud. It must be read well, with feeling, dignity, and conviction. Bathe your reading in prayer. I have found that it takes me just as long to prepare for a reading as it does for an evening sermon.

(2) *Keep it short.* While we now read through an entire book, I usually read three chapters at a time. It takes me about twenty to twenty-five minutes.

(3) *Allow for comments.* At first I did not do this. But after the last several readings, I asked for observations. It is refreshing to hear the disciples encourage each other (and me) with their insights into God's Word. Some of them take notes, not wanting to forget a new thought or truth that had previously been overlooked.

After several weeks of reading the Scriptures, I distributed a questionnaire hoping to determine whether to continue or return to a more traditional service. The response was fantastic! Every person who answered had nothing but praise for new emphasis on God's Word.

The reading of Scripture is blessing us! It is working better than I had anticipated because, as we are experiencing, the Word of God really is "living and active" and "sharper than any double-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).

One of our members expressed it so well: "The still, quiet mood everyone is in helps us to listen to what the Word really says. When we all are of one mind at the same time, it seems like God is talking to us and we really are listening." Amen!

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# MUTUAL EDIFICATION

Gordon R. Linscott

Several years ago I read some remarks on "mutual edification" by Brother Chambers. I'm glad he has spoken on this topic, for it is one that has been long on my heart. It is one area in which—in my opinion—the majority of the churches of Christ are still a long way from the Biblical pattern. Before you judge that statement to be either right or wrong, consider the basis for it.

## WHAT IS "MUTUAL EDIFICATION"?

"Mutual" of course, means simply "one another" or "done to the other." "Edification" is "building up." "Mutual edification" then is the edification of each other. Ephesians 4:16 clearly states that "*each several (individual) part*" of the body contributes to "the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." So the edification of the church is not the responsibility of a chosen few. Perhaps the responsibility resting upon elders and teachers is heavier, but *every* Christian has his own personal responsibility for the spiritual growth of his brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Paul uses the word "edification" in a slightly narrower sense in 1 Corinthians 14, where he deals with the assembled church. "When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (v. 26). Usually when we hear the expression "mutual edification," it is with reference to this same setting—the church assembled, each member edifying the others. Some would restrict "edification" still further, to include only the ministry of the Word—preaching or teaching—but we see from the verse above that the definition is not quite that narrow. Singing (Eph. 5:19) is certainly included, although the scriptures again place the emphasis on the individual, rather than on the congregation as a whole.

## IS IT WORKABLE?

In recent years I have discussed this matter with a number of preachers and church leaders. Not one ever questioned that it is the Bible pattern. But almost all raised this objection: "It won't work!" To that objection there are two answers. First, if we agree that God says do it, we should do it, regardless of what we think about it. Our responsibility is to be found faithful.

The second answer: *It does work!* Not a few of us have worshipped with congregations who follow this pattern. Some churches have gone on so for years, with the evident blessing of the Lord. Others, though still following the same "pattern" have pretty well reduced it to a "form"; perhaps several members participate in the service, but it is all very cut-and-dried and the work of human planning. Indeed, if we should merely exchange one form for another, we would gain nothing. The chief point is this: Who is in charge of the meeting? Is it a man, or is it the Holy Spirit?

If the Holy Spirit is truly in charge—and all are waiting expectantly on Him to direct—He will make it plain enough who is

to speak and who is to pray and who is to sing. No, there will be no confusion (1 Cor. 14:27-33). There may be times of *silence*—a thing most unbearable to the children of this age of noise and hurry—but hearts that are conscious of the presence of God do not need a musical background to their meditation. Instead of a single sermon by one preacher, one brother may present a fine study from the Word and another rise to add suitable words of exhortation (Rom. 12:8). Such I have witnessed many times, and the discourses of the two or three brethren fit together as nicely as if they had all studied together the whole week before!

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF OBEDIENCE

All of this may sound strange to him who hears of it for the first time. A congregation whose worship has always been directed by one man will feel much disconcerted at an attempt to do otherwise. We most easily become slaves of customs, and the chains of custom become heavier with time. In spite of the fact that most of "our churches" are very dependent upon one man (or a very few), I think we should diligently seek the mind of the Lord on this matter, with the foregone resolution that we will follow His leading, whatever it be. While we may now be enjoying a measure of the Lord's blessing, will not a closer adherence to His word open the way for ever greater blessings?

Many years ago, Moses E. Lard—one of the "greats" of the Restoration Movement whose *Commentary on Romans* is still in use—made a comment on Romans 12 that went something like this: "The church of the Lord Jesus Christ will never perfectly fulfill its mission in the world as long as we expect one man to be a spiritual jack-of-all-trades. God has ordained that we should be endowed with and should exercise various gifts given according to His own wisdom. As long as these gifts are ignored, buried, and unused, the church cannot but be poor in its spiritual life and in its testimony to the world."

We would not be in favor of beginning a "mutual edification party" among the churches, saying "*this* is the way services must be conducted if you would have fellowship with us." We would, however, strongly encourage a growing spirit of discontent with our turning the worship of our blessed Lord into a "spectator sport," a well-planned and well-executed show, presented by a few trained performers while the most are passive on-lookers. If you are convinced that the congregation with which you meet is "rich and has need of nothing," continue on as you are. If, instead, you feel that something is lacking, give this matter further consideration. Diligently study what the Word has to say (the subject has hardly been touched in this article), and earnestly pray for understanding until you are convinced that your conclusions are God-given. Perhaps this is the answer to the lack of spiritual vitality of which we hear so much. Be it so, or not, may God give to us a renewed awareness of the Holy Spirit and of His ministry to the assembled church.

Stanford Chambers on the same subject

*Does not the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians, the 12th also, show that*

*the N.T. church was very democratic in the public services? "Each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching (doctrine), hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation." See 14:26.*

There was, indeed, much mutuality. The true, spiritual edification of the body depended and depends upon each several member performing its purposed function. Even with Paul the great apostle present at Troas, it is written that he "discoursed with them." They were therefore not mere listeners. Mutual edification is certainly the scriptural way. But to be spectators or guests attending the services, services rendered by one or a few at the most, that is quite agreeable to the many and is an easy way of avoidance of responsibility. "Let the Minister (the Reverend Doctor or the Priest) do all the 'officiating'." How easy then to fall into the unedifying habit of sitting back, looking on, listening in, and criticising! Yes, the Head of the church would have every member of the body feel that he is significant.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Approaching the Throne Together**

Tom Lawson

It may seem difficult to understand. Teachers carefully prepare lessons. Ministers spend hours on sermons. Sponsors labor over teen group learning times. But these same people may regularly stand in public worship and speak to the Lord God without any real degree of planning, preparation, or thought.

Christians recognize that sermon preparation does not lessen the role of the Holy Spirit. Study or planning does not rob the message of heartfelt meaning. Instead, sermon preparation is expected. A prepared message avoids shallowness, and empty repetition. Preparation strives for Scriptural depth and meaning. Why should the same criteria not be applied when we are asked to lead a public assembly in prayer?

Just as there is an obvious difference between personal Bible study and a public sermon, public prayer is not private prayer. Private prayer expresses praise, adoration, and love in the most personal terms. These are born out of specific situations in our own life. But my needs may not be yours. Yours may not be mine.

Public prayer is prayer made to God on behalf of the assembled church. That thought should be a filter through which everything we say should be made to pass.

There are several weaknesses in the way we usually approach public prayer. This is not to say a poor prayer is not heard by our gracious Father. A poorly developed sermon may still bring a soul to Christ, too. But both can be improved with some effort.

*Using shallow repetitions*—One weakness of our public prayers is that they are often rather shallow. The same phrases are repeated time and time again. We have heard others pray them since childhood. When it is our time to pray, we find ourselves repeating them almost without thought.

Prayer language in the Bible is anything but shallow. Paul reaches almost poetic heights as he prays "to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." Such words lead our minds into seldom traveled paths of thought. Bible prayers do use repetition from time to time. But then the repetition is in an echoing crescendo of praise.

*Meager content*—Another weakness is in the meager number of subjects which we pray. Scripture is rich beyond measure with descriptions of the nature, character, power, faithfulness, and majesty of God. Yet we rarely get beyond, "We just thank You so much for Your love." We *do* thank Him for His love! But there is so much more we need to bring into our praise.

Even when we pray to God, our thoughts remain centered on us and our world. Our focus is on the here and now. That is important. But Scriptural prayers are also saturated with glorious expressions about God addressed to God.

Saying, "God, we thank You so much for this beautiful sunset," is not wrong. But the focus changes when we pray, "God, in this sunset we can see Your creativity. We recognize Your love of beauty. God, what a wonderful Creator You are! Thank You!" We are brought from appreciating the art to praising the artist himself.

*Majors and minors*—Most distressing of all are the evident priorities we hear in public prayers. We often major in minors. Eternal themes are far removed. Physical needs of daily life are given the great majority of time. We pray more for sickness than for souls.

Public prayer has developed in some circles into a reading of "The Weekly Sick List." The list is lengthy. The ailments are sometimes described in detail. People I do not know are named. I may not know if they are saved. But I am not expected or asked to call on them. We just mention them in prayer and go on. Souls trapped in the "cancer" of sin receive a lower priority—if priority is determined by time and attention.

Now before the stones start to fly at my remarks about the sacrosanct "sick list," a moment of self-defense. First, I firmly believe in a prayer-hearing, and prayer-answering God! I also believe in the need for intercessory prayer. While not as important as the questions of eternity, physical sickness and needs are certainly important. Jesus instructed us to pray for our "daily bread." James instructs the elders to go to the sick and to pray for their healing.

But let me suggest a few thoughts about a detailed "sick list." First, in an assembly of any size, just how large would the sick list of loved ones be if everyone really "opened up"?

Second, does the reading of such a list actually encourage some dear folk to sit there and think up names to offer? I have heard people suggest prayer for a person they read about in a newspaper article from another city. They could not even remember the name or the town.

Third, would personal prayer or small group prayer times be a better time for sharing such specific and personal burdens? In smaller

groups we can focus our attention on the needs. We can also follow up with visits, evangelistic teaching or a card.

Clearly, an exception would be a time when the whole church's attention is already focused on a particular need. Perhaps a member is struck down suddenly with a serious illness. Everyone present has been petitioning God in their personal prayers. The concern is a *commonly held burden* in everyone's heart. Then it would be only natural for the assembled church to publicly express their shared burden.

It is important to remember that *God does not answer prayer based on the quantity of those praying*. This may rub against the grain of popular myth, but James teaches that one man, praying in faith according to the will of God, can even alter the weather or effect great changes (James 5:16-18). The power of prayer rests in the authority and intercession of Christ and the Holy Spirit, not in our amassing enough "votes" to change God's mind.

We pray corporately because *we* need the time of expressing commonly held faith and needs to God our Father. God is not any more bound to answer the prayers of the assembled church, however large, than the prayers we express in the privacy of our own "prayer closet."

*Improvements*—So what is the answer? Very simply, public prayer would be improved a hundredfold by applying the very same common sense principles given to sermons and lessons. This does not lessen the value of the prayer. It does not tarnish the "spirituality" of the prayer. Instead, it will only enhance the effectiveness of the prayer to communicate to God the worship of the church and to bring the church into the presence of God.

*First, recognize public prayer for what it is.* Public prayer is public! It is a part of a time of corporate worship. Through public prayer, the entire assembled body of Christians is invited to approach the throne of God together.

Remember: The public prayer is praying to God, *on behalf of the entire assembled body*.

Public prayer is addressed to God. Many tell stories about people who have become so concerned to communicate to the congregation they forgot what they were doing and started preaching to the church. Public prayer does not forget the people. We are mindful that each person present is seeking to speak to God with us through our words. Following our prayer they should be able to say the "amen." That is, the prayer should have voiced praise, confession, submission, and petition that they share and that they understand.

*Second, preparation only improves meaning.* Why not study great prayers? Read the Psalms. Read some of the great prayers that have come to us through Christian history. Jot down ideas, themes, meaningful phrases and concepts. Let's broaden our expressions of praise and deepen our confession of need.

Simple notes on a card or held in memory may be all that is needed to enrich your public prayers. But a written and recited



prayer can also be filled with meaning and can be as heartfelt as any "spontaneous" prayer.

*Third, be sensitive to the moment.* If a prayer is to begin a time of worship then seek to focus everyone present on the person and character and wonder of God. Help us ask for His guidance and blessing. If before a sermon, lead us to ask Him for tender and open hearts. If the moment is joyous, pray a prayer filled with the joy of celebration! If the moment is somber, let your prayer reflect that.

*Fourth, be sensitive to our frail human nature.* No one thinks it odd that ministers (who could talk for hours!) try to keep sermon length down to much less time than that. Their desire to communicate eternal truths is tempered with their knowledge that our minds tend to drift.

Bobby Richardson's memorable prayer was, "Jesus. You. Nothing less. Nothing more. Nothing else. Amen." A well-planned sentence may bring an entire church into the very presence of God. Unprepared ramblings make it difficult for us to keep our mind focused on praying with you through your words.

*Fifth, outline a progression.* The Model Prayer in Matthew 6 moves from praise, to surrender, to petition, to confession, to life response, then (at least in some manuscripts) back to praise. That is certainly a good progression for a central prayer time in a worship.

*Conclusion*—Public prayer can be among the richest and deepest experiences of Christian worship. Through these prayers, the church, as a church, communicates with God our Savior. Minds clouded by the world are turned toward Heaven. Young Christians learn, through these models, great truths about the nature of God, our faith and what is truly important in life. Some planning, study, and thought added into these wonderful moments should only increase the wonder!

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## Should We Pray "Great" Prayers?

Alex V. Wilson

Were your reactions to the preceding article like mine—mixed? Some points the writer made impressed me favorably, but others raised questions at first. I wondered, "If our public prayers become too profound or eloquent, won't it make a lot of our members too scared to pray at all in the church meetings (and maybe at home too)? Many folks are already too self-conscious to lead public prayers; won't this make the situation worse? And won't such teaching lead others to try to become very impressive in their style, and minimize the importance of our heart? Aren't some pray-ers already too long-winded and pompous? And if prayer is a child of God talking to his Father, should the child need to plan and rehearse what he says before engaging in the conversation! And isn't it much better to be

spontaneous rather than highly structured in our meetings?" These and other questions arise.

In order to inspire wider participation, less fear and more simplicity in public prayer, about every other Sunday in our church we have an open prayer-session. First the leader shares some major requests for intercession, including the needs of some missionary. Then he asks all the men to stand, and invites any who feel a prayer-burden from the Lord to lead in a *short* prayer—just a few sentences. Some folks who would never lead a "regular" prayer feel free to participate in such a time. And anywhere from six to maybe fourteen join in lifting their voices to heaven, humbly and sincerely. Does not Brother Lawson's article militate against such a practice? Possibly so, but remember that we are not locked into an either/or situation; a *both/and* approach offers a solution.

We surely agree with him about the value of studying great prayers in the Bible. As we hear Daniel, Paul, David, and our Lord Jesus praying, it does reveal the "meager content" and mixed-up priorities common among us. And while spontaneity is valuable, it is not the only value. After all, the first four chapters of the book of Lamentations—*Lamentations*, mind you!—are all acrostic poems, the verses of which begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. And the longest chapter in Scripture, Psalm 119, is also in acrostic form; the eight verses of each stanza begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. What structure, what preparation!

Years ago I heard one of our leaders comment—and it shocked me at the time—that while we deplore churches that use prayer-books because the people say the same thing again and again, really we are not much better. Brother Jones uses nearly the same words every time he prays. "Frankly, if we have to hear a prayer over and over, I prefer the Episcopal prayer-book's lofty expressions and rolling rhythms rather than Brother Jones' narrow ideas and limited phrases." And a godly Anglican observed, "If *all* Christians prayed *all* the time as well as *some* Christians pray *some* of the time, there would be no need for a prayer-book. But since that is not the case, it is expedient to use a prayer-book."

Well, I'm not advocating we start using *The Book of Common Prayer*. But I recommend a practice we have tried a few times. Take a Psalm or one of Paul's prayers, adapt it for congregational use, print it in your bulletin, and have the congregation pray it in unison. Maybe doing that once or twice a month will deepen our praying at other times. Again, it's not either/or, but both/and.

Here's a sample of a Psalm (113) adapted for church use:

We praise You, Lord. We, your servants, praise your name, O Lord. May your name be praised both now and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, your name is worthy of praise.

You, O Lord, are exalted over all the nations, your glory above the heavens. Who is like You, O Lord our God, the One enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?

You raise the poor from the dust, and lift the needy from the trash heap—to sit among the mighty. You settle the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.

We praise You, Lord.

### Some Prayers to Ponder

The author suggests we study some of the great prayers that have come to us through church history too. Here are some samples to digest and make our own. Some of them are public prayers while most are personal but could be adapted for public use.

O how I fear Thee, living God,  
With deepest, tenderest fears;  
And worship Thee with trembling hopes  
And penitential tears.  
Yet I may love Thee too, O Lord,  
Almighty as Thou art,  
For Thou hast stooped to ask from me  
The love of my poor heart.

Fredrick Faber

Or consider again the moving prayer of Francis of Assisi, which has been put to music.

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace:  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled, as to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
it is in dying that we are born  
to eternal life!

The old, anonymous serenity-prayer continues to challenge us: "God, grant me the *serenity* to accept the things I cannot change, *courage* to change the things I can, and *wisdom* to know the difference." And this prayer of Peter Marshall, perhaps prayed while he was chaplain of the U. S. Senate in the 1940's, has stuck in my heart over the decades: "God of our fathers, and our God: We pray for *the bifocals of faith*, that see the despair and need of the hour, but also see—farther on—the patience of our God working out His plan in the world He has made."

Such prayers are memorable. They call for us to think, worship, apply and echo them as we ourselves address the Most High. Our hymnals contain some real gems, often overlooked. For instance: "Father, hear the prayer we offer, Nor for ease that prayer shall be, But for strength, that we may ever Live our lives courageously. Not for ever by still waters Would we idly, quiet stay; but would smite the living fountains From the rocks along our way" (Love M. Willis). Forty years ago John Baillie wrote *A Diary of Private Prayer*, with thought-provoking prayers for morning and evening of each day of the month, and space to write in your own personal adoration and

petitions. Note the following:

O Lord, forgive:

My failure to apply to myself the standards of conduct I demand of others; my blindness to the suffering of others and my slowness to be taught by my own; my complacency towards wrongs that do not touch my own case and my over-sensitiveness to those that do; my slowness to see the good in my fellows and to see the evil in myself; my hardness of heart towards my neighbor's faults and my readiness to make allowance for my own; my unwillingness to believe that Thou hast called me to a small work and my brother to a great one.

Teach me, O God, so to use all the circumstances of my life today that they may bring forth in me the fruits of holiness rather than the fruits of sin.

Let me use disappointment as material for patience; success as material for thankfulness; danger as material for courage; reproach as material for longsuffering; praise as material for humility; pleasures as material for temperance; pains as material for endurance.

Have mercy upon me, O God:

For my deceitful heart and crooked thoughts; for barbed words spoken deliberately; for thoughtless words spoken hastily; for envious and prying eyes; for ears that rejoice in iniquity and rejoice not in the truth; for greedy hands; for wandering and loitering feet; for haughty looks. . . .

O Thou before whose eyes all human hearts lie bare and open, forbid that I should seek to hide from Thee anything that I have this day done or thought or imagined. What no proper shame kept me from committing, let no false shame keep me now from confessing.

#### *Our Need: Enrichment, Enlargement*

I don't know about you, but such examples show me that my prayer-life, private and public, needs to be enriched and expanded. Not to try to impress God or other people with fancy words or show-off ideas. No, but to open wide our hearts toward God Most High; to deepen our worship, our self-knowledge and confession, and our intercession. Ancient writers such as Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis, Thomas a Kempis (*The Imitation of Christ*), and Luther can help us. The great hymnwriters too, like Watts, Wesley, Newton, Cowper, Crosby, Havergal, Bonar, Faber, Tersteegen, Heber and others. Some recent or current writers, notably A. W. Tozer and James Packer (*Knowing God*), can enlarge our knowledge of God's person and attributes and ways and wonders. And such knowledge can stretch and strengthen our praying.

I know a preacher who studied at a Church of Christ college. He was assigned to write a term paper on R. H. Boll, former editor of *W & W*. He had heard that Boll was a heretic, a proud and divisive man. But in gathering material for his paper, he read some of Boll's books. "I was deeply impressed while reading his book about *Hebrews*, for he ended each lesson with a warmhearted prayer. I'd never read a commentary like that. His teachings but especially those prayers showed me he was a humble, gracious and deeply devoted man—in fact, a fine Christian."

May God help us enrich our public praying. May we be sincere and humble, and yet not afraid of profound thought or sublime expressions. Thanks, brother Lawson, for stimulating our hearts about this important but neglected topic.

# Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller



Does the assembling of Hebrews 10:25 include Sunday night and Wednesday night, or does it speak only of Sunday morning?

Let us first of all clarify any misunderstanding that Sunday morning is a designated time for assembly. The N.T. does not single out some particular hour or portion of the first day of the week for worship. The early church did meet and was expected to assemble for worship on the first day of the week, but further than that the time is not specified. According to the writings of the fathers (religious writings from the early centuries of the church, but not scripture), the early church sometimes met before daybreak on the first day of the week, probably as an accommodation to slaves, for whom the day was an ordinary work day.

By custom in our day and land, Sunday morning is the usual time for an assembly of the church. Generally this is regarded as the most important assembly—the one which, if choice must be made, is best. It is so considered because more Christians will be in attendance, the program is geared to broader needs, etc. In some cases brethren have made this the only occasion when the Lord's Supper will be served. In many minds, then, Sunday morning is the occasion which conforms to the N.T. pattern of meeting on the first day of the week, and any other service or gathering—Sunday School, Sunday night, etc.—is regarded as extra, something to be attended as a matter of choice but not an obligation. In many cases this kind of thinking probably betrays a real lack of delight in the Lord's services.

The use of Sunday morning rather than some other period in the day is not wrong or unscriptural unless we bind it as the only acceptable time of the day. We do well to remember that the particular hour choice is a matter of common consent, not scriptural requirement, so that it does not become a mistaken bone of contention. There is nevertheless something to be said for what has become so widely accepted. It is often a great help to people who travel, and it often is a help in scheduling other activities. The agreement of the saints to meet at a given time confers a responsibility on all involved.

There is a serious danger of legalism with respect to church attendance. It is found in the attitude which says, "Sunday morning is required—that's my duty—but the other assemblies are matters of choice." It is true that the practice of the early church is a binding example on us, but *their example was in attitude and commitment as well as in deed*. Where do we read that their services were limited

to one hour? The probability is that on many occasions they were very lengthy. In days of difficult travel one prolonged service a day made better sense. In our day of easier travel the shorter service with a return in the evening makes for a better arrangement. Too frequently people betray a basic dislike for church services which declares a sad spiritual state. They want them short, sweet, and over with, so that they have "done their duty" and can get on with other plans. There is no real love for or delight in the worship and fellowship. Many a duty attendance on Sunday morning falls far short of what the Lord wants us to experience in the assembling of the saints.

The need, then, is not to try to establish some N.T. law which says that Sunday night (for example) is also required. It seems to me that whenever and as often as the saints agree to meet, these are assemblies of the saints where the Lord is present and where every Christian ought to be present to the best of his ability. I decided a long time ago to try to meet "every time the church doors were open." It has been a source of blessing to me, not a burden, and I have not had occasion to miss too many times. Whenever the saints meet and I am not there *by choice*, it seems to me that I am guilty of forsaking the assembling to that extent. All of the meetings have afforded me opportunity for growth, strength against temptations, awareness of need, and similar blessings. All of this enables me to better serve the Lord. In most cases the choices made by those who miss are not for something more important than the benefits of the assembly.

Is there normally any doubt where the Lord would have us when the saints are meeting? There may be other conflicting demands on us, some which even have a high priority, but let us be careful what we consider to be "good excuses." Beware of the attitude that seeks only what is absolutely required. What is the will of the Lord? What does He want? That should be sufficient to prompt my actions.

Should I use my income before or after taxes as the basis for figuring my tithe?

The tithe, strictly speaking, belongs to the law of Moses and is not the rule for Christian giving. Tithe means "tenth" and was required of those who lived under the law, along with freewill offerings. Although there was then no tax corresponding to the income tax of our day, there were some taxes, frequently oppressive when levied by enemies. One does not get the impression that the tithe was figured "before taxes." There seems to have been no provision for deductions, corrections, etc.

Although it is not the best usage, some people today use the word "tithe" to speak of percentage giving—whatever the percentage may be that they have chosen. Since New Testament Christians are to give as they have been prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2), percentage giving is often a good practice, though not necessarily the only way one could give as prospered. In most cases it provides a good guide as to how well we are following the "as prospered rule." We need to be careful that we do not adopt percentage giving and reject other pertinent New Testament teaching—that of cheerful giving, liberality, etc. (2 Corinthians 9)—but many good things are subject to abuse.

It is my opinion that one's giving should be based on "before taxes" income—in fact, on "before deductions" income. I am aware that some people count only "take home" pay as their income, just sort of ignoring what is withheld "because I never had it anyway." But the various benefits—hospitalization insurance, investment plans, retirement pay, etc.—really are a part of one's prospering. And, as painful as income tax may be, it still goes toward providing certain benefits that the taxpayer himself enjoys. We may not have much choice in the matter, but we really are buying certain important things for ourselves as well as for others. Add the fact that not everyone has the kind of income from which tax is withheld. Some of us must make our own tax payments, provide our own hospitalization insurance and retirement pay. How do we figure our giving? And if we are to take out certain things first, why not also deduct the house payment, the grocery bill, and a few other things? Pretty soon we will have given on the basis, not of prosperity, but of what is left when we are done spending.

The matter is not so important except as it may be misleading. A man may think he is giving 20% (figured "after taxes") when he is only giving 15%, 12%, or 10% (figured "before taxes"). If we will simply make the percentage high enough, it will not likely make a great deal of difference at which point we figure our degree of prosperity. Of course, if we feel under obligation to a legalistic 10% and want to be sure of not giving any more than is "necessary" to meet that obligation, it is easy to see how one might want to figure it only after as many deductions as possible have been made.

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## THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

### "Our Walk in the Spirit"

*Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*  
(Romans 14:16-19, NIV)

In these four verses, as my title shows, the thing that I want us most of all to notice is that as Christians, citizens in the kingdom of God, our "walk," our daily lives before men, is in the Holy Spirit.

Our standing as children of God and citizens of His Kingdom is in Christ, but it is the Spirit that bears His fruit in us (Galatians 5:22, 23) so that we can please the Lord and further the progress of His kingdom among men.

What does Paul mean when he speaks of "what you consider good"? The large percentage of commentators choose either the Christian liberty that Paul has been writing about, liberty to eat or drink, for example; or they choose salvation. Change the last one of those to "the gospel of salvation" and very few are left out of these two choices. I don't wish to take either side. In view of the context it is logical to say that Paul is speaking of that freedom or liberty we have in Christ, not bound by the law on days, meats, etc. Certainly we should think that is good and not want to cause others to speak evil of it, saying that we disregard the rights and needs of others and so are inconsiderate, something no Christian should ever be. On the other hand, no real Christian wants to give a bad impression of the great good news of salvation in Christ Jesus. The actions that would make men speak evil of our liberty in Christ would also make them speak evil of the whole gospel concerning our salvation, saying that it has not proved itself as worthwhile because we are so unresponsive to the needs of others. Never let that happen. Take consideration first of the needs of the other and be like Christ.

Verse 17 reminds us of those people who think that the important thing in our faith is the doing of certain things, something that leads to a legalistic righteousness, not faith. This verse is especially the one that I meant when I said that our walk as Christians is in the Holy Spirit. Notice after his eliminating "eating and drinking" as the important essentials, Paul tells us of the true essential of the kingdom of God—"righteousness, peace and joy" and note where these are found—"in the Holy Spirit." To live the true Christian life without being filled with the Spirit is as impossible as becoming a Christian by self effort. I am writing this during what much of the professing Christian world calls "Lent." Millions of them think it is important to the Kingdom of God for them to leave off eating or drinking certain things. How much more pleased the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit would be if they allowed the Holy Spirit to fulfill "righteousness and peace and joy" in them. Don't make that or any similar mistake. Allow the Lord to have His way in your life through the Holy Spirit.

Verse 18 confirms what I have just been saying by adding that "anyone who serves Christ *in this way* is pleasing to God." But what does he mean when he says that it is pleasing to or approved by men? Obviously he does not mean that every man, even if not a Christian, will approve what you do for Christ and be friendly with you. On the contrary, men will recognize that your life of righteousness and peace and joy is a good one, but even though they secretly approve they will often hate you even more—even as they hated the Lord because what He both did and said condemned their actions.

This time we stop with verse 19 with Paul's exhortation to "make



every effort" to do the things that will lead to peace and to mutual edification. What has he meant by "peace" in this passage? There is the "peace *with* God" that comes when we are justified, declared righteous (Romans 5:1) and there is the "peace *of* God" that comes when we truly commit everything to God as Philippians 4:6, 7 tells us. Again interpreters of the Bible are divided between these two. I personally lean toward the second, for a heart that is guarded by that peace "which transcends all understanding" will also give to the world around it the kind of witness that it needs to make it desire to know the source of that. But, on the other hand, let us not forget that peace *with* God is essential to being in His family and it comes to all who are justified. Regardless of which side you take, you should have and show that you have both kinds of peace. Are you well-pleasing to God?

## Viewing the News

Jack Blaes



ALL'S NOT FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR. When Janice Kraft, a John Birch member and a senior at the University of South Carolina, displayed banners containing conservative messages during football games at the university, campus police forcibly removed her from the stadium. One sign she carried said, "U.S.C. supports Communist Slavery—Divest From the USSR." Another read: "Pardon Ollie North... Indict Congress." As president of the campus organization Students for America, she has formally protested the treatment given her, and has received a great deal of publicity—on and off the campus.

Now that football season is over, Janice has begun attending basketball games. On December 3rd, she was holding a sign that said, "Protect Free Speech" when she was arrested, hand-cuffed, charged with disorderly conduct, and held over-night in a city jail.

Janice states that the role of a "university is to educate, and part of an education is allowing students to see different points of view." (Poor child, hasn't she suffered enough?) She has

found little exposure to conservative and anti-Communist views during her four years at U.S.C., and suspects their absence might be related to U.S.C. President James Holderman's membership in the Council on Foreign Relations.

She has demanded a public apology from her campus officials. Meanwhile, her point of view is getting wide publicity.

And that's what a nice girl like Janice is doing in a place like that!

OF GREAT CONCERN is the flood of children being kidnapped or sold into prostitution each year. REUTER, 6/22, Lisbon reported that the trafficking of children world wide is growing (over a million sold each year as part of a multi-billion dollar international sex racket) and is becoming a serious problem in Europe and the U.S. as well as in the Third World.

The report explained that trade in children generally moved from Latin America, Asia, and Africa toward the Middle East. Children are bought or kidnapped from Third World slums by crime organizations or false adoption

agencies and then sold through middlemen to rich clients in the north, either to work privately or in brothels.

It was reported that "extreme poverty is probably the most important cause for children to prostitute themselves." (If I may add, those getting rich off this despicable business are in it because of sinfulness to the extreme.)

SUN MYUNG MOON CAN ATTRACT 50,000 people to hear his message. How many, do you think, are attracted to hear Jesus' message in your home town? This false prophet, claiming that he is the messiah, allegedly has 20 million followers world wide. "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many." (Matt. 24:11.)

THE CONGRESSIONAL PAY RAISE IS A DEAD ISSUE; but that is just for now. The idea is well and alive, and we can expect to hear more about it in the future. It may be that the next time we hear about it, it will be in effect—just passed without coming to the public's notice. The following information may not be as untimely as one might think.

The Los Angeles TIMES garnered this news and passed it on to "those who have a right to know." We should be aware that: Congressmen are recipients of a pension that far exceeds most private sector pensions. As an example, the paper states that former Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee, who lost his Senate seat in 1970 receives a government pension of \$81,347 a year. Active Congressmen have complete medical care, a personal staff of up to 22 persons and free trips to foreign lands. Also they get free meals, newspapers, parking, telephone calls and gym privileges, plus a tax deduction of up to \$3,000 a year for unreimbursed expenses in Washington. Trips to foreign lands include hotel accommodations, entertainment expenses and a daily stipend that varies according to the specific place (London or Rome draws \$150 per day.)

Such benefits go on and on. According to official reports, nearly a third of the senators are millionaires, and most House members earn over \$100,000 a year. Some of the supporters of the pay hike admit that serving in Congress provides a good life. Rep. Tony

Coelho said that he's earning more money than he's ever dreamed of making.

One would think that members of Congress would be careful about grabbing for more from the strapped taxpayers, but, as was said so frequently during the public debate about the raise, the raise was needed because the present financial arrangement simply doesn't attract quality men.

#### HOW CAN WE GET THE FACTS?

President Reagan asked Surgeon General Everett Koop to give him information regarding the physical, mental and social after-effects of induced abortion on women. Dr. Koop responded in a four page letter that he would need a \$100 million, five-year study for conclusive proof to answer such questions. The record shows that, writing in 1976 and 1979, Dr. Koop reported as a medical fact that induced abortion caused physical, emotional and social harm. His staff explains that the difference between his two positions is due to the fact that the earlier writings were only Dr. Koop's private opinions. Could the truth lie somewhere else? The good Dr. told the President that there "never has been a prospective study on a cohort of women of child-bearing age in reference to the variable outcomes of mating." (I think I understand what he is saying.) But Mrs. Judie Brown, president of American Life League, quotes from a copy of just such a study from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, published in January 1981, entitled, "Prospective Study of the Outcome of Pregnancy Subsequent to Previous Induced Abortion." This study does show the adverse risk ratios of women who aborted their first pregnancy versus women who carried their pregnancies to term. Mrs. Brown wonders if the good Dr. feels it is necessary to hide something. Other claims and charges Dr. Koop makes in his reply to the President regarding Pro-Life positions are not backed with documentation, scientific or otherwise. Is he still giving his own private opinions?

When, in 1986, the supporters of the freedom to smoke were arguing that there was a great lack of conclusive proof that nonsmokers were harmed by second-hand tobacco smoke

and that therefore, public action against public smoking was not needed and was unfair, the Surgeon General rejected their plea. 300,000 are the estimated number who die annually from tobacco smoke; 1.5 million babies are aborted every year. If it is important to prevent deaths in one case, isn't it equally as important in the other?

What has happened to the Surgeon General?

. . . . .

**KEEP THESE FACTS IN MIND WHEN THE MEDIA ENGAGES IN PRAISE OF THE SOVIETS:** "In October, 1917 we parted with the Old World, rejecting it once for all. We are moving toward a new world, the world of Communism. We shall never turn off that road,"—Mikhail Gorbachev. So much for "mellowing." Billions of human beings have been brutally killed and terrorized because of this "parting," "rejecting," and "moving" process. And it is not finished.

And another way of "moving" is given by V.I. Lenin, twelve years before the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Instructing the combat committee of the St. Petersburg revolutionary committee, Mr. Lenin said, "What is needed is furious energy, and again more energy. . . Go to the youth, gentlemen; that is the only remedy; otherwise—I give you my word for it—you will be too late (everything tells me that). Go to the youth."

Soviet educator Pinkevich, in 1929, declares: "The aim is the indoctrination of the youth in the proletarian philosophy. In the works of the accepted program, the school must be not only a vehicle of the principles of Communism in general, but also an instrument (for) . . . training up a generation capable of finally establishing Commun-

ism."

Moving on, as Mikhail says, the following quote is from PRAVDA, Nov. 11, 1954, a Declaration of the Central Committee of the Communist Party USSR, and is signed by Premier Khrushchev: ". . . Scientific and atheistic propaganda is an integral part of the Communist education of the working people, and has as its aim the dissemination of scientific, materialist knowledge among the masses and liberation of believers from the influences of religious prejudices."

"Today, all teaching should be, to a great extent, the vehicle for a plan of a vision of the universe. The vocation of the school is to form Marxist-Leninist convictions in students and develop consciousness of their responsibility for the destiny of the homeland," said Premier Chernenko, 1984.

The following is a quote from a speech by Joseph Stalin to American Communists: "Comrades, Hitler gained control of the youth in Germany before he was able to wage a successful Nazi Revolution in Germany. We communists gained control of the youth in Russia before we were able to wage a successful Communist Revolution in Russia, and Comrades, we must gain control of the youth in the United States if we are to wage a successful Communist Revolution in that nation. For this purpose, we are ordering our Comrades to set up a new Communist Youth group in the United States."—Reported by Matt Cvetic, who for nine years was an undercover agent in the Communist Party USA for the FBI. This "new Communist Youth group" was formed with more than 6,000 American students as members a few short months later, known as the Labor Youth League.

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## REPRINT:

# Pregnancy Crisis

W. Robert Heid

"I'm planning to have an abortion," said a 23-year old mother of one, to her sister, in a somewhat strained conversation, as is so common when a non-Christian confides in a believer. "To me, that seems to be the way to solve my immediate problem."

"Have you considered marrying the man you know is the father

of this unborn one? You have already told me that he wants you to carry the baby to birth, and that he wants to marry you. And he further told you that he would pay the bills and agree with you to give the baby for adoption, if it must go that way.

"But he is a good bit older than I am, and I don't feel that I want to marry him any more than I would have wanted to marry the father of my first child, (\_\_\_\_\_). And moreover, I think that a new baby would come between me and my little girl—so that I would not love her as much as I ought to. You know how fond I am of her. I need to be free to work and support her, you know. Yes, I know that \_\_\_\_\_ wants to marry me and do the right thing, but I don't think that I should agree to that. He said he would even go to church with me, but church doesn't carry much weight with me. It never has. . . ."

"Well, Sis, my husband and I want you to know, here and now, that if you will carry this baby to birth, we will give you help, financially, at that time, and a place to live with us. We will also take you with us to church, and pray that we may all find our places in the Lord's work.

"Since you had one baby, to hold in your arms and nourish to toddler age, I don't understand how you can bear the thought of the next one being helplessly aborted. Those who are advising you have not mentioned the nagging after-thoughts and remorse that stalk the million-and-a-half women each year who are guilty of the thing you are now considering. Nor do they tell you that two "wrongs" can never make a "right." I can see how you carry a burden of two pregnancies out of wed-lock, but what is it going to help, to take this course and add a third and far greater sin to what you have already done?"

A few days later, the Christian sister had another word to say: "Our minister would really like to talk to you and encourage you to keep the baby full term, and even marry the father, if it is at all feasible. We are praying about it."

"I don't want to talk to him at all. And I think my mind is pretty well made up. I do know that you and Mom are both trying to help me to think, but I guess that it is no use."

To magnify this problem even more, the father of the unborn was suddenly severely injured in a motor-vehicle accident and died two or three days later, never regaining consciousness. Was his willingness to assume the burden of his indiscretions any proof that he had repented? The Lord only knows. And if he had repented, did he find an avenue of communication with the Savior? We have no word of any further confession of faith or act of obedience. There is that faint ray of light in his willingness to "go to church," whatever he meant by that statement. Only God knows his inner thoughts and intentions. But what of the un-wed mother? What should she do, and more importantly, what *will* she do? A verse in Proverbs (29:1) says: "He (she) that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

At the time of this writing, as far as I know, the final step toward abortion has not been taken. We urgently pray that it is shunned completely, and that mother and child will be able to find their future paths with the Lord Jesus. Do we really believe that prayer changes things? Then it behooves us to pray for our young, yea, those who are barely adolescent, in their grappling with problems that society has made prominent, and that church and family have failed to solve—in many cases have not so much as tried to solve.

This case, which is one out of a million and a half that will be upon the people of the United States during this year (according to past statistics), should drive us to our knees, to our Bibles, and to our pulpits. This case is not just one that we read about. It is one that we *know* about. This burden has burst heavily on the hearts of five or ten relatives and friends who know the details. The other 1,499,999 cases will probably be as heartbreaking—maybe to a total of 15 million people.

A young politician said, "I don't know when life begins, and I don't think it is the Government's place to tell women whether or not they should have abortions." My response would be, "I think that I *do know* when life begins, and I know that *it is the church's* place to tell young women not to have abortions. Further, we must show them a better way of life than pre-marital or extra marital sex. If we, as Christian homemakers and leaders, don't see the magnitude of this sex problem, and the sin and trauma of the abortion problem, we need to pray and read and listen and heed. Young folks might be calling out to us. If so, we need to love them back to God and the right way. But they may not be calling out at all. Then we need, at least, to stand as lights in a dark place, and, keeping our own feet fast upon the Rock, reach down and out to those who might be grasping for some strand of hope.

May God help us to evangelize in this way, too, as did Jesus, when he said to the harlot, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go thy way and sin no more."

## Missionary Messenger

*"Greater things for God"*

Winston Allen

Eagle River, Alaska

January, 1989

A health problem which bothered off and on for some time manifested itself painfully again. The esophagus and stomach are involved and possibly a hernia. I plan to see a specialist. Had talked about it previously with our family physician. Have also been advised to have a lens implant in the left eye.

Irene's lung problem remains about the same. She has been seeing a different Dr., but no change has so far been evident.

# NOTHING HAPPENED

Claude Ries

Does it make any difference whether I as a Christian go to the weekly prayer service or not? Does it matter whether as a professing Christian I go to Sunday School or not? Indeed it does, for the simple reason that *what I am to be I am now becoming*.

When I was a student in Houghton College I urged a fellow-student to attend students' prayer meeting. The reply was "Oh, I don't know as it matters. That's just up to me whether I care to or not." That young man finished college, was married and became a pastor. Though far from being an old man, he has been on the shelf, or put aside, for years, for the same spirit which characterized his religious activities in college dominated his ministry after college.

Shame on the healthy-bodied Christian young man who lacks the gumption to get himself out of bed in time for Sunday School! One wonders if "he has what it takes" to produce a virile, red-blooded soldier of Christ.

I once read of a young man home from college who was asked by a Sunday School Superintendent to teach a class. He declined. When the pastor spoke to him about it he nonchalantly remarked, "There's no penalty for refusing, is there?"

"Yes," replied the minister, "there is. There is *the penalty of never knowing the good you have failed to do.*"

"If I never know it," said George, still in his flippant mood, "I guess I won't miss it."

The minister then asked, "Do you remember the incident in the life of Jesus when He was on his way to Jerusalem? He sent two disciples to ask shelter at a Samaritan village; but as His face was set toward Jerusalem, they would not receive Him. Some of His disciples wanted to call down fire and brimstone on the village, but Jesus, reproving them, patiently resumed His journey. What was their penalty?"

"I don't think there was any," George replied. "As far as I know, nothing happened to the village." "No," the minister agreed, "**NOTHING HAPPENED**. People put out their lights, and went to bed as usual; the next morning they rose as they always did. Nothing happened, indeed; no sick were healed, no new parable was spoken, no new disciple was found. Had any one of these three things happened, the village would have had a place in history to the end of time. As things are, even its name is unknown."

For a moment George was silent; then he said, "I thank you for the reminder. I will teach that class."

Are things happening for God because of your faithfulness and loving loyalty to Christ or is the verdict of your daily life "Nothing Happened"? —From *Christian Platform*

# READY! FIRE! AIM!

Winston N. Allen

Ready! Fire! Aim!

On your mark! Go! Get set!

Obviously these familiar orders are out of order, and trying to follow them would be frustrating and futile if not foolish. Failure to follow the proper order or sequence of events can result not only in defeat but even in disaster. Much of our heartache and trouble comes from getting things out of order.

“But let all things be done decently and *in order*” (1 Cor. 14:40).

“For everything there is a *season*, and a *time* for every purpose under heaven” (Eccl. 3:1).

“For this cause I left thee in Crete that thou shouldest set *in order* the things that were wanting” (Titus 1:5a).

“But ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

These passages emphasize the importance of progression, the proper sequence of events, right priorities. The importance of putting things in order, first things first, is apparent in the physical world. Imagine trying to prepare the foundation of a building after the framework has been erected. Imagine trying to bake a cake by putting the ingredients in the oven at 350 degrees before they are mixed together, or before the eggs have been taken out of their shells. Trying to drive a car before starting the engine and putting it in gear would get you nowhere.

First things first! The right sequence of events! Proper order! What a contrast this is to taking short cuts, skipping or reversing certain steps, taking the so-called easy way. In the spiritual realm, living selfishly for the here and now rather than for the Lord in view of eternity—this is a basic cause of getting things out of order.

Using a closely related concept, *timing* is important in the affairs of this life as well as in the preparation for the life to come. In music, in mechanics, in sports, in agriculture, in traffic, timing is vital.

“... now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2b).

“Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee” (Lk. 12:20).

“Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near” (Isa. 55:6).

“Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1a).

Consider briefly a few examples of God's order of things, and proper timing.

1) *Love, marriage, sex, children*. Sad to say God's order is so often rejected today with tragic results—broken homes, disease, guilt, wrecked lives.

2) *Work, money, give, buy*. In this day of instant gratification, credit cards and so-called “easy payment plans”, many are living

beyond their means and are not really involved in the Lord's Great Commission. Instead of the attitude expressed by Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death" the all-too-common attitude is "Give me." But as Solomon learned to his sorrow, things and pleasures of the world cannot satisfy emptiness in the soul. In Eph. 4:28 we are admonished to work that we "may have something to share with those in need."

3) *Go, weep, sow, reap, rejoice.* "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him." (Ps. 126:6).

4) *Justification, sanctification, glorification* (see Rom. 8:30). The new birth must precede holy living, and the cross must come before the crown. "... if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." (Rom. 8:17.)

5) My personal belief regarding God's *order of events in the future* includes the following: rapture of the saints followed by Judgment Seat of Christ for the giving or losing of rewards, the Great Tribulation (the time of Jacob's trouble) here on earth (including Russia's invasion of Israel and God's judgment on the Soviet Union), Return of Christ with His Bride to deal with Antichrist and his followers, judgment of the nations, the Millennium (restored Israel to have prominent part), resurrection of the wicked dead and Great White Throne Judgment, New Heaven and New Earth and New Jerusalem—Eternity.

In Genesis 1 and 2 there is a beautiful account of progression, a sequence of tremendous events in which God's work in each of the six days of reconstruction prepared the way for the next. Everything was good and in order. In the last chapter of the Bible we see a wonderful progression and sequence of events because between Gen. 1 and Rev. 22 God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have step by step and in an orderly manner dealt with the problem of sin (James 1 describes the order followed by sin) and the works of the devil. Now in Christ whosoever will may have pardon, peace, purpose, power over sin, and God's wonderful promises for the life that now is and the life that is to come.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely."

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## LIVING ON THIS SIDE OF EASTER

Jim Carter

I had never seen her before. I have not seen nor even heard of her since. I never really got her name. I remember only the occasion, the few words she wrote on a card, and, most of all, the fresh hope I saw flashing in her eyes.

It happened several years ago in Roanoke, Virginia. Somehow, I had wound up being invited to conduct a weekend meeting for a "pretty regular" Church of Christ in that city. It was the last day of



the affair. The earlier sessions had gone well, but there had not been any "public responses." (Frankly, I wasn't really trying to have any, since I had come to the conclusion, right or wrong, that this particular church needed to be changed far more than it needed to be spread.) That Sunday evening, in a semi-formal setting, I tried to talk about the need for the church to be a place of authentic and affirming relationships. In passing, I mentioned that little remark (or was it a command?) that Jesus made to the friends of Lazarus after he had raised him from death. "Loose him," said the Lord. Jesus had given Lazarus more life, but he was still all wrapped up in grave clothes. He needed his friends and loved ones to unbind and set him free. I talked a little more about this being what church is all about, tried to answer a few questions, and hushed. I thought the meeting was history. But when they stood to sing the closing song, here she came. Slowly, but eagerly, she moved to the front. There was obvious pain in her movement. Her face and body were disfigured. Her hands shook. She was not an old woman, but it was evident that life had not been fair to her. There was water in her eyes, but it did not hide the hope. The regular preacher had her sit on a pew and fill out a card. (That seemed a little impersonal to me. She could have talked; we could have been blessed by what she had to say. But, it was his program now, not mine.) Here's what she wrote on the card. "I have been angry, bitter, and away from the Lord long enough. I want to take off the grave clothes and live whatever I have left of my earthly life on this side of Resurrection." The preacher read the card. Many in the congregation wept audibly. Most of them knew her. I later learned that she was in the late stages of terminal cancer. If that dreadful disease has taken its expected toll, that woman has by now made the transition. Oh, how God allowed the two of us to help each other that Sunday night. I was privileged to help her claim the only ultimate cure and hope there is. She helped me to believe again in the power of the proclamation of the gospel of Easter.

—Bulletin of Brookvalley Church, Atlanta

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## NEWS AND NOTES, continued from inside front cover

### A TOOL FOR WITNESSING

Have you ever wished you had a tract or booklet small enough to carry in your pocket or purse, explaining salvation simply and yet fully enough that the person you gave it to would be able to see his need for Christ and receive Him as Savior & Lord? Tooger Smith yearned for such a tool—so he wrote it! Pocket-size, 8 pages, with attractive cover, and entitled "A Gift from a Friend." Tooger says he will send copies free of charge "to anyone who agrees to personally hand them out to special people." Write Tooger Smith, Rt. 1 Box 272, Lyons, IN 47443.

### Youth Rally A Great Success

The first Louisiana-Texas Winter Youth Rally was held January 27-29 at the Jennings Church of Christ in Jennings, Louisiana. A total of 184 registered young people represented 24 churches from Texas and Louisiana. The theme for the rally was "Young People Living for Christ Now and Later." What a marvelous up-lifting experience for all who attended and opened their hearts and minds to God!

On Friday nite, 88 played games, got acquainted with each other, and ended with songs and a prayer circle.

Saturday morning Robbie Bacon spoke of "Preparing Now for Later."

Then the guests divided into ten workshops to hear good teachers discuss ways young people can serve the Lord now while they prepare for their vocations and continue as Christians in the future. After a two hour skating party following lunch, 7 boys and 1 girl competed in the Bible Bee, based on 1 Timothy. Winners were Weldon Hebert from Turkey Creek, Rachel Ecetes from Lake Charles, and Darryl Broyles from Jennings. After dinner Don McGee spoke of "Making a Youthful Impact for Christ." The Revelators from Dallas entertained in song for an hour afterwards and then helped with games until time to retire.

Sunday morning the young men led the worship and communion services, and Chuck Gilbert spoke of "Taking the Initiative for Christ." The Jennings church wishes to thank everyone who participated in any way for helping to make the Rally a success. God blessed us richly, and for that, we praise His Name!

—Joyce Broyles

New Albany, Ind.:

#### 4-PLUS DINNERS

Acts 2:46: "They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts..."

There is something special about sharing a meal with others. Four-Plus Dinners is an opportunity for us to share in the fellowship enjoyed by the New Testament Christians. Sometimes we get so caught up in the rat race of the eighties, we no longer have time for Christian fellowship. Gone are the days of dropping in at a friend's house for a visit, and so many good intentions of inviting people over are never followed through. As a result, too many drift away from the church to find that needed encouragement and support from other sources. So what can we do about it? Here is a start.

Four-Plus Dinners occur no more than once each month. They are for people who want to experience the joys of fellowship through sharing meals together as was done in Acts 2. If you are willing to host a dinner in your home, you will be matched up with your spouse and two other church members who wish to participate. (This is the "Four.") A list will be posted at the first of each month. The host should then contact the

guests for that month to arrange a convenient time and tell the guests what they can bring—salad, dessert, or a covered dish. The host should then invite an additional couple, single, or family of his choice. These can be either church members or friends from other circles. (This is the "Plus.") You will only be required to host a dinner every other month.

We understand that it is impractical for some of you to serve as host, but please still sign the sheet under willing to come. These people will be used to make up the "pluses" and may not be invited every month. Remember, fellowship is the goal.

—Martin Brooks in Cherry St. Bulletin

#### OPEN DOORS MAGAZINE:

##### GREAT DEBATE IN RUSSIA

Last May, a pioneering debate took place in the main hall of the Soviet Union's Voronezh State University between five atheists and five Christians.

Before an audience of 300, which included the Open Doors contact who gave us the report, the Christians clearly presented the gospel. Arguing along Marxist lines, the atheists' hostility was in marked contrast to the peace and love shown by the believers.

"What is the most-read book in the world?" the Christians probed. "How many people on their death-bed ask for a Marxist textbook?"

The atheists talked about Christianity as if it were just another theory to be argued by intellectuals. Their opponents responded that everybody can know God, without needing a professor. They pointed out the life-changing effect of Christ and challenged, "Show us 10 people whose lives have been changed by atheism!"

At least one of the students in the audience came to Christ after the debate, and the seed of the gospel was no doubt planted in many more hearts. With schools in the Soviet Union being encouraged to seek the truth—within strict limits—we can expect many more encounters such as this.

Please pray that the Christians of Russia will continue to have the boldness to spread the gospel during this time of relative freedom.

Buechel Church, Louisville:

Every year Portland Christian High School has a Homecoming. The stu-

dent body nominate boys and girls from each class from Freshman to Seniors to represent their class at the Homecoming Ceremony.

The qualifications for selection of the nominee or finalist is what caught my eye. Certainly these qualifications are representative of how we as Christians ought to be in everyday life. Allow me to share these qualifications with you.

1. The student is known as one who tries to follow Christ in daily living.
2. This student is outstanding as one who exercises the following Christian characteristics: Thoughtful to others and their feelings and is **considerate**; Is not a complainer but practices **contentment**; Shows willingness to work with students and faculty in common efforts and is **co-operative**; Respects others and their opinions, and shows **deference**; Gives best effort, is a hard worker, is **diligent**; Is inclined to overlook wrong done to them, is **forgiving**.

Think how much better we would all be if we put into practice these qualifications everyday.—Larry McAdams

#### Linton Church of Christ, Ind.:

Sunday evening Feb. 26 promises to be a great blessing to those who will be in attendance. In addition to our song service and birthday fellowship we will have a representative from the Gideons to speak at the evening service. We will have an opportunity to give to help buy Bibles for the Gideons to distribute around the world.

#### The High Lysine Corn Project of the Bryantsville Church of Christ

It has been almost four years since the Bryantsville Church of Christ and Rosehill Farms, Inc. began cooperating in the High Lysine Corn Project. Starving children can develop normally on a diet of high lysine corn. During this time many individuals, congregations, and organizations have contributed to the growth of the Project with money and with physical help. At this time, 6880 fifty pound bags of corn have

been sent to hungry people in Mexico, Haiti, Honduras, Arizona, and Jamaica. We work through groups that have distribution systems set up in these areas and usually the system is a feeding program in schools.

We hope to be able to send 4500 fifty-pound bags of corn to hungry children during 1989. We try to keep costs as low as possible. Much of the labor in cleaning, bagging, and handling the corn has been done by Youth Groups from interested congregations and by friends in the Bryantsville area. We need \$3.16 per bag for corn raised on Rosehill Farms and 41 cents per bag for the corn that was donated to the Project. Of course, the distributing groups often need financial help in transportation expense.

We would ask you to help. Financial contributions can be made to The Corn Fund, Bryantsville Church of Christ, William Hopkins, treas., R.R. 1, Box 271, Mitchell, IN 47446. If you would be interested in growing some high lysine corn or in helping in the cleaning and bagging process, please contact me, Hollace D. Sherwood, R.R. 1, Box 408, Mitchell, IN 47446. If you need a free speaker with slides and samples of corn, please contact us.

—Hollace D. Sherwood

#### Suffering Church Sunday

May 21, 1989

For believers behind closed borders, the simple act of public worship can be difficult ... or totally forbidden. Yet millions still meet despite the danger, in unmarked houses, secluded forests, and secret hiding places.

On "Suffering Church Sunday," May 21, congregations all over the U.S.A. will expand their vision by remembering these valiant believers in prayer and through special services.

Your church can be part of this vital day. For a free packet of ideas and materials write to Open Doors, P.O. Box 27001, Santa Ana, CA 92799. (Portland Church has done this twice, and been blessed.)

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"Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your power. Pray for powers equal to your tasks."

—Selected

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# Christ's Teaching On Prayer

R. H. Boll, a Bible scholar, goes straight to the gospels for the answers to effective prayer. Do you need these answers?

This is a practical book. You might use it as additional reading for your Sunday school class. Or your prayer group.

Sixty-four pages. You could read it in an evening.

**Only \$ 1.40**

Kentucky residents add 5% sales tax

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## **COMING IN APRIL:**

**HOW TO BE GOOD AND MAD**

**GIVING CRITICISM AND TAKING IT**

**SHRINKING TO NEEDLE'S-EYE SIZE**