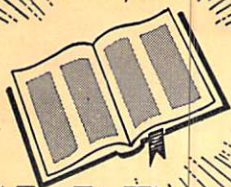
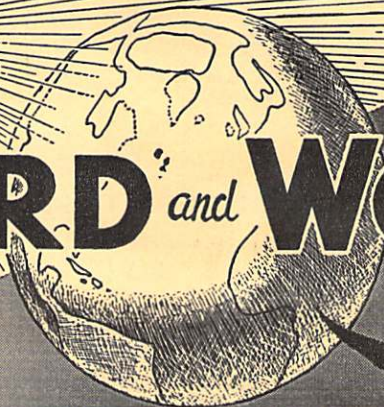


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—James Philip, **Christian Maturity**

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PAGE 104

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## In This Issue

Theme: *Christian Character and Relationships*

The Second Mile — Joseph E. Harvey - - - - -	98
Not To Be Ministered Unto — J. H. Horsburgh - - - - -	98
Criticism—Giving It — John W. Alexander - - - - -	104
Criticism—Taking It — John W. Alexander - - - - -	105
How to Get Good and Mad — J. Robert Ross - - - - -	111
SANDY - - - - -	114
A Prayer Provoked By Baby-Murderers — Alex V. Wilson -	115
Is Television Altering Attitudes and Values? — James O. Baird - - - - -	116
Questions Asked of Us — Carl Kitzmiller - - - - -	118
Reprint: The Needle's Eye — R. H. Boll - - - - -	120
Thoughts From Romans—"A Good Rule to Live By" — E. E. Lyon - - - - -	123
MISSIONARY MESSENGER - - - - -	124
Take Root Downward, Bear Fruit Upward — Fred Renich - -	126
NEWS AND NOTES - - - - -	128

## THEME:

# Christian Character and Relationships

## GUEST EDITORIAL: THE SECOND MILE

"Come here, you dog, and bear my pack a mile,"  
So spoke a Roman soldier to a Jew;  
"The day is hot, and I would rest a while,  
Such heavy loads were made for such as you."  
The Jew obeyed, and stooping in the path,  
He took the burden, though his back was tired;  
For who would dare arouse a Roman's wrath,  
Or scorn to do what Roman law required?  
They walked the mile in silence; at its end  
They paused, but there was not a soul in sight;  
"I'll walk another mile with you, my friend,"  
Spoke up the Jew. "This burden now seems light."  
"Have you gone mad," the angry Roman cried,  
"To mock me, when you know that but one mile  
Can I compel such service?" By his side  
The Jew stood silent, but with kindly smile.  
"I used to hate to bear a Roman's load,  
Before I met the Lowly Nazarene,  
And walked with Him along the dusty road,  
And saw Him make the hopeless lepers clean."  
"I heard Him preach a sermon on the mount;  
He taught that we should love our enemies;  
He glorified the little things that count  
So much in lessening life's miseries."  
The soldier tried to speak; as he began,  
His head was bowed, his eyes with tears were dim;  
"For many years I've sought for such a man,  
Pray tell me more; I, too, would follow Him."

Joseph E. Harvey

\* \* \* \* \*

## Not To Be Ministered Unto

J. H. Horsburgh

*For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto,  
but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.*

Mark 10:45

A great fact is here stated concerning the Son of Man. The speaker is our Lord Himself, who in this, as in all matters, left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

The incident that gave rise to His words is a sad one. Two of His disciples, James and John, wanted to be ministered unto by being granted the chief places in His glory (Mark 10:35-37). When the others heard it, they were highly indignant, for they wanted to be ministered unto by having the chief places themselves. But out of the ferment the Lord brought good. He made it an occasion to remind His disciples that they were not of the world, and that their distinguishing mark must be lowliness and readiness to serve one another.

"Jesus called them unto Him" (Mark 10:42). Notice the tenderness and pathos here. He had been telling the Twelve about Himself—of the awful betrayal, the cruel sufferings and indignity, the shameful death that awaited Him at Jerusalem (Mark 10:32-34). Surely their hearts are melted? No, they seem unable to think of Him. They begin to quarrel among themselves as to who should be the greatest. Picture their flushed faces, their angry tones, their violent gestures! "But Jesus called them unto Him," and gently quelled the storm. Earthly rulers, He tells them, exercise lordship over others: "but so shall it not be among you: but whosoever desires to be great among you must be your servant, and whosoever of you desires to be first must be the bondsman of all. For even the Son of Man came NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45). In a word, "Remember that you are My disciples. The disciple must be as his Master."

Evidently this is something which closely concerns us all if we are Jesus' disciples. It tells us what spirit we should have and what our life ought to be today—and every day.

The passage tells us that the Son of Man *came* to minister. This is a great subject. It is not that incidentally He ministered unto a few or to many; but He *came* to minister. It was His set purpose.

But this wonderful passage tells us something else about the Son of Man. He "came NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO."

We are apt to slur over this, to forget it, or perhaps to pass it by altogether unnoticed. The disciples of Jesus are to be "even as the Son of Man" in coming to minister. Yes, and the disciples of Jesus are to be "even as the Son of Man" in coming "*not to be ministered unto.*"

If a word of personal testimony may be allowed, I should like to say this. In the ups and downs, the wear and tear of daily life, there are few passages of Scripture which search me as this does. It convicts, rebukes, and condemns me. It is always finding me out. And, yet, how it encourages, strengthens, and helps me!

This desire to be ministered unto is at the bottom of disagreements in the nursery, fights in the school, quarrels among private individuals, wars among nations. And, alas, not only in the world is this spirit prevalent, but in the Church also. As Christians we do not adequately realize—perhaps we hardly realize at all—how much sin and failure, vexation and discontent, discord and unhappiness in our lives are due to our *desire to be ministered unto* instead of coming not to be ministered unto.

Are we not too often vexed and indignant? Sometimes we show it by a foolish exhibition of temper; sometimes we restrain ourselves,

but there the nasty feeling is! And why? In all probability because we want to be ministered unto and have been disappointed.

The fact is we are always wanting to be ministered unto by people, by circumstances, by fortune ("luck" perhaps you call it), by the weather, by something. To be ministered unto is so natural, so necessary, so proper! We have been brought up to expect it. And if we are thwarted, as we often are, we are apt to get moody, and perhaps end by making ourselves miserable, and others too.

How different it would be if, like the Son of Man, we always "came *not to be ministered unto*." Take a few illustrations.

#### *Are You Slighted?*

You are slighted, ignored, brushed aside. Or your employer, or employee, does not show you proper consideration. Or your neighbor does not treat you with the respect which is due to your position, your abilities, your character. You feel it very much; in fact, you are upset about it. Why? Is it because you came to minister, and were deprived of the privilege? No, not that at all. It is because your feelings, rights, gifts, and importance were not recognized. *You* were not ministered unto. And you came to be ministered unto. Hence the storm!

#### *Are You Jealous?*

Or consider that most hateful thing, jealousy. What is it? Another is praised or put before you. Another does better than you. Another is more fortunate than you. The honor, success, or popularity has gone to him. You wanted it for yourself. You came to be ministered unto. And because he has been ministered unto, and not you, you are jealous!

"But it was not right," you say, "he had no business to ignore me, to snub me, to treat me as he did. And it was most unjust; that other person ought not to have been placed over my head."

That may be perfectly true, and we make no excuse for wrong and injustice. But you are a disciple of Jesus and I ask you—if you had come, like your Master, "*Not to be ministered unto*, but to minister," would you be feeling so sore and angry and jealous? The trouble is, you came to be ministered unto.

#### *Not Praised*

You have been kind to someone. You have rendered him a service. It has cost you something to do it. Naturally you thought your goodness would be appreciated. And it wasn't, at least not as much as you think it ought to have been. You expected profuse thanks, and quite a little fuss to be made over it. And your friend took it coolly. You are disgusted. You wish you hadn't helped him. And you feel half inclined to say in your haste you will never do anybody a kindness again! Why? You have ministered unto another: you have helped someone who was in need. Yes, but *you have not been ministered unto*. You wanted to be thought exceedingly good and kind and generous. That is to say, you expected to be ministered unto by the thanks and praise, and a little flattery too, perhaps, of the other. Yes, when we come to be ministered unto we do meet sometimes with severe shocks!

### *Not Consulted*

You are a person of sound judgment and good common sense. And you find your advice has been ignored—perhaps it was not even asked in a matter, too, in which you are an authority. You cannot understand it. Your spirit within you is ruffled. What is the trouble? Is it that you came wanting to minister to your friend, and by neglecting to take your advice he has got himself into a sad mess? Not at all. As it happens, he has managed very nicely indeed without your help. The trouble is this: *you* have not been acknowledged. Your reputation as an “authority” in the matter has not been ministered unto. You came not to minister but to be ministered unto. And you have been disappointed!

### *Are You a Public Speaker?*

You had been announced to speak on a special occasion. A good audience assembled, and you noticed with peculiar satisfaction that Mr. X, a well-known and influential Christian man, was present. You had a great subject, and waxed very eloquent. At the close you felt extremely pleased with yourself, and you naturally expected Mr. X to come up at once, grasp your hand, and thank you warmly “for such an able, interesting, and moving address.”

But Mr. X. walked quietly out of the hall without a word! How crestfallen you were! The joy you had felt was extinguished like a snuffed-out candle! How was this? You had the opportunity of ministering to a number of people. But this was not quite what you came for. In your heart of hearts you wanted that speech to minister *unto you*. It is the old trouble again. *You came to be ministered unto.*

### *About Your Work—*

You are a professional man, or you are a man of business. You are doing fairly well. You have enough for all your needs. But you have set your heart on great things. And your success has fallen short of your expectations. This is weighing on your mind. It is a daily trouble to you. You are feeling constantly depressed. What is really at the bottom of it? Is it that you came to minister, and you are disappointed not to be able to minister as fully as you hoped to do? No, not that. But you desire to gratify yourself more; you want to make a bigger show; to be thought more of. And your desire for these things is not gratified. *You are not ministered unto.*

### *—And Play*

Even our recreation is disturbed by this coming-to-be-ministered-*unto* spirit. You went in for a sport, a game. You failed; you were beaten. How you felt! To this day that feeling haunts you.

A Cambridge athlete won a race three years in succession. If he could win it a fourth year it would be a record. And he was expected to win. But he lost! I am told that for weeks he never smiled. He wanted that race to minister to his family. He wanted people to be able to point to him and say, “He has done what nobody else has done.” And because he was not ministered unto, he was crushed.

“But,” you reply, “in our sports and competitions we are out to do our best and to win. Our aim is to be ministered unto.” Yes, of course. But after all, it is only a game. And a disciple of Christ must

not take sports too seriously. Even on the playing fields he can manifest the came-not-to-be-ministered-unto-but-to-minister spirit.

### *Christian Service*

But to return to something more serious than sports. You are engaged in Christian work. You are a Sunday School teacher or a church officers. Or perhaps you help at the nursery or with the youth group. Now you are thinking of giving up the work. Why? Has your health failed? Have you not now the time for it? Are home duties too pressing? No, none of these is the reason. Then you are not wanted? Is there no longer need of your services? Is the opportunity to minister withdrawn from you? No, the need is as great as ever. The door of opportunity remains wide open. Then why are you giving up? Well, you are tired of the work, so you think you will drop it. You expected it would be an interest to you. It would bring you into touch with others. It would give you a position in the Church. In fact, *you thought you would like it*. And you did like it for a time, but now you are tired of it. Ah! we are beginning to understand. You thought the work would minister unto you. And as long as it ministered unto you, you were willing to go on with it. Now that it no longer ministers unto you, you will give it up. But "the Son of Man came *not to be ministered unto*, but to minister, and to give His life . . ." And are not you His disciple?

These are only a few illustrations. They may not be applicable to you. But think it out, and whatever may be your walk in life, or your relation to your fellow-men, you will be surprised to find how much of your unrest, how many of your troubles, arise from this same cause—*the desire to be ministered unto*, instead of coming to minister.

### *In The Home*

You and your friend are living together. Your mutual happiness is interrupted by irritations. You are quick, and your friend is slow. You are economical, and your friend is extravagant. You are punctual, and your friend is unpunctual. You are neat and your friend is not. So there is constant friction. But why? Is it because you cannot minister to your friend? No, indeed. It is because your love of neatness or whatever it may be, your liking to have things your own way, is not ministered unto.

Or, perhaps you are the free and easy person, and you are annoyed because your happy-go-lucky way is not ministered unto! Suppose you both try desiring not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give.

It is astounding what a number of little things disturb us. Your plan for the afternoon is upset. You desire a clear day; it persists in raining. A visitor calls just when you want to go out. You are asked to sing and your voice is husky and does not do you credit. The answer to your letter has not come. Your request is not granted. You are interrupted in the middle of an interesting book. The pen won't write. The dress doesn't fit. The fire won't burn. Something is wrong with dinner. The children are so noisy!

Sometimes *everything* seems wrong. There is nothing big, nothing we can lay our finger upon. But we are always coming into the



world with our likes and dislikes, our whims and wishes. And if we are not ministered unto in these little things, we are apt to get put out with ourselves and with everybody else.

### *The Happy Way*

*I am persuaded that the happiness of our lives depends enormously on the spirit in which we come afresh into the world each day.* If we come to be ministered unto, we shall soon be fretting and inwardly fuming. But if we come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, it will be very different. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is happier to minister than to be ministered unto. And it is far nobler: "Whosoever will be *chief* among you, let him be your servant." (Matt. 20:27).

### *A Word of Caution*

Now for a word of caution. Our text does not say that we are to be like Stoics, that whatever happens we are not to feel it. Annoyances, disappointments—the things that we have been talking about—of course we *feel* them. (They would be of no use to us if we didn't feel them). But they need not *distress* us. Someone has said: "You cannot prevent a crow from alighting on your head, but you can prevent its building a nest in your hair." When we want to be ministered unto, we *harbour* a grievance, we *exaggerate* it, we *give way* to it, we let it build its nest and hatch its mischievous eggs. But when we desire not to be ministered unto, but to minister, we do not harbour the grievance, we pay it scant attention, we are too occupied to trouble about it. Let us be like Jesus. He was always too busy thinking of others, and ministering to them, to concern Himself as to whether He was being ministered unto or not. One sovereign remedy against touchiness is to be busy caring for your neighbor.

### *Another Word of Caution*

Again our text does not say that we are not to be ministered unto. It does not say that we are always to be slighted: that we are never to meet with success; that no reward will ever come our way; that we are to go about the world looking for insults and ill-treatment. Nothing of the kind. There is no harm in being ministered unto. The Son of Man was often ministered unto, and He appreciated it very much. We shall often be ministered unto; perhaps all the more if we do not expect it. The harm is in *wanting* to be ministered unto: in seeking it, setting our heart upon it, and in being disappointed and cross if we are not ministered unto.

We have lingered long talking about this failing because it is so prevalent, its consequences are so sad, and chiefly because so many of us who are habitually guilty are unconscious of the fact.

### *Self Must Die*

And now for a few brief words concerning the remedy. Be well assured that at the bottom of the trouble, and in all its ramifications, is *self*. And this old enemy Self must be mortified—put to death. We must give Self no quarter. "I send you my best wishes for your birthday. I hope you are dead," wrote one. And she was right. *Self must die*.

With this fact in view, in what a different light must we regard *not being ministered unto*. Welcome disappointment! Welcome hardship! Welcome slight! *These may all be turned to excellent account*. To be thwarted may be so good for us! To have our wishes crossed may be positive blessing! To be trampled upon may be a splendid thing! For every time we are not ministered unto, a fresh opportunity is given for Self to die! And the person who snubs us may well be regarded as a friend for administering to our arch enemy—*self*—a stout knock on the head! **SELF MUST BE MORTIFIED**. For it is only as Self dies that we can live the happy and victorious life.

### *Christ Must Live*

But it is not enough that Self dies. Something else must happen. Christ must live. Self dying—Christ living. And it is in proportion as Self dies in us that Christ can live in us. Let us not then be afraid of death—death to the Self-life. It is only as Self dies and Christ lives in us that we shall be able to come fresh into the world each day not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and in our tiny measure to give our lives for the glory of our God and the good of our fellows.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **CRITICISM—GIVING IT**

John W. Alexander

**SUMMARY:** Be careful how you criticize because great harm can result if you do it wrong. Consider 10 practical checkpoints before you lower the boom.

You're troubled, deeply troubled by a problem. You have a youth minister, Bob, who just isn't listening to the kids. The kids would like to have a hand in what's going on. But Bob just runs the group himself—he decides everything. If you confront him, he'll think you're trying to run the program—ruin it, too, perhaps.

*Negative* criticism evaluates weaknesses and mistakes. It can be *constructive*. When based on valid evidence, formulated according to true analysis and expressed in a loving manner to the proper recipients, negative criticism can help a person recognize his flaws and commence remedial measures for improvement. After all, we cannot strengthen weaknesses of which we are ignorant or avoid mistakes which we do not see.

Negative criticism can be *destructive*. When based on hear-say or subjective rather than objective evidence, when improperly analyzed, when communicated in an unloving manner and for the wrong motives, negative criticism can do terrible damage not only to those being criticized but also to groups of which they are members.

Negative criticism is like fire. In the right place, at the right time and under control, it can do great good. In the wrong place, at the wrong time or burning out of control, it can do great harm.

A major problem among Christians is what to do with negative criticism. Is there a way to control this fire so that it produces benefits instead of damage, builds up rather than tears down,

strengthens instead of poisons? The solution is not excessive positive criticism or absence of negative evaluation. We all need the benefit of *some* negative criticism. How else can we be sure we know some of our weaknesses? None of us needs flattery.

### RULES FOR GIVING CRITICISM

I would like to propose ten rules to help toward a more constructive negative criticism.

*Rule 1. Pray.* "Lord, please control and direct my expression of negative criticism. Restrain me from overcorrecting and resorting to flattery. Restrain me from clamming up and remaining silent when I should speak. Guide my utterance so that critical communication will be constructive; and please prevent my sowing discord among my brethren."

*Rule 2. Go directly.* Go directly to the person criticized. "If your brother sins against you, go and tell *him* his fault, between you and him alone" (Matt. 18:15, RSV, italics added).

Continued on page 108

\* \* \* \* \*

## CRITICISM—TAKING IT

John W. Alexander

**SUMMARY:** How do you take negative criticism? Nobody likes it but these 11 checkpoints can help you benefit from it.

How many Christians are suffering from wounds inflicted by negative criticism? How many pastors, Sunday school teachers and Christian workers spend sleepless hours after such attacks? Many a member of a Christian organization finds that his greatest pain comes from criticism by fellow Christians.

Criticism—expressed and unexpressed, specific and vague, valid and invalid—is a fact of life inside the Christian community and outside as well. Often it is unhealthy. It can turn people against each other and destroy friendship. It can bring civil war to a witnessing, loving Christian community, sap its life and ruin its worship of God and its ministry to people.

But criticism can be healthy. Criticism can be the surgeon's knife that cuts away a cancer in your life and makes way for wholeness once again. We need to learn how to take this kind of criticism.

### RULES FOR RECEIVING CRITICISM

There are a few rules which can be applied by anybody receiving negative criticism.

*Rule 1. Pray.* Ask the Lord to guide you in responding to the criticism—sensitive to hear what should be heard, strong to turn aside that which should not be entertained, able to control your temper and anger.

*Rule 2. Beware of becoming defensive.* The natural reaction is to fight back with defensive tactics, explanations, excuses. Anxiety

peaks sharply when negative criticism hits home. It is as if a tightly coiled spring deep inside is cocked to snap back in self-defense.

In *You Are What You Do*, Rohrer, Hibler and Replogle write: "It is human to defend ourselves. We all defend our egos in varying degrees. It is almost as automatic as the reflex action that closes the eyelid as a foreign object approaches the eye. Thus, when our ego comes under fire through criticism...our automatic impulse is to find some way to protect the inner self."

*Rule 3. Let the critic finish.* Don't interrupt him. Self-defensive interruptions can choke off his message and deny you his whole story. When he appears to be through, encourage him to go on—in an effort to flush out any residue of criticism. Ask, "Is that all?" If he continues and comes to another stop, you might inquire, "Is there anything else?" Indicate sincerely that you desire to hear everything on his mind concerning your shortcomings or whatever he feels critical about.

*Rule 4. Ask for evidence upon which the criticism is based.* You may discover the evidence is valid; on the other hand, it may be rumor or hearsay.

If the critic's evidence is adequate and his conclusions valid, then he has done you a favor by providing guidance for making corrections. He may have called your attention to a weakness that you knew nothing about, to a mistake which you did not realize had occurred, to oversights of which you were not conscious, to flaws which you had not noticed. "Why didn't somebody tell me?" we often say. The negative critic may be endeavoring to change our ways.

On the other hand, if the critic's evidence is insufficient or the conclusions invalid, you have an opportunity to call his attention to the inadequacy of the criticism. But he may not listen to you, in which case ask the Lord to give you a tender heart, an open mind, a strong will—and a thick skin.

*Rule 5. Ask questions of yourself.* What is the Lord trying to do to/in/through me via this criticism? Did He know in advance that I would be receiving this? If so, why did He let the attack come? He must have had some reason. What might it be?

Perhaps your attitudes need changing. If so, can this criticism help you to see what those attitudes are and stimulate change? Perhaps you are too proud or self-centered. Or possibly you are overlooking information which you need to observe and only the jolt of negative criticism will draw your attention to the right focus.

*Rule 6. Let the criticism be a source of learning.* According to Rohrer, Hibler and Replogle, "Constructive criticism is an invaluable source of information for those who accept it. Quite often we spend more time justifying, excusing or rationalizing an error than in trying to understand and benefit from criticism. When we are non-defensive we become aware that constructive criticism is a real compliment to us. The person offering it is usually uncomfortable in doing so, but if he is willing to endure the discomfort in order to help us, we should listen and appreciate his suggestions. He runs the risk

of arousing our enmity, but he cares enough for our welfare to take this chance."

*Rule 7. Determine whether the critic has needs revealed by the criticism.* If he does, what can you do to shift attention from defending yourself to helping him? It is possible for a person to cry for help, unable to express his message in any form except criticism of other people. If you happen to be on the receiving end, you need God's help to avoid being overly defensive and to be sensitive to the critic's need.

*Rule 8. Determine why the critic has criticized.* Does the critic have a motive other than what might appear on the surface? It is important to determine this if you can. But beware of psychologizing here. Give each critic the respect he deserves and hesitate long and hard before deciding that he is deceiving himself in criticizing you. It is painfully easy for the one criticized to fool himself.

*Rule 9. Determine what the real problem is.* Does the expressed criticism indicate the basic problem, or does it deal with a surface issue which is underlain by a more important issue that needs to be dealt with? Put the criticism inside the largest frame you can deal with. Look at the hidden factors that may underlie the issue raised. And help the critic to see what may be involved.

*Rule 10. Determine carefully how to respond.* Face-to-face confrontation? Should you telephone him? Or write him? Or make the initial response through a third party? The more direct way is usually the better way, as we have seen above. The important thing is to respond with honesty and honor. Respect for the critic will go a long way toward patching up your differences.

*Rule 11. Talk about it.* First talk to God, then to a trusted friend. Seek advice from friends whose wisdom and perspective can augment your own, particularly if the friend is familiar with the critic and with the issues involved. When a friend listens to you in such a situation, he enables you to benefit from "the talking cure."

One of the debilitating aspects of negative criticism is the energy it saps from the bloodstream of the person being criticized—unless he has an unusually thick skin making him immune to barbs. This is especially true for leaders. My impression is that most leaders of Christian organization (whether small as a Sunday school class, larger as a church or still larger as a nationwide movement) are sensitive individuals. Criticism stings them. They really feel it. It is not the criticism from non-Christian sources that hurts but the comments originating with fellow Christians. The sharpest pains—the ones that awaken the leader in the middle of the night and keep him from going back to sleep—come from Christians within his own organization.

How to handle such attacks is the question. "The talking cure" is especially helpful—talking first to God in prayer, talking then with other persons who will listen. If they understand enough to offer suggestions, so much the better. But even if they offer nothing in response, the very fact that they listen contributes immeasurably in

helping the criticized person carry the burden.

Secure people are able to take a lot. Insecure people cannot.

Consider this suggestion from Rohrer, Hibler and Replogle: "The most effective way to gain self-knowledge from others is deliberately to establish a relationship of mutual trust and confidence with another and to invite his continuous appraisal. The extent to which we accept and consider this counsel, without resorting to defensive tactics, will encourage or discourage his willingness to hold the mirror for us."

So what will you do now as you continue to live with annoying critics? How will you listen to your friends who seem to be down on you? Thinking through and putting into practice the principles above should help. God has called us to unity. We really are "one in the Spirit" and "one in the Lord." By developing an ability to give and take criticism, we can more fully express that unity before God and reveal that unity before men.

Actually, practicing the principles of receiving practical criticism is ultimately a matter of discipleship.

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## GIVING CRITICISM, continued

*Rule 3. Go privately.* Deliver the criticism in private. It is between you and him *alone*." Criticizing a person in the presence of others prior to discussing it privately is not only rude but in violation of 1 Corinthians 13:4: "Love is patient and kind." If he fails to respond, then inform him that the criticism will be shared with a third person who, with you, will attempt to help him understand. "But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses" (Matt. 18:16, RSV).

It takes courage to criticize a person directly and privately. The easy way is to criticize behind his back. In too many churches and Christian organizations there simply is too much complaining, grumbling and criticizing behind the backs of people.

Sometimes it is necessary to go privately in writing. Where a relationship is strained, you may discover when speaking face-to-face that either (a) your courage evaporates, leaving you unable to utter the criticism, or (b) the other person tenses in self-defense, his selective hearing mechanism preventing his comprehension of your criticism.

For example, two people experience a worsening relationship until finally one of them, Bill, can stand it no longer. He goes to Frank and tries to talk through the problem—without success. In desperation Bill contacts Harry with a cry for help. Harry then phones Frank to give a report on Bill's discomfort. Understandably Frank is hurt and exclaims, "Why didn't Bill tell *me*?" Then Bill responds, "But I did! I tried my best to get through to you. But you wouldn't listen."

In such a situation Bill should compose a written statement of his complaints against Frank and request that Frank sit down and go through the list of grievances in discussion with him. If that fails,

Bill should request Harry to sit in on the discussion and prayerfully help the two go through the list.

Let's face it—there are times when a person simply cannot express criticism through the spoken word directly—and when recipients cannot hear the spoken word. It is essential that such critics be helped to get it out of their systems in writing. If it is not flushed out, it is sure to fester and cause worse trouble later.

Likewise, it is essential that we help such persons being criticized to see the grievances being expressed against them—in writing.

In different words, if a man is deaf to your spoken criticism, write him a letter clearly articulating your criticism, complaints and grievances, and insist that he give you time to discuss them with him.

*Rule 4. Lead with positive questions.* An effective procedure is to ask sincere questions of the person being criticized, so that (a) the critic can procure additional information to make sure he has sufficient evidence on which to base criticism, (b) the one being criticized can explain his position and (c) the critic can ask the one being criticized if he has considered alternatives. The questions must be positive; it is possible to use negative or loaded questions which produce negative results.

There are practical reasons for this procedure. First, the one being criticized may have access to information not possessed by the critic. If the latter goes to the former, he may be able to divulge information and satisfy the inquirer. Second, the inquirer may possess information not possessed by the other, in which case he can share his information.

But suppose the one being criticized isn't free to divulge information? At such times the problem boils down to a matter of trust. If a man trusts his colleague, he will return to the battle line and go on with the fight against the enemy—not against his fellow soldier.

*Rule 5. Doublecheck motives.* Ask yourself: Why am I expressing negative criticism? Has my ego been hurt and do I want to embarrass someone? Is the motive retaliation or a desire to advance my status? Or is my concern truly to help the person and strengthen our Christian group?

Honesty here may force you to cancel all plan for criticism. Be careful how you manage to pass the test!

*Rule 6. Be honest.* Let us communicate, both verbally and non-verbally, what we honestly think and feel—and why. I can take my complaints directly; I can lead with questions—and still not communicate my real feelings.

How many laymen leave a church and, in explaining their reasons, hide behind a smokescreen of excuses which do not express their true motives?

When you deliver criticism, ask the Lord to give you courage to be honest. Withholding information or concealing criticism which a person is entitled to receive is dishonest.

There are times, of course, when it is not wise to express all we think or feel. Timing is important. But what we do express must be true. How great indeed is the temptation to tell a man one thing

but say something quite different about him to other people. To his face we express positive criticism; behind his back we are negative. This is deceit.

**Rule 7. *Speak the truth in love.*** The first six rules are not enough. I can go to a man, lead with questions and speak the truth—but do so in a manner which bruises, stabs and crushes. It is possible on such occasions to employ a facade of “honesty” for venting hostility. Rule 7 is the application of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (RSV): “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.” It is absolutely essential that we speak the truth in love.

How much of the criticism which I levy at others is actually rooted in my own impatience, lack of kindness, jealousy, conceit, fiendish delight in pointing out another’s mistakes? Love which originates in our Lord is the only cure for such impulses. Genuine love tempers the truth embodied in criticism.

**Rule 8. *Be objective and specific.*** Support your criticism with objective evidence rather than subjective opinions. Do your homework in procuring adequate data so that you know what you are talking about. Consider negative criticism flows from persons who are unfamiliar with the facts and simply pour forth opinion. In this connection the term objective means evidence which anybody can observe if he so chooses, evidence which is the same no matter who views it and therefore is not dependent on the viewer’s prejudices or feelings.

Objective evidence should be specific. Negative criticism cast in terms of subjective and vague evaluation does little good—unless it sets the stage for objective evaluation.

**Rule 9. *Earn the right to be heard.*** The listener will be more attentive to your evaluations if he respects you. There is only one way by which you can earn his respect: the production of a record of deeds well done.

This is the basic reason why it is risky for a beginner, regardless of his pedigree and credentials elsewhere, to come on strong with negative criticism too soon. This doesn’t mean you remain silent during initial stages of your work. But the fact is there: Your negative criticism is more likely to be received with an open mind (and therefore more likely to be acted upon favorably) if you have first earned the right to be heard.

**Rule 10. *Suggest alternatives.*** Accompany criticism with remedial suggestions. To blame a person and suggest no possible alternative is immature. Most anybody can point out weaknesses; it takes creativity to propose solutions. Many a negative critic, talkative in describing mistakes, is silent when it comes to workable alternatives.

A useful approach is to organize suggestions in terms of three categories:

“Here is what I think you should stop doing.”

“Here is what I think you should start to do.”



"Here is what I think you should continue doing, but I believe it would be better if you did it this way."

Augment your criticism with a promise to pray for the person. Then volunteer at least a little assistance. Doubtless your church would benefit if more critics balanced their criticisms with such offers.

Loveless negative criticism is a prime component of worldliness. The spirit of Christless society is to gossip, ridicule, focus on mistakes and emphasize weaknesses of leaders.

How will you approach your youth minister about running the group on his own? Thinking through and putting into practice these principles should help.

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## **HOW TO GET GOOD AND MAD** **(Ephesians 4:25-32)**

J. Robert Ross

This text sounds a little odd, for it gives us this startling advice, "Be angry..." But when Paul tells us to be angry, he simply acknowledges a fact of life—we do get angry, and anger as such is neither good nor bad. Jesus, for example, certainly felt anger (Mark 3:5). Anger is a natural emotional response of a sensitive, feeling organism to hurt and frustration. The wife who calls her husband and asks him to pick up some rolls for a special dinner will feel upset with him when he walks in the door without them. And the man who thinks himself more qualified than others for a certain job will feel hurt and angry when his boss passes him over for a promotion.

We are most likely to be angry at those who are closest to us: a spouse, parents, children, a business partner, or the preacher. People who are involved in one another's lives most intimately inevitably rub one another the wrong way. And the closer we are the greater the potential for friction and misunderstandings. No close relationship can be achieved, whether in the home or the church, except by recognizing and dealing creatively and constructively with the conflict which the relationship produces. Therefore, the first word to us from the Apostle is this, "Be angry..."

Although ordinary anger is a natural response to hurt and frustration, sometimes our hurt and anger is not very realistic. And the anger rooted in unrealistic hurt always gives us the most trouble. Sometimes hurt is not caused by a deliberate attempt by someone else to hurt us. Instead, it is rooted in our own insecurity and poor self esteem. This is what we mean by saying that someone has a "thin

skin." Such a person is overly sensitive. For example, if I don't feel very good about myself, then I assume others don't like me. So no matter how they treat me, I am bound to interpret it as an affront, and I will feel angry. If you criticize me, I will certainly feel hurt. But if you compliment me, I will assume you are making fun of me, and I will be even more hurt and angry.

Therefore, if my hurt is caused by super sensitivity, there is no way to get good and mad. I will stay angry most of the time, and it will be impossible to deal effectively with this kind of anger. In this case I must find some healing for my soul, healing which comes from the truth of the Gospel that God loves me and I have worth in his sight. If I cannot believe that way down in the pit of my stomach, I am probably going to stay mad all of my life.

But let us assume that one's anger is realistic. After Paul tells us to be angry, he continues with these words, "but do not sin." Anger *per se* is not sin, but it presents a tremendous danger of sin. So Paul encourages us to put away such things as "bitterness, clamor, slander, malice, etc." These are interesting words. For example, "bitterness" translates the Greek *pikria* from which we get the word "pickle." Who is the sourpuss in your house? Does your church have some pickled members? Or does the church board have one member who manages to sour every meeting?

Then there is the word "clamor," which translates *krauge*, a word used by the ancient Greeks to describe the grunting and growling of an animal. Listen to the word—*kraaauge*—you can hear the snarling of a beast. Sometimes we betray the unresolved anger in our hearts by the way we growl at people around us. A friend of mine in seminary preached his senior sermon to the seminary community on the subject of love. But in the critique of his message the homiletics professor asked him why he yelled at the congregation. The student preacher talked about love, but he did not sound as though he himself loved his audience.

Then there is the word "slander," which is from the Greek *blasphemia*, often translated "blasphemy." When we slander our neighbor, we desecrate the very image of God in our brother or sister. As James reminds us, "With [the tongue] we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing" (James 3:9-10). At 11:00 a.m. on Sundays we sing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." At 11:00 a.m. on Mondays we say, "The deacon—or preacher or brother-in-law—is a nasty so-and-so, and I hope his house burns down." As James says, this contradiction "ought not to be so."

And then there is "malice" or hard feelings. A certain church once had two elders with differences. When their turn came, they stood together at the Lord's Table on Sunday mornings to offer the prayers of blessing for the sacred meal at which they presided. But these elders carried a grudge for each other, and after their prayers at the communion (!) service, they refused to either speak or shake hands with one another.

"Be angry, and sin not." Undoubtedly our unresolved anger, which leads to bitterness, clamor, slander and grudges, is at the bottom of ninety-nine percent of the problems in our homes and churches. There are basically three possible ways to respond to and deal with our anger: retaliation, repression or reconciliation.

First, *retaliation*—this means immediately expressing anger by lashing out at the target of our anger. It means "venting our spleen," just letting our gall spill all over whoever has hurt us and perhaps anyone else who happens to be close to us at the time. I have seen women in my office with bruises on their face and body from beatings which they received from their husbands, who, when they were angry at their wives, simply retaliated in a violent fashion. But how many other husbands have assaulted their wives with a vicious tongue lashing? And how many wives have made sharp criticisms of their husbands which have deeply hurt them? That, too, is retaliation. Let us hear this counsel from the Proverbs, "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man quietly holds it back" (29:11).

Another way we may deal with anger is by *repression*, which is probably more of a temptation for many of us raised in the church. We may enjoy watching others vent their anger in violent movies, but we ourselves would never act so brutally.

First, however, note the distinction between repression and suppression. Suppression of anger means that I do not blow my lid, but I can acknowledge the fact of my anger. Repression means not only not blowing my lid, it is the process of screwing the lid down without even realizing how angry I really am. We not only try to fool other people into thinking that we are "cool," but we have fooled ourselves. That is repression.

Usually we repress anger because we are afraid of it, or we are afraid that we will lose someone's love or respect by revealing our negative feelings. But whatever the reason for screwing down the lid, it is, nevertheless, a dangerous procedure. We know that a pressure cooker or a boiler needs a relief valve when pressure builds up on the inside. Otherwise, it may blow up in our face, or at best crack a seam to allow some of the pressure to escape.

Likewise, repressed anger can either blow up in our face, sometimes when we least expect it, or more likely, it will crack a seam in our emotional and mental life. For example, Rita (not her real name) moved with her husband away from the city, which she loved, to a small farm, which she hated. Shortly after the move she became completely frigid, and the couple went to a marriage counselor to see what was wrong with her sexual response. Of course, what was wrong with her sexual response had nothing to do with female anatomy or physiology, but it had everything to do with her feeling toward her husband. Her physical unresponsiveness was simply a crack in the seam where her repressed anger over the move to the farm began to escape.

Or take Fred, for example, who went to his physician complaining of excruciating migraine headaches. His blood pressure registered at the top of the scale. Fortunately his doctor took time to check out

Fred's soul as well as his body. Fred was a school teacher, and it turned out that for several years the principal had placed all the children with behavior problems in his class. Fred was a good teacher and did a good job with discipline, so the principal kept sending the problem children to him. Fred resented it, but he had never talked with the principal about it. He saw himself as a patient, easy going person who always cooperated and was always willing to help the other person. Only after several weeks of therapy could Fred admit to himself that he felt terribly abused and that on the inside he boiled with resentment toward the school principal.

It has been said that many illnesses are due not so much to what we eat as to what eats us. Or as Scripture puts it, "The life of the body is a tranquil heart, but envy is a cancer in the bones" (Prov. 14:30, Jerusalem Bible).

Continued next month.

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## SANDY

When Sandy (a pseudonym) discovered that she was pregnant, she saw only one alternative: abortion. The light-skinned 20-year-old with short, curly hair already had a 13-month-old girl out of wedlock, and living conditions were tight with the one child. "I couldn't handle another."

Three months pregnant, she went to the Women's Medical Center of Washington, D.C., to abort. Four years earlier she had had an abortion there, and, she said, "everything went fine."

With \$300 in her pocket, she approached the clinic one Saturday morning. Protesters, with signs such as "Abortion Is Murder," were picketing outside. *Oh no*, Sandy thought, *why did they have to be here today?*

A woman working in the clinic offered to escort Sandy past the pickets. "You don't have to talk to them," she assured her. But Sandy stopped. Deep inside she was hoping for an alternative.

Protesting abortion that morning was Kathy Jones (a pseudonym), a member of the Maranatha Capitol Hill Church, which sponsors picketing of the D.C. clinic. "May I talk with you?" she asked.

Sandy nodded.

"Are you pregnant?"

"Yes," Sandy answered. "Three months."

Kathy then explained the effects of abortion on Sandy and her baby. "Even at this early stage," she said, "the baby can feel and hear." She displayed a clay model of a 3-month-old fetus.

"This is what your baby looks like now." Then she showed Sandy pictures of a dismembered fetus. "This is what your baby will look like if you walk through that clinic door."

"That really upset me," Sandy said. "I stepped away and vomited. I knew then that what I was doing was wrong."

Putting her arm around Sandy, Kathy offered her help—financial, medical, anything, if only she would not abort. "Instead of abortion,"

she pleaded, "can't you just sacrifice six months for this baby's life?" Sandy hesitated. This was the last day the clinic would perform the abortion.

"Will you come to lunch with me?" Kathy invited softly. Sandy never returned to the clinic.

"At lunch," says Sandy, "we discussed what I would need. I thought, *This is hard to believe*, but I decided to trust her. I moved in with her seven days later."

That week Kathy invited Sandy to church. *Do I have to get religious, too?* Sandy thought. To her own surprise, that first Sunday she gave her heart to the Lord. "So much was wrong with my life," she said, "I needed to make the commitment to God."

Kathy and her church also made good on their commitment to Sandy. They are providing her with a check each week, enough to give her food, a place to stay, and incidentals. The church even paid to put her daughter in a day-care center while she looked for work. They also promised to arrange for a Christian family to adopt the baby Sandy is carrying. When Sandy could no longer work because of her pregnancy, she helped in the home of a paralyzed church member.

What changed Sandy's mind in front of the clinic was what she had learned. "I hadn't realized that the baby was so developed at that time. I thought it was just tissue. The abortionists never said anything about that or the side effects. They just told me the procedure and how much it would cost."

What made Sandy's decision easier was the offer of whatever material help she would need. "Otherwise, I would have killed the child, as I did the first one. I used to think that I could replace it with my next baby. But I know now that you can't."

Nearing delivery, Sandy has decided to keep the child. "I know it will be hard," she says, "but the Lord will provide." She is excited about having another child, and so is her family, who have supported her decision. She wants a boy.

What will she name him? "I don't know," she says, "but I think I will find a name from the Bible."—from *Liberty* magazine.

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## A Prayer Provoked By Baby-Murderers

by Alex V. Wilson, at a pro-life rally

Righteous God and Just Judge of all peoples,  
Hear our prayer . . .

for children who will never be, because they have been killed before they were born;

for others who were allowed to be born but now are battered, bruised, abused or even deserted by their own parents;

for women who have had abortions and now wish they had not;  
for children who are cared for physically but neglected spiritually;

for expectant mothers who are having difficult or unwanted pregnancies;

for couples desiring to bear children or adopt children but they are hindered;

for all who are the victims of rape or incest or exploitation;

for all who are plagued by their guilt, and seeking relief and a new life but they don't know where to turn:

to all these, give mercy, comfort, guidance, courage and strength—and draw them to faith in Jesus who died for our sins and arose from the dead.

Now hear our prayer, O God Most High, for the millions of women who have had abortions and don't care;

for the millions of men who have begotten children but take no responsibility for them, treating them like junk;

for the millions of men who abuse and exploit women for their own pleasure and then abandon them in their time of need;

for pornographers who stir up lust, shame and violence due to their stinking greed for filthy money;

for those doctors and clinic-operators who have performed thousands of abortions, whose hands reek with the blood of the innocent and the defenseless;

for our lawmakers who drag their feet and dilly-dally around while a human life is being snuffed out every 20 seconds:

to all these, O Lord, give restless minds and deeply disturbed consciences, and bring them to a godly sorrow that produces true repentance and a seeking for forgiveness and also great efforts to fight the evil they have been engaged in.

Have mercy upon us, our land and people, O Lord, though we do not deserve it. Turn us to truth and love and self-control and obedience to Your will, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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## IS TELEVISION ALTERING ATTITUDES AND VALUES?

James O. Baird

Winston Churchill is credited with saying, "First we fashion our buildings, and then they fashion us." Since early in this century, the automobile has radically reshaped the pattern of Western civilization. Our cities and our incessant demand for personal mobility are products of our cars.

More recently, television has become the great molder of American life. Because television is an aggressive medium with which we powerfully interact psychologically through visual images, it does more to shape fundamental attitudes and values than we have been willing to admit.

Perhaps we should tape the word *Christ* across our television screens as an encouragement to ask ourselves if we are watching through eyes attuned to the standard Jesus has given us. The follow-

ing quiz may be able to help awaken us to what is happening in our lives.

● Has your television made you a more superficial person and less willing to read and to reason reflectively?

● Has television led you to sin regarding the use of your time? Are the hours spent in front of the television justified as deserved relaxation? Do you give little thought to God's teaching that we are all stewards of a limited amount of time and are soberly charged to use it well (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5)?

● Is your television leading you to a distorted view of life's realities? As events in your own life do not unfold with the color and speed of a soap opera, have you convinced yourself that the deserved excitement of life is passing you by?

● Has your television caused you to accept as true a Satan-bred falsehood about the nature of material things and the quality of your life? Have the relentless commercials at last succeeded in convincing you that happiness and fulfillment are the product of possessions and that a happy marriage and good home are all purchasable commodities?

● Has your television encouraged you to become less civil? Do you leave it blaring when visitors come?

● Has television encouraged you to exalt the wrong role models?

● Do you think women are to be beautiful but not to be honored for their quiet heroism in child rearing and homemaking?

● As fathers, does your admiration for sports heroes transmit the message to your sons that unless they perform exceptionally well on the playing field they are failures?

● Has your television caused you to think of pleasant, easy-going conversation among friends as a lost art, long overdue for its funeral?

● Do you lack the courage to restrict your children in their use of television?

● Do you have the self-control to turn off immoral programs?

● Has television become such a crutch for you that the rows of great books in your home continue to go unread?

● Has your television made you more cynical and distraught?

● Has the steady diet of crime, famine, invasions and war finally convinced you the world is beyond hope?

● Has television altered the quality of your faith in God and your understanding of Him? Do you see Him as a beneficial grandfather, who occasionally raps knuckles, rather than an eternal God to be held in awe?

● Have you become more distrustful of all religion because of scandals associated with television evangelists?

● Have programs that exalt the wonders of our natural universe sold you on the notion our world can be explained in natural terms alone?

● Has your television made you more impatient and heightened your demand for immediate gratification?

● Has television become such a crutch to your life that when

your set breaks down you are seriously frustrated, almost angry and at loose ends as to how to use your time?

● Have actions that once troubled your conscience become so commonplace on television that you no longer feel any remorse when you see them or do them yourself?

If you have answered "yes" to even a few of these questions, it is time to give your relationship with your television set prayerful thought. It may be remaking you in an image far removed from that of the Christ you claim to serve.

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## Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller



*Does God take away the sinful appetites when one becomes a Christian? For example, does He take away the taste for alcohol from the drunkard, the ambition for material things from the thief, the sexual appetite of the sex offender, etc?*

God does what He has promised to do! But let us be careful that we do not have a preconceived or false notion as to what He has promised. It seems to me that the thing God has promised to the one who comes to Christ is power for victory over sin. Christians are new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17). Those who "transact business" with the Lord come out of the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Of this there can be no doubt. The indwelling of the Spirit of God in the Christian is a fact (Rom. 8:1-10; 1 Cor. 6:19-20), and one of the great works of the Spirit in the Christian is enabling him to overcome the flesh. Moreover, one of the greatest promises in the entire New Testament in this writer's judgment is 1 Cor. 10:13—He will not permit us (Christians) to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. He can do this by limiting the temptation or by enabling us to face it victoriously. I do not find that He anywhere promises to remove temptation in an absolute sense. In that case there would be no reason for a Christian's failure. There would have been no need for the apostle Paul to write to the Corinthian church, to those who had been "washed . . . sanctified . . . justified" (1 Cor. 6:11), to correct sin problems which had arisen among them. Temptation is not sin. Christians are tempted. But Christians have power to be victorious over sin.

While God is not a respecter of persons, neither does He have to be mechanical in His dealings with mankind in order to maintain that standard. He knows us individually and personally, not just as a



computer figure. He knows our needs. He knows our "load limit." Just as a wise parent does not deal mechanically in the same way with each child but recognizes the make-up and need of the individual child, how much more our heavenly Father is able to deal with His children. There are those who being converted to Christ declare that their temptation for some particular besetting sin was completely taken away. I don't believe in putting God in a strait jacket or denying that He has such power. So far as I can tell there may be genuine cases in which this happens. There are also those who in a given environment and because they are expected to do so, declare the removal of an appetite but who later yield to the same and fall, showing that they were tragically deceived. The experience of many Christians is that they may have to continue to struggle with some weakness. The temptation will still be there in some measure. Like the apostle Paul with his thorn in the flesh, they may pray for removal of the problem and find the Lord's answer that His grace is sufficient. It is not the removal of the temptation that makes us strong, but the overcoming. The temptation may make us lean all the more on the Lord, find strength for our weakness.

Now it is evident that genuine repentance will have a strong effect on the power of temptation. For example, one man does not like the thing that alcohol does to his family, his job, etc., and may want to quit drinking, but he does not regard drinking as a sin. Another faces up to the fact that he is sinning and genuinely repents before God. The latter stops making excuses and has a real change of mind toward his old ways. He can expect to have a great deal fewer problems with continued temptation than the former. The person who becomes subject to God and who in harmony with that resists the devil (Jas. 4:7) will find the devil fleeing. Decisive action, as we look to God, is one of the ways we can take a great deal of power from temptation. It may not totally eliminate temptation in a lot of cases, but there will be cases in which it will be so completely set aside that it will seem that God has taken away the taste for the wrong. God calls for us to act decisively about sin, to choose whom we will serve, and those who go limping between the two sides will have much more trouble with temptation. It is no secret that a lot of the powerless, defeated "Christianity" we see today is because people are trying to hold to Christ with one hand and to the world with the other. What some may see as the Lord removing all taste for something may be in great measure the result of genuine repentance.

It is dangerous doctrine, however, which says that becoming a Christian removes all the taste for the wrong. The old man, the flesh, must still be contended with. We are new creatures, but also babes in Christ who must grow up spiritually. We do have power to overcome, but we may not have learned how to use it. If the Lord always removes the taste of alcohol from the drunkard, then any slip into temptation after the individual supposedly became a Christian must prove that there was never any new birth. And that is simply untrue in some cases. We do not deny that there are those who try to play games with God, so to speak, but there are also genuine Chris-

tians who stumble. And they stumble because they are tempted. How better could we destroy a person than to lead him to expect that in the process of his conversion all his old appetites are going to be miraculously removed? He turns to the Lord in all sincerity but the temptation is still there in some measure. So, he concludes, his change was only a mockery. Certainly we want to claim every promise the Lord has made us, but to enlarge a promise beyond what He has promised is not only wrong but may have destructive consequences.

We repeat that what is promised is power for victory. The Christian never has to sin. He will never be put in the position that the only thing he can do is sin. He can never plead that there was no righteous way out. God will provide either a way out of the temptation or power to overcome. If indeed, removal of the task is needed or according to His will, He can surely do that. But if He chooses to exercise us unto godliness by allowing us to have a practical victory, that may be the better thing. We do not say victory is always easy. It is possible, however, to the one who belongs to Christ.

Our age has marked some sins as almost impossible to overcome short of a miracle from the Lord. Nor would we deny that there are sins which get such a hold on people that giving them up is very difficult. God's power as seen in the lives of some of the people at Corinth is still available though (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Fornicators and adulterers became Christians. Homosexuals became Christians. Thieves and those greedy of gain became Christians. Drunkards became Christians. Note that we did not say that they continued to live in those evil ways as Christians. This was not a mere show of religion while they continued to live in the old ways. They were "washed . . . sanctified . . . justified." It is not declared that these were never again tempted. It is declared that God had done His work in their lives. They had repented of their sins. There was victory for them *in Christ!*

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## Reprint: THE NEEDLE'S EYE

R. H. Boll, 1920

The old yarn—perhaps originally invented to please a wealthy parishioner—of the "Needle's Eye" being a little side-gate through which a kneeling camel could just barely squeeze mars the whole lesson. The Lord Jesus did not at all mean that salvation of the rich was merely a *difficult* matter which, however, by hook and crook could be managed. His point was that it was *impossible*. The "camel" He spoke of in illustration was a regular life-sized camel; and the needle's eye simply a needle's eye. In Mark's report the Savior modified His statement to the extent of saying "Children, how hard is it *for them that trust in riches* to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:24). But it might be said with equal emphasis that it is just as hard for a rich man not to trust in riches. Wherefore the Lord immediately falls back upon His first statement again: "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich

man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). This second statement of the case struck deeper than the first. The disciples began to examine themselves, and they perceived that poor as they were, they trusted in what little they had. They began to understand that the difficulty extended further than the rich, though in the case of the latter the evil was more pronounced and hopeless. But what of the poor who were trying to get rich? What of the man whose trust and covetousness ("which is idolatry") hung upon the handful of his pitiful belongings? What of the multitude, everyone of whom held something dear apart from God, and all the souls of men which so literally "cleaved to the dust?" There arose before their eyes—a partial vision only, taken from only one point of view—of the stupendous difficulty of saving *any* soul; and "astonished exceedingly" they said, "Then *who can be saved?*"

**"WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED?"**

The Lord Jesus left them in no doubt. They had rightly feared: it simply *cannot be done*. It is IMPOSSIBLE. That is, humanly speaking; and they were speaking humanly just then. Such is man's lost and ruined condition, be he rich or poor, that by no manner of means can he swing himself out of the low, earthly, fleshly attachments of his human nature, and fit himself for the kingdom of God. Sooner could a camel go through a needle's eye. The Lord had not used it as a figure of extreme difficulty merely: He meant to declare the impossibility of man's salvation. Think about it a little, my reader. If you have had any spiritual experience, and insight into your own heart, you have surely had a glimpse of the tangle of evil tendencies and desires; of the bondage and servitude of sin; of that evil "law" which is in your members, bringing you into captivity. Yet you do not know a fraction of the reality. Even a Job, "perfect" and "upright" among men, saw himself in the light of God and said "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Even an Isaiah must cry out "Woe is me for I am undone!" The salvation of a man passes all bounds of natural possibility. "With men it is *impossible*," said the Lord Jesus.

### **PEACE BE STILL!**

When one takes in the full force of the statement it has a strangely sobering effect upon him. It does not paralyze him at all, but it subdues him. It is as if in the midst of his frantic efforts and struggles to be somewhat, a strong, quiet hand had been laid upon him, and a calm voice had called him to halt. Why all this mad struggle? The aim fails forever. Man cannot achieve goodness. It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth. With man this is *impossible*. And yet it is possible. Not with man, however—only with God. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). There is a hope, but it lies in God alone. There is a chance, but only in the Omnipotence of God. *There* is the one possibility, whether for the rich or the poor or for *any* of us, to be saved.

### **THE WAY OF FAITH**

The recognition of this great truth turns our whole line of

thought and endeavor. I cease now to try to gain my own victory, and will turn my eye to God on whose almighty power and wisdom my salvation hangs. What I could never have achieved of myself and for myself, is possible by His life-giving promise of grace. "Look unto *me*, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." Upon Him I cast my whole confidence, unto Him I look, for upon Him my all depends. How sweet is the relief to give myself up as a hopeless case, and trust in Him who can create me anew in Christ. Instead of trying to establish my own righteousness, I now subject myself to the "righteousness of God," and receive it as the "gift" of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead of wondering whether I shall be able to hold myself straight in the Christian life, I recognize the simple impossibility of it all, and thenceforth walk by faith and fight by faith, in the strength of Him who alone can make it possible and who will also do it. Thus I find hope and peace, and thus I become more than conqueror through Him that loved me. And therefore I cannot despair of myself, nor of any other man who would come to Christ.

#### THE ESSENCE OF GOSPEL-FAITH

This is the essence of the faith that saves. We are told that Abraham believed in the "God that giveth life to the dead" (Rom. 4:17). That is just another way of saying that Abraham believed in a God who is able to do the impossible, who is able to reverse the course of nature, to bring life out of death, and to reach man's utmost inability and ruin. That is the gist of saving faith. It was illustrated in Abraham's case, when to the man and his wife who were practically dead, being about a hundred years old, the promise of an offspring was made. It was a manifest impossibility so far as the human course of nature was concerned. "Yet looking unto the promise of God he wavered not through unbelief but waxed strong through faith giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised he was able also to perform. Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:20-22). All human possibility, all merely natural and fleshly power was excluded. Upon God, God alone, hung the whole prospect. But Abraham "believed God and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." "Now it was not written for his sake alone . . . but for ours also unto whom it shall be reckoned, who believe on him that raised Christ Jesus our Lord from the dead: who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:23-25).

#### OUT OF DEATH INTO NEW LIFE

Through Christ we *can* be saved. With Him we are buried through baptism into death—the judicial end of the old man with all his hopelessness—and with Him we are raised, "through faith in the operation of God who raised him from the dead," henceforth to walk in newness of life. God, by the risen Savior at His right hand, is able to cope with our fathomless ruin and make us new in Christ Jesus, and give victory to the end to those who "trust and obey," by His power, that His may be the praise and glory and honor unto the ages of ages.



## THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

### “A Good Rule to Live By”

*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to do anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin. (Romans 14:19-23, NIV)*

The verse that I had in mind when I gave the title to this last article on Romans 14 was verse 21—“It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.” That verse seems to me in many ways to summarize much of what the chapter says. That truly is “a good rule to live by,” don’t you think? We have freedom in Christ and we should not allow anyone to take that away. But when it is better for another Christian or potential Christian if I don’t take advantage of some of the freedom I have, then I am truly acting in love. Long ago I wrote in my own words something that William R. Newell said that impressed me very much: “More people stumble at the inconsistencies and lack of love in professing Christians than at all other things.” We need to take real love out of I Corinthians 13 and put it into our lives. Otherwise we are not acting as Christ did and the world loses a witness that it needs very much. Now let us notice the background and the follow-up of this in the other verses.

I used verse 19 last month because it went well with the preceding verses, but it also is a great introduction to our subject in these last verses. We should be making it our aim to do all that we can do to the things that lead to peace among brothers and to “edifying” them—building them up in the faith. Verse 20 mentions the opposite of such an action—Destroying God’s work with men for the sake of being able to eat or drink something that we want. Remember verse 17—the kingdom of God is a matter of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, not a matter of eating and drinking—or of leaving them off in itself. The cleanness of the food from a matter of legal

ceremony is not important—it is important that we use it for physical good only if it does not do spiritual harm to someone else. There is no one food that is essential to life, but faith is essential to spiritual life. Do not let your eating of food cause someone else to act against his faith. Our text verse then repeats that and applies it to any area of action that might cause someone else to act against his faith or otherwise harm him in spiritual things.

You might then ask, "Shouldn't I be demonstrating my faith to everyone around me, so that they will know I have this freedom in Christ?" The answer given by Paul is an emphatic "No." God knows your faith and He is the judge of all you do. So long as He knows this, what others know is not that important—so long as it does them no spiritual harm. You know that it is wrong to do harm to another, so your own heart will condemn you if you act against the best interests of the other. Real blessedness, real happiness, does not come from flaunting your liberty but from acting the way God wants you to. He is the One Who called you out of darkness into light, out of condemnation into salvation, and His approval is the important one at all times.

But what about that weak brother who thinks eating what you know you have a right to eat is wrong. Even though he is wrong in thinking that, he is your brother and Christ died for him just as much as He died for you and He wants him with Him eternally just as He wants you. So don't encourage him to act against His convictions. Even though it is not wrong to eat whatever you may be thinking about, if he thinks it is wrong and goes ahead because of your example and eats, then he is sinning. The reason is simple: His faith tells him it is wrong, so he truly believes eating it is wrong (or substitute some right action that he thinks is wrong) for him then it is wrong—he sins against God if he eats. Every action that a man does apart from the faith he has toward God is wrong, is sin. Sin, you may remember from 1 John 3:4, is lawlessness, a refusal to be controlled by the lawmaker, who in this case is God. We are saved by faith and should live by faith. Let us see that we do that, but never do it in such a way as to put a stumbling block in the way of someone becoming a Christian or living as one after they become one. Let us show the world that we love God and love one another.

## Missionary Messenger

*"Greater things for God"*

Norma Gene Smith

Wycliffe Bible Translators, Mexico

February 24th

[The writer is the daughter of the late Earl C. Smith, a Bible teacher known to many W & W readers. For many years she has been a missionary in Mexico, working among the Pame tribe and translating the Bible into their

language. This letter shows some of the nuts-&-bolts of such a ministry, plus its joys as a church is born!

Due to present government restrictions, Sister Smith can actually live among the Pames for only a few months at a time, then must return to the U.S. Bernardino is a Pame who has helped her to master the language and translate the Scriptures.]

Some time in 1987 two missionaries of two different denominations began holding meetings in Pame-land at different times once a month. Both services were in a community about two miles or less from Bernardino's home. They were in two different homes, but the same families attended both services. Several Pame men and women have made professions of faith. In 1988 ten from one group and eleven from the other were baptized. Bernardino was baptized in June in Ixmiquilpan at the big Otomi Indian church, making a total of 22.

The Mexican missionary from the town of Cardenas has now stopped going. But the American missionary, who lives farther away, continues to go. The Pames who attend the meetings told Bernardino they wanted to hear God's Word in their own language, as they could understand it much better than Spanish. While Bernardino was helping Lorna Gibson and me at Ixmi in November and December we suggested he get them to meet together every Sunday and read the Scriptures in Pame and sing the Pame hymns.

Bernardino helped us sing the last thirteen hymns and choruses in the newly revised Pame hymnal as we recorded them in December. The new hymnal came off the press just before he went home and he took several copies with him. But we weren't able to make a copy of the cassette before he left.

Later Bernardino told us that when he arrived home he found that the new group of believers had already begun meeting even on the Sundays that the missionary, David, wasn't there! And now they have the new hymnbooks with the cassette so they can learn the tunes. On the cassette the numbers of the hymns are announced so they can look at the books while singing. Also Lorna gave to Bern a print-out of 1 Corinthians, all but the last chapter, after editing on the computer the changes he had helped us make. We believe this book has teaching in it that is especially essential for this group at this time.

Rejoice with us for what the Lord is doing among the Pames! Pray for spiritual growth for these new believers, as well as for those who have been believers for several years. Thank the Lord that they want to hear His Word in the language they understand.

Pray for us as we are making a big push to turn in Volume 1 of the Pame New Testament some time this year: Matthew through 2 Corinthians. There is still some revising and improving to be done, much proofreading, and captions for the pictures to be translated.

Our biennial Mexico Branch Conference was Jan. 22 - Feb. 3. It was refreshing to hear reports of what the Lord has been doing among the Indian groups of Mexico. Eleven New Testaments have been published since our last Conference.

# Take Root Downward, Bear Fruit Upward

Fred Renich

(An address to missionary candidates, with important principles for all who serve the Lord in any way. The author directed Missionary Internship.)

The pressures steadily increase. There is no letup. The missionary abroad as well as the Christian at home feels these pressures even though he may not think of them consciously. They take several forms and relate to varied factors:

There are heathen peoples all around us.

These people have no hope outside of Christ.

War, catastrophe, revolution—all keep telling us that souls are dying.

The turmoil around the world tells us the time is short.

Doors may not be open long.

Christ may be coming soon.

These pressures constitute just a few of the “facts of life” that all of us must face.

In doing so, however, we find ourselves accepting another pressure that becomes ever-present although often unacknowledged: the awareness that we as Christians ought to be “producers.” This concern that we be “productive” as a Christian is deepened by the implication that the answer to today’s problems lies in the increased “spiritual productivity” of Christians. Never before in history has there been such an emphasis on the production of “fruit” in terms of visible “results” in Christian service. For the missionary this emphasis can be almost overwhelming. Since he is supported by the gifts of God’s people, he feels deeply that he must “show a return in souls won” on funds “invested” in him and his work.

We seem to be in danger of losing sight of the basic God-given law of growth: *first* the root, hidden, unseen, often unknown— *then* the tree and the fruit. Without the root there can be little real fruit. For an abundance of fruit there must be vigorous roots.

While Christians are encouraged by the wonderful promise that God works with us in our service for Him, many are not set free from the deepseated fear that they are failing to “produce.”

Can it be that we fail to see the full scope of the promise? Of course we cannot have faith for what we do not see promised. God has declared that His people “shall take root downward and bear fruit upward” (Isa. 37:31). “In days to come shall Jacob take root; Israel shall blossom and bud; and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit” (Isa. 27:6).

These are promises from Almighty God. While they refer immediately to Israel’s restoration, they also express eternal principles in promise form that provide for man’s total need in any age: rooting as well as fruiting.

The Apostle Paul picks up this thought in Col. 2:7 and speaks of the Christian being “rooted” in Christ. Elsewhere he speaks of our being “grafted” into Christ, and “rooted” in love.



While these and similar expressions are well known, the practical experience and application of them remains a mystery to many. One major objective here at M.I. is to help missionaries "take root" in a practical way in Christ. To be "rooted in Christ" is to have a settled inner confidence that I am joined to Jesus Christ; that He accepts the real me, just as I am, with all my weaknesses, failure, and even my sins. It is to rest in the quiet confidence that He is quite capable of dealing with whatever in me is not pleasing to Him, and therefore He does not reject me because of these things. Rather He expects to change them.

For this "rooting" to become a practical reality in any person involves at least three things:

*Honesty* about oneself. I must be sufficiently honest to accept the real "me"—the "me" that actually lives, relates to others, and reacts to circumstances and people.

*Faith* that God accepts this "me" that is. Many people believe God would accept the "me" that could have been, should have been, or ought to be. But there is often a secret doubt that He will accept the real human person one knows himself to be.

*Acceptance* of the actual Lordship of Jesus Christ in the practical everyday circumstances of life. This acceptance involves the expectation that He will perform His will first *in* me and then *through* me right in these circumstances. This acceptance says: "This is the circumstance the Lord hath made (or permitted), I will rejoice and be glad in it . . . because He is God *in this circumstance*, and since I am joined to Him in it, I shall triumph gloriously."

In the measure that this "rooting" is a practical reality, fruit-bearing is the inevitable and spontaneous result. The Lord describes this as the development of a quality of life that springs from this living relationship between the soul and God. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit . . ." Again in Gal. 5:22 (A.S.V.) "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control . . ."

Where this relationship is a reality in daily circumstances, Christ-like living is inevitable. When this quality of life is being demonstrated how can souls not be drawn to Jesus?

His *love* flowing through us will *warm* them.

His *joy* through us will *cheer* them.

His *peace* through us will *relax* them.

His *longsuffering* through us will *shame* them.

His *kindness* through us will *bless* them.

His *goodness* through us will *convict* them.

His *faithfulness* through us will *melt* them.

His *meekness* through us will *disarm* them.

His *self-control* through us will *challenge* them.

Missionary Internship is committed to the God-revealed principle that the bearing of fruit upward comes only as God's servant "takes root downward." This rooting is nothing less than a living, practical, functioning faith-relationship to Jesus Christ. Ordinary day by day circumstances are opportunities for exercising this faith,

and its fruit is life with a "Christ-quality" about it. Those young people who demonstrate this kind of life inevitably discover hungry, prepared hearts who do respond to God's offer of glorious redemption.

## NEWS AND NOTES

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

Salem Church, Cynthiana, Ky.:

We were glad to see the North American Christian Convention (July 11-14) mentioned in the *Word and Work* the past couple of months. Some of our youth from Salem have been participating in local Bible Bowl competition and plan to compete in Louisville this summer. We would like to encourage other youth and youth leaders to attend and get an idea of what Bible Bowl is all about—it's a real encouragement to study and memorize God's Word.

We're also looking forward to our Revival (July 31 - Aug. 6) with Bro. Earl Mullins, Sr., and would invite any one to visit us then.

—Rose McCauley

### Cook Needed!

Maple Manor Children's Home will be needing a cook by the first of April. If you know of someone who would be able to fill this opportunity, please let it be known.

### A Valuable Practice

This is the month that we are to mark our Reading Through The Bible in a Year chart that is in the vestibule. If you are on schedule make a check by your name, if you are behind, catch-up! If you are ahead, keep up the good work! and make a check by your name.

—Henryville, Ind. bulletin

Cramer & Hanover bulletin, Lexington, Kentucky:

### LILLY DALE WORKSHOP REPORT

This year's program marked the 15th year the Tell City & Lilly Dale congregations have been hosting this workshop. It was a blessing to be in attendance and see many friends in the Lord. There is nothing more precious than enjoying fellowship with the people of God. Attendance was good! Messages were both positive and uplifting! A

special thanks to these congregations for working together and making this a great time in the Lord!

### WORD FROM ALASKA

"This has been declared the winter of the century because of the severe three-week-long cold siege. Everyone was affected by it—some more than others. We coped very well and were thankful not to experience any power outage." Bro. & Sis. Winston Allen are experiencing health problems. Remember these servants of the Lord in your prayers.

### S.C.C. REUNION

All alumni and friends of Southeastern Christian College are invited to attend a reunion. When: Sat., July 1, starting at noon. Where: Charlie Vetter Park (formerly Chenoweth Park), on Billtown Road in Jeffersontown, Ky. There is a pavilion, so come if it rains. Families are invited; bring a picnic lunch. Spread the word to others who might not see this notice. Renew old friendships. For more information call Sharon Tipton Graham, 451-5798, or Lenora Scheer Ott, 423-1516, or Ronnie Wright, 239-0917.

### Some Suggestions from a Friend:

Jerry Hallett from Indianapolis made some practical suggestions about *W&W* in a letter. 1) Ask the students in the School of Biblical Studies to write articles for *W&W*. (That would make a good assignment!) That could fit into the idea of a theme for each issue, would give the students valuable experience, and would allow the churches to become better acquainted with the students and to see the good work being done at SBS. 2) Have a series of short articles about the history of the congregations in different regions of the country. This could help us grow closer together. 3) If elders or other teachers in the churches write articles, it might encourage more people to

subscribe because of increased participation.

Thanks for the good ideas, brother. Well, how about it, folks?

**Tell City, Ind.:**

**SUNRISE SERVICE:** Easter morning at 6:00 a.m. our annual sunrise service was held at Camp Koch in Troy. Our young people led the program, and Troy Christian Church provided the morning refreshments.

### **WOODLAND BIBLE CAMP, INC.**

110 B. St. N. E.

Linton, Ind. 47441

June 4 - 10	Work Week
June 11 - 17	Jr. Week #1
June 18 - 24	Int. Week #1
June 25 - July 1	Sr. Week #1
July 9 - 15	Family Week
July 16 - 22	Jr. Week #2
July 23 - 29	Int. Week #2
July 30 - Aug. 5	Sr. Week #2
Sept. 1 - 3 or 4	Young Adults
Sept. 15 - 17	Jr. Int. Retreat
Sept. 17 - 22	Sr. Retreat
Sept. 22 - 24	Senior Citizens

**A good idea from Jennings Church:**

**CHURCH SURVEY:** This week you'll receive a copy and we ask that you take time to fill it out and return it to us by next Sunday. This survey will be useful as we plan goals and set objectives for our church family.

**Southeast Church of Christ, Jefferson-town, Ky.:**

Two new classes are being offered on Wednesday nights.

Great Truths of the Bible, Nathan Burks teacher.

Christian Parenting Class, Gene Heid teacher.

### **"Capturing the Vision"**

This year's **Louisville Christian Fellowship** is scheduled for August 7th-10th. A committee of eleven men have been meeting in Louisville to plan this year's program. The theme is: **"Capturing the Vision"** and we're anticipating a **great week of Christian Fellowship!** Make plans now to be in attendance and encourage your whole church to come!

-Bennie Hill

**Good News from Gallatin, Tenn.**

3 items from recent bulletins show God is at work there:

**NIGHT OF PRAYER**-Friday, March 31 - 8:00. We will gather for a time of praise, intercession, thanksgiving, and edification. We will answer the call for repentance and restoration. This evening will include instruction, testimonies and practical aspects of prayer. It will last till 6:00 the next morning. We want you and your family to be a part of this. You can leave anytime, but we encourage you to stay as long as you can.

This year's **OFFICER'S "GET-A-WAY"** will be held at Barren River on Friday night and Saturday morning, April 7th and 8th.

This is an opportunity for all elders, deacons, and wives to get away from our everyday responsibilities for a time of fellowship, evaluation and planning.

Signs of **fresh, new life** are occurring in our church family. Signs in our fellowshiping together in small groups as never before; signs in our worshiping together; signs in the spirit of our singing together; signs in better attendance and warm feeling on Sunday night; signs in various groups meeting to pray. And many more which each of you could point out.

You who have not felt this renewal as much as others, let the Spirit lead you into involvement in some of these areas.

You who think we are only in the "budding" stage, and are not where you would like us to be-be patient, be kind, be praying, be leading. As with His creation, God will fill us with new life, new beauty, new vigor, new strength, new excitement, a fresh, filling of His Holy Spirit.-Dave Schreiner in bulletin

**Belmont Church, Winchester, Ky.:**

For about 6 weeks beginning Thursday, March 23, we will have the opportunity to share in a class, **"Helping Each Other Bear Burdens."** Dennis Kaufman from Louisville will teach. Some of the topics will be: Goals of Counselling (Biblical or Secular?); Positive & Negative Ways of Communicating; Recognizing & Treating Depression; Marriage & Family Issues; Helping People Pick Up the Pieces; Developing a Plan for the Church.

**D**

MRS. MOLLIE BROWN  
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