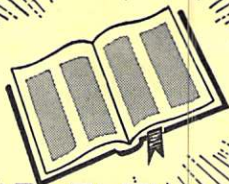
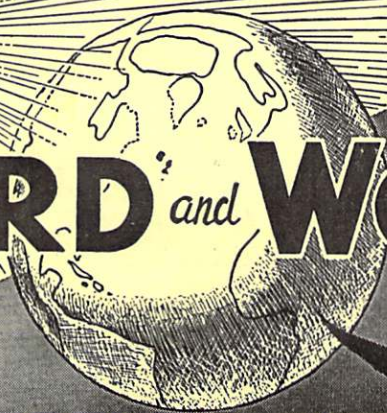


"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."



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



"Holding forth the Word of life."

JANUARY, 1990

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My God, I Thank Thee

Adelaide A. Proctor

*My God, I thank Thee, who hast made
The earth so bright,
So full of splendor and of joy,
Beauty and light;
So many glorious things are here,
Noble and right.*

*I thank Thee, too, that Thou has made
Joy to abound,
So many gentle thoughts and deeds
Circling us round,
That in the darkest spot of earth
Some love is found.*

*I thank Thee more, that all our joy
Is touched with pain,
That shadows fall on brightest hours,
That thorns remain,
So that earth's bliss may be our guide,
And not our chain.*

*For Thou, who knowest, Lord, how soon
Our weak heart clings,
Hast given us joys, tender and true,
Yet all with wings,
So that we see, gleaming on high,
Diviner things.*

*I thank Thee, Lord, that here our souls,
Though amply blest,
Can never find, although they seek,
A perfect rest,
Nor ever shall, until they lean
On Jesus' breast.*

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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WE APPRECIATE OUR HELPERS

Alex V. Wilson

This magazine is made possible only by the hard and sacrificial work of various people. Two of the hardest working have been sisters Edith and Mildred Lale. They have donated many hours *every month* for more than *twenty years*. Sister Edith has handled the circulation-list and the mailing, and Sister Mildred the office (bills, receipts, orders, records). All their labors have been given freely; their "pay" has been deposited only in heaven's bank, not earth's.

How can we adequately express gratitude for labors of love and works of faith like theirs? Words utterly fail. Only the Lord can possibly provide compensation in cases like these— and He has, and He will! If His children will be rewarded for giving just a cup of cold water to the needy for His sake, they will also be honored for stamping out name-and-address plates, updating the mailing list, filling orders for books, filing reports with the Postal Department, etc.—and doing these behind-the-scenes jobs month in, month out, fair weather or foul. What a blessing they have been to me: their faithfulness and dependability have encouraged my spirit. What a blessing they have been to you readers, though most of you have neither met nor heard of them. What a blessing they have been to our Lord's heart, for their primary motivation was to please Him.

The Lales "retired" from W & W with last month's issue. Ladies, enjoy your rest. And again, "THANK YOU BOTH, over and over again!" Our present office manager is Louise Wells, whom God raised up in answer to fervent prayer. We are grateful for her abilities and willingness to work hard. She is assisted at mail-out time by Gloria Miller. Our typesetter and technical consultant continues to be Michael Hawley, as accurate as ever. (I'm smiling.) Jane and Rebecca Heid still render needed advice and gracious aid in many ways, and Delmer Browning continues to transport all the magazines to the post office for mailing. (Bouquets to you all.)

We are computerizing our mailing list, with the help of Robert W. Heid (not to be confused with his father, our ex-editor W. Robert Heid) and Sharon Henderson. Robert is devising the new system, and Sharon will use it. (More bouquets.) We hope there will not be many bugs in the works as we make this switchover. If you don't get this issue, or the following ones, notify us right away! (I'm smiling still.) In addition to all these members of our team, there are those who pray for us, and/or who donate to help us financially, and/or who labor to increase our number of subscribers. We Invite And Urge YOU To Join Our Ranks In Some Of These Ways. Help us GROW during 1990, please. A Louisville congregation recently ordered a bundle of 20 or 25 copies monthly, to give out at church. This is a splendid way of getting valuable teaching into the hearts of more people. Why not urge your church to join others in doing

this, if it does not do so already. Remember that in bundles of ten or more, each subscription costs only \$5.50.

Other Odds and Ends

A number of readers cheered our announced decision of possibly changing the *design of the front cover*. But only one man responded to our invitation to submit a layout for us to consider. That brother suggested several changes. Have you any ideas?

Last month our *News and Notes column* had only 9 sections (fewer than usual) plus 3 obituaries (more than usual). That's all we had room for in that issue. But after culling that information, mostly from a number of church bulletins, I still had 35 separate bulletins from various congregations on hand—in case I needed them! Why mention that? To show that A VOLUNTEER IS NEEDED to edit that column for us. I haven't got the time to read scores of bulletins every month and glean the best items to use. Anyone in the Louisville area care to volunteer for this interesting job? Call me at 502:897-2831. We appreciate the 2-3 churches who have members send us reports every once in a while, rather than just bulletins (many churches send neither). That saves us time.

Once in a while (like Feb. and Nov. '89), almost all our articles are by writers known to many of our readers. Other months (like this one) you may recognize very few authors, and you might notice lots of articles are reprinted from other magazines—*Reader's Digest* style. Several factors account for this. *Availability* is one; we can't publish what we don't receive. Then there's *quality*; sometimes articles are sent but would require a great deal of editing before being usable. Space is a limiting factor too; it's really painful to "bump" a fine article because we lack room for it, but it's often unavoidable. *Topics* affect our decision too. Most of you appreciate the theme approach, in which we run several articles on one major subject each month. But that often affects which articles and authors we include. Themes for coming months include dealing with depression and despair; teaching God's Word better; moral issues confronting us today; cults and errors; fellowship and cell groups. If you have other suggestions, please make them, and send articles too if possible—by yourself, or written by others if we can get reprint rights.

We love you, dear readers. By God's gracious enabling and your help, we want *The Word and Work* to be a mighty tool in His hand, an influence for good, as it has sought to be for over eighty years—most of this century. Soli Deo gloria: to God alone be glory!

THEME:

WANTED: Spiritual Leaders

The Editor

Nothing is more important for God's people than godly spiritual leadership. We need leaders who combine wisdom with humility, faith with works, love with conviction, prayer with practice, idealism with realism, courage with compassion, enthusiasm with patience.

God-given vision is essential for leadership. Such vision produces confidence and enthusiasm. But the vision must not only be seen for oneself but also imparted to one's followers. Someone aptly observed, "A man who is one step ahead of the crowd is a leader; if two steps ahead he is a radical; if three steps ahead he is 'mad' or 'a charlatan.'"

We have mentioned various attributes of effective leaders, but we don't mean to imply that all overseers should fit into some rigid mold. No, there are various styles of leading. John Snape gives three differing examples:

I know personally three ministers. They have been successively the pastors of one church, a strong church of more than 1200 members.

The platform of the first could have been expressed in these words, "Here am I; let me do all I can for you." And they let him. He was big-hearted, sympathetic, industrious—and he worked for them. He was the bond slave of his congregation.

The platform of the second man could have been set forth in these words, "Here am I; do all you can for me." And, strange to say, they did! They praised him to his face, bragged about him to others, and read with delight the reports about him and his work—which he sent regularly to the papers. He was the private chaplain of his congregation.

The third minister came and said, "Here is Jesus Christ; let us together do all we can for Him." And, strange to say, they did! Immediately their vision was enlarged, their evangelistic activities quickened, their gifts to missions doubled. He was the ambassador of God to his congregation.

The second man sounds like a Mr. Me-first, seeking self-glory. Let's avoid that. The love and hard work of the first man are admirable, but let's hope he won't burn himself out. He may need to learn the arts of delegation and motivation, to stir up all the parts of the body to function. (Too many churches want someone just like him, for them to *use*, not *follow*!) Thank God for the third man. May his tribe increase more and more. But the point is, note the variety of gifts, emphases, and styles demonstrated by the three ministers. There is no single pattern.

The above examples are of preachers, but this issue is primarily about ELDERS AND DEACONS. Their ministries are vital; they can make or break a church. May the Lord raise up mature leaders to shepherd the various local flocks of His sheep.

* * * * *

Shepherds After God's Own Heart

Leroy Garrett

I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

—Jeremiah 3:12

In reading the history of the early church in *Acts* it soon becomes apparent that elders (presbyters) played a significant role. While they are not mentioned by name until one has read more than one-third of the narrative (*Acts* 11:30), it becomes evident as the story unfolds that the presbytery is important to the development of the church. It is the elders of the church in Jerusalem that received donations for their poor from caring brethren in Antioch (11:30).

That it was common if not the rule that each new congregation had elders is indicated in 14:28 where elders are said to be "ordained in every church."

Moreover elders are seen as part of the decision-making process, for in one of the first crises in the early church the presbytery is gathered with the apostles (15:6) to deal with the problem. And it is noteworthy that "the brethren" were part of the conference and that the matter was settled only at the pleasure of "the whole church" along with apostles and elders. If we are looking for norms for our time in the life of the early church this should be one: *There is evidence in the New Testament that in decision-making the elders always acted in conjunction with the whole church.* Should we not have a compelling reason for doing otherwise? It underscores the people's right to know what is going on and to share in the decisions that are made. If we should draw up a "Bill of Rights" for church members, this should be one of them.

The early church was dependent on the Old Covenant Scriptures for its understanding of who an elder was and what he was to be. The Jews who had become Christians were aware of "the elders of Israel" as they were the elders of the church. There are four references to these elders of the old Jewish system in *Acts* before Christian elders are mentioned. Of the eighteen references to elders in *Acts* eight of them refer to the elders of Israel. The gospel records, of course, abound with such references, at least 25 of them, all of which refer to the elders of Israel. One grim reference tells how Jesus informed his disciples that he must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and be killed (Mk. 8:31).

Even more recent to the early Christians than the elders of the old Mosaic system were the elders of the Jewish synagogue, which stood as a kind of bridge between the ritual of the temple and the simplicity of the church. There was hardly any difference at all between the function and qualifications of the elders in the synagogue and those in the church. But the prototype for the elders of the synagogue was the elders in the Old Testament.

The quotation above from Jeremiah can therefore serve as the thesis of this essay, that we do well to form our concept of the work of elders as much from the Old Testament as from the New Testament, and that the basic trait of the elder in the Old Testament is that of shepherd. That is a pregnant line in Jer. 3:15: "I will give them shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding." That one passage comes near saying it all, for the elder is first of all God's man, one after His own heart. Moreover he is a shepherd that feeds the sheep, and with great care, for it is with knowledge and understanding.

This is a continuing theme in Jeremiah, who is a prophet of hope as well as of doom. In fact the prophet sees the *bad* shepherds as one cause of the woe and the *good* shepherds as a reason for hope. "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture," says the prophet in 23:12, and goes on to condemn them for not watch-

ing after the sheep. Then with a cry of hope Jeremiah assures the people that God will regather his scattered sheep from all the nations and bring them back to their folds where they will prosper. Then in 23:4 he says, "I will set shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall there be lacking."

Jeremiah frequently names the *carnal* shepherds, those who were concerned only for themselves, as the cause of Israel's fall, as in 50:6: "My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray." And yet shepherds, the faithful ones who cared for the sheep, were essential to the prophet's dream of renewal for Israel. "I will give them shepherds after my own heart" remains one of the great shafts of light in the Old Covenant Scriptures.

In their judgments against shepherds who were not faithful the prophets reveal what God expected of them. "Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" Ezekiel (34:1) asks in a woeful judgment. He refers to things they did for themselves, *but you do not feed the flock*, he complained. In the following verses he spells out what is involved in caring for the sheep, which goes far in clarifying what the early Christians deemed to be the function of elders, whom they referred to as shepherds.

Ezekiel's description is in Ezek. 34:4, and if we listed them as positive functions they would read as follows: The shepherd strengthens the weak. He heals the sick. He binds up the broken hearted and brings back those who have wandered away. He seeks out those that are lost.

It is noteworthy that this is what the prophet refers to as *ruling*, the only intimation in the Old Testament that the shepherd had an authoritative role. He says, "but with force and cruelty you have ruled them." We may deduce from this that they were to *rule* with kindness and friendly persuasion, or better still they ruled by teaching, encouraging, healing, and seeking out those who had strayed. There is no suggestion that "rule" or "authority" is in any way arbitrary or official. The shepherd had no authoritative office. He ruled only by serving. He led by being a servant.

But the most impressive picture in the pastoral passages of Ezekiel is that of God himself as the Shepherd. The prophet hears God say, "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out" (34:11), and "I will seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day" (34:12). That the vision of God as the faithful Shepherd is not an uncommon one in the Old Testament is evident from such passages as the famous 23rd Psalm: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

It may well be that our Lord was led by the prophecy of Ezekiel to identify himself as "the Good Shepherd" (Jn. 10:11). He fulfills the prophecy in that God acts as the Shepherd of his people through Jesus Christ.

Here we have the ultimate motivation for those who serve as pastors of God's people: *allow God and Christ to serve as shepherds through them*. If we have any question about the role of the presbytery in the church today, we can look to Christ and resolve that the elders of the church, as God's under-shepherds, should emulate the

ways of the chief Shepherd. When elders function with the spirit of Christ in view, we will have far fewer leadership problems. Even though Jesus could lay claim to all authority in heaven and on earth he made it clear that he was in the world not to rule but to serve.

Once we see the prophetic view of the elders-shepherds in the Old Testament as teachers and servants, which was surely the view held by the early Christians since the old Scriptures were their only Bible, we can question a practice that makes business men the elders of the congregation. We all know that elders can "run the church" without "feeding my flock." Men can serve as something like corporate executives without even a semblance of the heart of a shepherd.

"I will make them shepherds after my own heart" is the lofty concept we should hold before those who would lead us. If we could call a moratorium on the use of the term "authority" in reference to our elders and employ terms like serving, shepherding, and pastoring instead it would do wonders for our crisis in leadership. Since the Scriptures nowhere describe the leaders of God's people in authoritative terms, we have good reason for a moratorium. In fact the very opposite is the case, for when Jesus referred to the rulers among the Gentiles as those who "lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them," he went on to say "It shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant" (Mk: 10:42-43).

To our shame we have to concede that it *is* so among us, for all too often "those in authority" and the "great ones" are elders and ministers. While the Son of God himself girded himself with a towel so as to serve, our leaders take unto themselves titles and offices so as to rule. *It shall not be so among you!* is a mandate from the lips of our Lord that would revolutionize our thinking about "the eldership" if we would but listen. With Jesus as our example of leadership, we would reach for a towel more than for the gavel. We have far greater need for the heart of a shepherd than the skill of an executive.

—*Restoration Review*, Oct. 1986

* * * * *

Full-time Elders

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor."

—1 Timothy 5:17

Five years ago one of the elders of a church I know retired from his work. He was a devout and able man, and his fellow elders approached him about giving a major part of his time to the work of the church during these years when he had more time and experience than ever before. He was interested, and over a period of several weeks there were candid discussions in the elders' meetings of the pattern of this newly considered arrangement. This would be a new experience for the congregation and, of course, for the elder

as well. Frank communication at the beginning was far better than inexpressible regret later.

Trying to put themselves in the place of their associate, the elders projected the following:

- The proposal was formalized by a mutually acceptable written job description.
- Satisfactory office space was provided.
- A salary was offered. (The amount was quite modest.)
- The entire arrangement was subject to periodic review on an agreed-upon anniversary date.

This pattern has now been in operation for several years and has contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the congregation. It is regarded as one of those plateau-like upward steps which has helped to change the church for the better.

Among the recognizable benefits have been:

- The preacher has more time for the public ministry of the Word since he no longer has so many administrative details thrust upon him.
- The members of the congregation respond favorably to the constancy of presence of one of the shepherds. The sick are visited more promptly and newcomers more consistently.
- There is someone available to make the unexpected decision. Emergencies can't wait.
- The other elders enjoy having one of their own number to whom they can turn for the detailed insight that comes from such constant service. They are freed to spend more time as shepherds.

In summary, the arrangement has exceeded expectations about its benefits. The point is, however, that none of this would have taken place if the retiring elder's peers had not initiated some discussion with him about the possibility. He was interested and able, but to have initiated the discussion himself would have come across as presumptuous.

What a great thing it is when a good elder wants to devote full time to the work of the kingdom and there is a church perceptive enough to put him to work. More and more congregations are moving in this direction.

—James O. Baird, in *Christian Chronicle*

* * * * *

Sculpturing

Bruce McNicol

Some congregations are like sculptures. Others resemble sand dunes. Sculptures develop *by design*, whereas dunes drift under *random influences*.

What determines whether a local church is more like a sculpture or a sand dune? Its elders, primarily. The leaders' personal lives especially impact the assembly.

But the next most determinative factor in fashioning a sculptured fellowship is *what elders do when they're together*. *Elders' meetings*.

Because these meetings consume so many cumulative leadership hours, they must operate with specific purpose and priorities. A pre-determined agenda is indispensable. All the elders may contribute to its content, but they should appoint one man to develop the agenda and guide the meeting with it.

Without a structured agenda, elders catch the fireman syndrome: they use valuable time together to put out brush fires and exhaust themselves in the process! Legitimate, but less important issues, must never preempt the major purposes of their collective sessions.

Since the weakest ink is better than the strongest mind, minutes of each meeting should be taken, specifying who is responsible to do what, by when.

Top the agenda list with prayer and study of the Word. With groups, as with individuals, when prayer and study don't get scheduled, they don't happen!

Who shepherds the shepherds? Usually no one, unless the elders take care of each other. Therefore, elders' prayer means, among other things, transparent confession, intercession and affirmation of one another. A time of loving accountability, sharing of schedules, perplexities and joys. It is also a time to mature in worship together. Following this, elders may want to group by twos to intercede for special needs in the flock.

Scripture study should apply to the *work* of the church. The church's vision, priorities, resources, ministries, gifts and many other issues.

What I've just described takes substantial time. But it's worth it!

In one sense, the most important meeting of the church is the elders' meeting. For what happens there largely determines the shape and quality of all other meetings, and therefore, of the church itself.

—Reprinted by permission from INTEREST magazine

* * * * *

Having Vision, and Implementing It

David Ward

Vision requires a flexibility to change, but only in certain areas. In matters of Scripture, we must hold fast to the unchanging Word of God.

1. *Unchanging Principles*

First, we must determine what are the unchanging principles on which we must operate. And there are unchanging principles. For example, the Bible tells us that we are to evangelize. We are to preach the Gospel to every creature. Those are unchanging principles that the Word of God lays before us.

Furthermore, The Word of God indicates that there is to be that which is now called "body-life." All members of the body are to func-

tion in respect to one another (Eph. 4). That is a basic principle of Scripture relative to church life.

The Bible indicates that there is to be prayer on the part of God's people. And there are still other unchanging principles, things that cannot be set aside, because they are part of the continuing will of God for His church.

2. *Cultural Contexts*

Second, we find that there are slowly changing cultural contexts in the midst of which a growing church must function. We must know the culture of the community in which we are working, in which we are seeking to implement our vision. What are the economic standards? What is the intellectual level? What is the age range?

What is the mind-set of the people in our area? What is their attitude in respect to church?

Are relationships strong or weak among these people? What are their traditions? What degree of spirituality and maturity do they evidence? All of these things are involved in what we call culture. Whereas the church is supra-cultural, it nevertheless touches culture, and time, and geography.

It is very important for us to realize today, for example, that the world population trend is toward the urban centers. Urbanization is the trend all over the world. We had better stop, look and listen to see what is necessary in respect to urban evangelization.

Cultural awareness is very important. For lack of it, many preachers fail. I see it in local churches in our area. A preacher comes from one section of the country to work in a church here where we are. He knows the culture where he came from, perhaps, but he doesn't know it here. And he doesn't last very long.

3. *Program Changes*

A third factor in vision for growth is an openness to make frequent program changes. We must be open to change, and we must be willing to fail.

In our local assembly, in the last ten years, we have worked through, I suppose, four different Sunday schedules. Changing schedules is not easy for a congregation to do, but the Lord has enabled us to do it. In doing it, we have found a schedule that we are very comfortable with, at least for the present. It is meeting the needs of the work. And that is what I mean by program change.

There came a time when Thomas Edison was nearing the end of a long search for the right material to serve as the filament for his incandescent lamp. He had tried many, many experiments, without success.

"Now Thomas," said his wife, "why don't you give it up? You've tried a thousand different materials and not one of them has worked."

Edison replied: "My dear, I have found a thousand ways it doesn't work." And he kept on until he found one way that did work.

There is no failure except to give up trying. And so we must be prepared for flexibility and change in respect to program structure.

Summary

Thus, there are unchanging principles, Biblical mandates, which

we are not free to change. Hopefully, we will not move on these points.

Then there are slowly changing cultural situations. You can't get people to change culture overnight. Don't try to do it, or they will build up heated resistance.

Finally, there are frequent program changes. Here we must be flexible, and ready to change—not for the sake of change, but as a means to an end, as helpful in bringing refreshment and strengthening to the assembly.

ON IMPLEMENTING VISION

How is vision implemented? What are the ingredients that are needed to bring vision to fulfillment? Let me suggest four things.

1. *Objectives*

We must see clearly the objectives that are before us. We need to be specific. We need to spell out clear, specific goals. What are we trying to do? Why are we trying to do it? These are hard questions that have to be asked.

2. *Authority*

We can't just ask somebody to do something and then not have the leadership of the church stand behind them. There must be authority given to those who are going to undertake any task. A good picture of that in the early church is recorded in Acts 6. After telling the congregation to solve a problem by setting aside what we sometimes call deacons today, the apostles then laid their hands on those who were selected. By doing this before the congregation, they identified themselves with them and gave authority to these new leadership people.

3. *Personnel and Planning*

It takes people to fulfill a vision. We must look for spiritual people, available people.

Along with people we may need additional facilities. Or, we may need to change the facilities we have. Also, materials may be required—Bible study materials, overhead projectors, clothing, or food, depending on the type of ministry that is being envisioned.

Planning may require us to lay out an event-flow. What series of events will move us forward in implementing our vision? We may need to couple this with a time-frame. What has to happen? In what order? And when? We should set up a time-frame in respect to the program we are trying to put into operation.

Paul was in touch with God. As you read about his missionary journeys, you see clear strategy. You see the flow of events that led to fulfilling the great burden that God had given him, even to carry the Gospel to the known world of that day.

4. *Evaluation*

Finally, evaluation. Review and evaluate what you have done. Improve, revamp, drop. Last year we dropped our annual Christmas social. It's not easy to drop traditions. Why did we do it? Because the body of believers now is too large for a social to meet the needs

we have. Instead, the same thing is happening within the smaller groups of the large congregation.

Be willing to discontinue that which is no longer necessary. Someone has said that every year we should re-evaluate every program to make sure that it is still necessary and that it is still fulfilling its need within the body.

AN EXAMPLE — SHEPHERD GROUPS

Let me give an example, now, of how vision is implemented. A number of years ago we realized that our mid-week prayer meeting was not effectively meeting the needs of the body. The elders spent a great deal of time in prayer about that, and they decided to establish what we now call "shepherd groups"—small fellowship groups within the church.

The results have been gratifying. In the past we would have about eight people praying long, congregational prayers in our mid-week meeting. Today we have upwards of 200 people involved in conversational prayer in the small shepherd groups.

How did all this come about? Several steps were involved:

1. In addition to much prayer, the elders gathered a lot of information before making their decision.
2. The elders and their wives then involved themselves in a training program which ran for three months. We became the initial shepherd group, and a model for those that followed. Before we started other groups we wanted to experience small group fellowship ourselves—how it functioned, what its problems would be, etc.
3. The congregation was then fully informed. This involved two Sunday morning sermons on the subject and handouts explaining in detail the new direction. Those who wished to belong to a shepherd group signed up for the program.
4. There was then a final orientation of all the leadership people involved, and all the shepherd groups were started on a specific Tuesday evening. We started with eight groups.
5. One month later was an evaluation by the group leaders, and then evaluations continued monthly. After a year, that became a bi-monthly meeting of the group leaders with the elders. We now number thirteen groups.

The shepherd groups serve to develop maturity in the body of Christ. They supplement pulpit preaching, so that instruction in the Word of God comes at two levels, the small class level, as well as the full church service. But maturity develops, not just from biblical input, but by what we call relational theology, working truth out in relationship to other people.

That is where the small shepherd groups are important. As the believers discuss the Word of God, they see how it works in each other's lives, and they make application of it in the relational aspects of the church.

This is fellowship. Fellowship is more than eating doughnuts and drinking coffee. It is the sharing together of the commonalities that we have in Jesus Christ.

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Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller



Will you explain the responsibility and authority of deacons which Acts 6:3 provides and how deacons should be subject to elders?

There are a number of things concerning the work of both elders and deacons which are not spelled out in detail in the N.T., and we must use discernment and wisdom to try to discover the N.T. pattern and just exactly how modern church activities and responsibilities fit into that. We recognize that the Lord has given the necessary details and examples to enable us to be in His will and that where there is no revelation He expects us to act on the basis of good sense and in harmony with what is revealed. In some areas He has indicated work to be done but has not given the details as to how to do it. We cannot always cite a "thus saith the Lord" concerning a deacon's work. This must not keep us from doing so to the extent that it is possible and does not throw open the doors for reckless abandonment of what guidance we have.

In Acts 6, good godly men were appointed to serve tables, i.e., to handle the feeding of widows in the church. They are not specifically called deacons here, but the Greek words translated in 6:1 as "ministration" and in 6:2 as "serve (tables)" are from the same root as the word elsewhere translated "deacon." A *diakonos* is simply one who renders service to another. The Holy Spirit has taken this word and used it for a selected set of helpers in the church. Since the work of Acts 6:1ff is in harmony with all that we know elsewhere in the N.T. of the work of deacons, it seems fitting to call these the first deacons in the church. They were appointed specifically to relieve the apostles of work that would hinder the apostles from a ministry in the Word. The authority of the seven was a delegated authority. Their work was that of tending to more mundane matters so that the apostles would have time for spiritual matters—notably prayer and the preaching and teaching of the Word.

The office of apostle ceased in the church with the deaths of those mentioned in the N.T. This is evident when we consider the qualifications (Acts 1:21-22). Paul was given a vision of the resurrected Lord and thus qualified to be an apostle, but he recognized that even he was one born out of season (1 Cor. 15:6). It seems evident that the apostles were for the purposes of getting the church started in this formative period. As qualified elders were appointed, the apostles seem to have backed away and left the oversight of the individual congregations to the elders in those churches. This does not mean they did not

offer sound advice and exhortation (cf. Acts 20:17ff), but neither were they a dictatorial body that made elders in their day mere figureheads (cf. Acts 15:2). With the death of all the apostles, the highest office left in the church is that of elder (also called the N.T. bishop, overseer, presbyter, pastor, or shepherd). It is obvious, of course, that Christ is the Head of the church, but we speak of the highest office filled by mere man. Apart from their role as instruments of revelation, the apostles yielded much of their authority to elders. The work of elders is clearly set forth in the N.T. as being that of feeding the flock (spiritual feeding, that is—instructing in the Word, Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2) and exercising oversight over the church (1 Pet. 5:2; the Gk. word *episkopos* is translated bishop or overseer, Acts 20:28). Their role is that of shepherds to the flock—pastors, a work too often assigned to others in our day.

An examination of the account in Acts 6 in the light of the above and an examination of the qualifications of deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13) makes it evident that deacons were meant to be helpers to elders—good men to whom they could delegate authority and who could be intrusted with matters of lesser spiritual importance. They are not required to have quite as high spiritual qualifications as elders. They must rule their children well, but it is not required that the children be believers. Generally speaking, younger men are able to qualify as deacons than can qualify as elders. Ideally and practically, it seems that deacons are in apprentice training to be elders when they have attained the spiritual maturity for the office. This is not a necessary requirement of scripture, however.

The person asking our question is concerned not only with the responsibilities of deacons but with their authority. This is an area where the N.T. does not state specifically what the limits are. Wisdom tells us that they are not elders. In cases where elders have died off or qualified men have not been found, deacons sometimes become the overseers of a congregation. This is a potentially dangerous situation, for it makes elders (in practice) of those who only qualify as deacons. Deacons are servants, while elders are overseers. This is shown by the very name given to them. It would seem to be a part of wisdom for each eldership to make clear to deacons just what areas and how much authority is being delegated to them. The seven of Acts 6 knew what their work was—ministering to the widows as to their daily needs of food. Since the apostles wanted to be relieved of this burden, every little issue would not have been cleared by them. I cannot conceive that the seven had to get an apostle's signature on every food purchase. Delegated authority must confer some authority or it is not delegated authority. My own personal opinion is that if a man (or men) are given a job to do, they should be given as much authority to do the job as possible within the overall goals and purposes. Elders are overseers of the work of deacons as a part of the whole work of the church, but an overseer is one who knows how to delegate authority. An eldership which deprives their deacons of responsibility, making them only figureheads or names on the church bulletin and stationary, is very likely a failure as an eldership—jealous of power, consuming their time with work deacons ought to be doing,

and neglecting the higher responsibilities which are theirs.

Now it is evident that the relationship between elders and deacons should be a harmonious one. These two offices should never be an occasion for division in the church. Deacons do not constitute a lower body of elders set in opposition to the upper body, as we have in legislative bodies. Any occasion of rebellion ought to occur only under the most extreme of circumstances when obedience to man requires disobedience to God. When scripturally qualified men fill each office, there will likely be no problem, for each will be concerned with the Lord's work and not be in a struggle for power. Separate elders' and deacons' meetings can serve a very useful purpose when they are aimed at getting the work done, but they can be a source of real trouble if the two groups are antagonistic one to the other. I have known of cases where deacons formed a sort of opposition group to elders in the church, and this is not healthy. The younger are to be subject to the elder (1 Pet. 5:5), not vice versa. Elders have the oversight, and that includes the oversight of deacons. In the absence of specific statements as to areas of responsibility, deacons should act by the authority committed to them by the elders. Elders are the rulers (1 Tim. 3:5). (Elders, to be sure, must not be dictatorial, are accountable for their conduct, should use every member of the body in the best way possible, etc., but space for this article prevents extended examination of that side of the matter.)

Because of the lesser qualifications and the example given in Acts 6, it is generally assumed that deacons should be responsible for the things requiring less spiritual development, so that elders may give themselves to matters of greater spiritual importance. It is not easy to separate the work of the church into mundane and spiritual matters. Even the feeding of the widows had spiritual significance, for it could have led to serious division in the church. It is noteworthy that the apostles insisted on high quality people for taking charge of the work. What is done with the money collected by a church has spiritual significance. Is it to be used for frivolous things or for preaching the gospel? How much emphasis is to be put on a place of worship, maintaining it and updating it? These are not primarily spiritual matters, but the use, emphasis, and attention given to them might be. It is evident to anyone, however, that the serving of tables, handling of funds, caring for a building, and other like matters are of lesser importance than prayer and the ministry of the Word. Possibly the lines are not clearly drawn for several reasons, including the fact that the Lord wants all Christians serving to the fullness of their ability. Stephen and Philip, of the seven first deacons, went on to become powerful preachers of the word and were not permanently locked into lesser acts of service. Good deacons are growing Christians who will be delegated authority by a wise eldership according to their abilities.

The truth of the matter is that in too many of our churches a hired preacher is expected to do the work of elders; elders see their job mainly as hiring and "bossing" the preacher or tend to spend time over responsibilities that could better be handled by deacons, and deacons tend to do jobs that any responsible Christian could do. It is

evident that deacons were meant by the Lord to be fellow-laborers with elders, serving in such a way as to enable the elders to give attention to the things of highest priority.

* * * * *

WHO RUNS THE CHURCH?

Rubel Shelley

Jesus received this indictment one day:

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (Luke 15:1-7)

And this indictment arrived here a few days back:

For God's sake, who is running the church? We are going to wind up with all the gays and divorcees . . . If there is not a large turnaround from what we have now, there will not be a church as we have known it in the past.

It's a good question: Who is running the church? The answer tells what you understand the church to be. What you think its mission is. What sort of heart you have. How near (or far) you are from the kingdom of God.

Human beings have been running the church for centuries. Thus blacks were unwelcome until the government intervened. Divorced people are treated as lepers in some churches. Ex-convicts are unwelcome. And alcoholics. And people with AIDS. And prostitutes. And so on and so on.

If Christ is ever allowed to run the church, He will surround Himself (just as He did in His earthly ministry) with the people human-run churches exclude. People who "have it together" don't need Jesus anyway. Only the lost sheep need a shepherd. Only the sick need a physician. Only sinners need a savior.

Come to think of it, we don't need the church "as we have known it in the past." Run by humans. Excluding the very people who need the church most. Rejecting the people Jesus wants to draw to himself and save.

Let's try a bold new experiment. Something really radical and crazy. Far-fetched and dangerous. Let's be prepared, though, for a barrage of criticism. *Let's try letting Jesus run the church for a while.*

Who knows? If we seek out the same people he sought and minister to them as he ministered, we might become a genuine New Testament church.

—bulletin of Ashwood Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee

Who Loves The Most?

(A Sermon on Luke 7:36-50)

Bob Ross

Introduction

In an effort to protect people or at least let them know the risk they are taking, the government requires a warning message on every pack of cigarettes. That makes sense to most of us including tobacco farmers and people who like to smoke. Smoking is dangerous to your health, and we may as well be honest about it.

Dangers to our physical health are not the only things we need to be warned against. There are also dangers to our spiritual health. Most of us would agree that things like pornography or drugs or heavy metal music are hazardous to one's spiritual health. These things are dangerous not only for children but for "mature" audiences. Anyone's mind and morals can easily be corrupted by a steady diet of illicit sex and violence.

But there is another spiritual danger, one which can take away your appreciation for God and distort your understanding of his love for you. This danger is more sinister because it looks so benign. Indeed, we encourage people to stay close to it. We take our children to it. We feel safer in its presence than anywhere else. But it is, nevertheless, highly dangerous to your spiritual health.

I submit that every church should have a prominent sign displayed near the entrance which says, "*DANGER—Those who enter here are prone to develop pride and hypocrisy, the most deadly spiritual disease known to mankind.*"

You see, there is a strange paradox because the church exerts tremendous energy to save people from sin and depravity, but when it is successful, it places the church member at risk of becoming a proud, self righteous hypocrite. When people get saved and clean up their lives, they start living better, they attend church, they learn to pray, they give to help others in need—in a word they become "good" people. The only problem is that sooner or later the church member begins to congratulate himself that he is not part of the low life outside the church. In a sense he is "better" than people who have not seen the light. But the moment he thinks that he is "better", he has lost sight of the mercy of God, which is what saved him to begin with. So, beware, all who enter the doors of this church. It may be dangerous to your spiritual health.

Religious Classes in Judaism

In order to appreciate the story in this text, it is necessary, first, to understand the social and religious background of first century Judaism. The Jewish religious leadership was split into three major sects: Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. The Essenes were an isolated monastic community which does not appear in the New Testament. The Sadducees formed a small conservative, wealthy, worldly, and politically powerful circle that controlled Jerusalem and

the temple, the most prestigious institution in Judaism. Most of the Sadducees were priests. Religion to them meant maintaining the status quo—and please keep the tithes and offerings coming in.

Finally, there were the Pharisees, a group that traced its origin to a revolt against Greek and pagan corruption of Judaism in the second century B.C. The name probably means “separated ones.” Above all, the Pharisees believed in purity and in the need to maintain the distinction between clean and unclean. They were devoted students of the Law of God and would suffer hardship or death rather than compromise their purity. Most Jews greatly admired and respected them for the standards which they taught and maintained.

However, these three sects were a minority of the population. Taken together they made up only a small percentage of the total population of professing Jews. Obviously, the great majority of Jews could not leave their homes to become monks. And to be a Sadducee one had to be born into the right family. And as far as being a Pharisee was concerned, there was no way, realistically speaking, that a common, ordinary working man or woman could manage to observe all the hundreds of laws about not working on the Sabbath or not touching this or that because it might be unclean.

Not that the average man or woman was irreligious, not at all. The common folk were believers, and many of them tried to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for at least one or more of the three great annual festivals at the temple. This great mass was simply called the *am ha'retz*, “the people of the land.”

But besides the *am ha'retz*, who in the eyes of the Pharisee had a chance at salvation, there were the “sinners.” The term “sinner” in Jesus’ day was a technical term that described a special class of depraved Jews, who were so far gone that it was inconceivable that they might be recipients of God’s mercy. Of course, everyone sinned, and for the ordinary Jew there was hope for forgiveness. But for certain groups of people, who were considered “sinners,” there was absolutely no hope.

One group of “sinners” were swine herders. According to the law, the pig was an unclean animal, and the Jew was forbidden to use it for food or to touch it. So in Jesus’ day it was believed that any one who fell so low that he would keep pigs was a total reprobate. The second group of despicable sinners was comprised of those who betrayed their own nation to work with the Romans as tax collectors. And, finally, the third group considered to be utter, unredeemable low life were the street walkers, prostitutes, especially those who sold themselves to Gentile men. These three groups, therefore—swine herders, tax collectors and prostitutes—made up that notorious company known as “sinners.”

A Story of Two Debtors

Now, back to the record of the dinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee. When the host, a good and pious Pharisee, who was attracted to Jesus, saw a street walker come in, he must have been shocked. It is almost impossible for us today to imagine how he

felt when he saw her go to Jesus, who reclined at the table with His feet behind Him, and there begin to cry with tears of happiness and to anoint the feet of the man who had somehow, somewhere reached out and touched her. Thus her gratitude and joy expressed itself in a scandalous display of affection.

Ordinarily when men met this woman, they saw essentially a female body without soul or spirit, something to be used or bought for a price. Even Simon, pious as he was, in his own way dehumanized her and made her into an unclean object beyond the reach of God and of righteous men like himself. But when Jesus met her, He saw her as a human being made in the image of God. He recognized her pain, her need for love, acceptance, forgiveness and healing. Somewhere He had reached out to her, and now she reached out to Him to express her appreciation for what He had done for her.

I don't think you had to be the Son of God to look at Simon's face and tell what he was thinking. And Jesus, seeing the shock in his eyes, told Simon a story. A man had two debtors; one owed a small amount of money and the other owed a large amount, ten times the amount of the other debtor. He forgave them both. Now a simple, rhetorical question: "Which of them will love the most?" And Simon, of course, gives the obvious answer, "The one who was forgiven the most."

Now Jesus uses Simon's answer to confront him with his self-righteous pride. He points out Simon's lack of warmth and hospitality—no water for His dusty feet, no kiss of greeting, no oil to smooth and soften His skin. But on the contrary the woman at His feet has washed them with her tears, profusely kissed them and anointed them with a fine ointment. Her expression of gratitude is an obvious sign of how much she was forgiven.

And so the paradox: Simon the righteous Pharisee, who has kept God's law, finds himself alienated from the Son of God, and a woman, who had fallen so far that she was beyond hope, enjoys a sweet expressive intimacy with Jesus. As Jesus said in another place, truly the prostitutes and the tax collectors—the "sinners"—go into the kingdom of God before the self-righteous who do not need the Lord's healing grace.

That is why it is so dangerous to become a good Christian. By cleaning up our act we are tempted to think that we have something of worth to offer the God of the universe and to forget that our relationship with Him is totally dependent upon His goodness. Martin Luther, commenting on one form of religious devotion in his own time, said, "Men fast, pray, watch, suffer. They intend to appease the wrath of God and to deserve God's grace by their exertions. But there is no glory in it for God, because by their exertions these workers pronounce God an unmerciful slave driver, an unfaithful and angry Judge. They despise God, make a liar out of Him, snub Christ and all His benefits; in short they pull God from His throne and perch themselves on it" (*Commentary on Galatians*).

Frederick Buechner says that the Pharisee's self righteousness alienates him from others, from himself and from God. "First, his holier-than-thou attitude pushes others away. Second, his secret

suspicion that his own holiness is deficient pushes part of himself away. Third, his possibly not-so-subconscious feeling that anybody who expects him to be all that holy must be a cosmic SOB pushes Guess Who away.”

So, here we are at church on a Sunday morning, gathered for prayer and communion. Most of us grew up in church, went to Sunday school and vacation Bible school. Some of us may have a hog operation on our farm, but that doesn't make us really bad people in the eyes of the church. We are sober, honest people. Wonderful! But the very goodness of our lives makes it easy to trust in ourselves and to rely upon our goodness. And when we do so, we distance ourselves from Jesus and miss the kingdom which He announced.

I can understand Simon. I can feel embarrassed with him at the unrestrained display of emotion at his dinner table. So what is the answer? Quit going to church? Take up drugs or become a bank robber? No, no, don't do that. But you can bow your head and say, “Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul; thank you, Lord, for making me whole. Thank you, Lord, for giving to me your great salvation so full and free.”

Hosea, The Heart and Holiness of God

“WHEN GOD SUFFERS”

(Hosea 1:1-11)

Ernest E. Lyon

Many Christians lose a great deal of blessing by neglecting to study the books written by the prophets in the Old Testament. And they do this in spite of Paul's words to Timothy in Second Timothy 3:16, 17, “*All Scripture* is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” They also overlook the many passages in the New Testament which quote from and teach us lessons from the Old Testament. (Also see 1 Cor. 10:11 and 2 Tim. 3:15).

Another problem with our studying prophets is our labeling of the books Hosea through Malachi as “minor prophets.” We like to label things to remember them, so the five books of Moses are labeled “Law,” the twelve books from Joshua through Esther are labeled “history,” the five books from Job to the Song of Solomon are labeled “poetry,” the five from Isaiah through Daniel are labeled “major prophets,” and the last twelve “minor prophets.” Those are convenient labels to remember the books in an easy numerical fashion —5, 12, 5, 5, 12. But many get the idea the last twelve are “minor” in importance, a very false idea. No book in the Bible, for example, sets out for us the heart of love of God and His holiness better than Hosea does. All twelve are major in the sense of being important. Let us remember that God never speaks of a “minor prophet.”

I think many people have the false conception that a British theologian had several years ago when he wrote a book called “The

Impassive God," in which he maintained that God could not suffer. So many think of God as being not touched by anger, sorrow, suffering, and other feelings. But God speaks much of His anger, His love, His compassion. The book of Hosea should be a real help in overcoming such a false idea as that. Let us study it with open minds and expectant hearts for the blessing that comes from knowing any part of God's word.

Like all the other prophets, God called Hosea to his work at a time when the people He had chosen were going astray from Him. He was a citizen of and prophesied especially to the northern kingdom of Israel, which he usually called "Ephraim." He apparently had a very long ministry, as the opening verse shows, probably around 70 years. And apparently he lived to see the captivity of Israel (Ephraim) that he had prophesied. He was primarily a prophet to Israel, but he lists only the first of the kings he served under and lists the four of Judah. He began in the latter years of Jeroboam II and lived through the kingship of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea, the last of whom was king for nine years before the captivity. Hezekiah started his reign in the third year of Hoshea and apparently Hosea died during Hezekiah's twenty-nine year reign in Judah.

At the beginning of Hosea's work as a prophet God prepared him to understand His "heart and holiness." He prepared Hosea to suffer as He suffered when His chosen people Israel committed spiritual adultery by turning to idols of all kinds for their worship. All of this occurred when the people thought that God was pleased with them, for they were in a prosperous time. God does not work as men think He does. That is one of the great mistakes the people of this country make; they feel that since we are the greatest economic power in the world, God is blessing us for something we have done right. What a lesson we could learn if we would apply the principles of this prophecy to our country. We are not the "chosen people of God," but God blessed this country, probably because of the fact that so many of our leaders in the beginning were men who knew that God was ruling in the affairs of countries and that "blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." It wasn't because of our great natural resources, for South America had as much or more. But this country was established mainly by people looking for religious freedom and South America was conquered by people looking for gold and riches. Yet our country certainly has departed very far from its foundations. Please remember this as you study Hosea.

The story behind the prophecy is that of marital infidelity. The human story of the infidelity of Gomer is a common one—and probably would be more common if the one who was false to the marital vows were the husband! But the rest of the story is uncommon—a man whose wife had proved false and fell so low in prostitution that she became a slave was told to go and show his love to her and bring her back. He even bought her back for thirty shekels and restored her to her place as his wife. That is the basis for the prophecy and the reason Hosea could understand both the "heart and the holiness" of God, who suffers when His people desert Him, but He does not desert them.

Verse two goes back to the very beginning of God's use of Hosea as a prophet. That early the NIV says God told him to "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife." This very beginning gives place for varied interpretations. Was Gomer an adulteress *already* or was she of such a nature as to *become* one? Fine Bible teachers disagree about when Gomer became unchaste. Some think of her as that way when Hosea first met her and when he found out about it he was not going to marry her. But God stepped in and told him to go ahead. (That would be very similar to the situation of Joseph when he thought Mary was pregnant from another man. He thought of putting her away privately instead of the open disgrace allowed under the Law, but God sent an angel to stop him and let him know that he was mistaken.) Hosea wasn't mistaken if that was the situation. Yet God wanted him to marry her—knowing either that she was already unchaste or would become so later.

Now to see the progress of this infidelity, notice the children. The first was a son Jezreel, who was named after the place where Jehu went beyond God's command and killed more people than God had told him (2 Kings 9 and 10). He was so named because the Lord was going to put an end to Israel as a kingdom, breaking their bow (the symbol of power) in the valley of Jezreel. Of Jezreel Hosea tells us, "she conceived and bore him a son." But the second child is different—it simply says "Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter." Not said, you see, to be a daughter of Hosea. It could be that Gomer was already unfaithful. The daughter's name is also significant, for it indicates that God was no longer to show love to the house of Israel, no longer to pursue them further with favor; no longer would He forgive them; He would utterly take them away. But He was not ready to do that to Judah, but would save them by His own power. The second son also is not said to be Hosea's son and he was named Lo-Ammi to indicate the close of God's relationship with Israel. Note also if this is put into the singular, then it would say, "for you are not my child."²

All of this indicates the sad place that Hosea was now in, but notice that it is the relationship of Israel to God that is in question here. Here then, God is shown as suffering, rejected by the people that He had called as His wife spiritually. They had gone astray from Him and went after the gods of their own imagination. Now look at the last two verses of our text (1:10-11) and you will see that God is not saying that He is through with Israel. On the contrary, He speaks of a time when they will grow enormously in number, they will deserve the title of "sons of the living God," and they will be reunited with Judah with one leader. That, indeed, will be a great day. Turn to Romans 9-11, especially 11:12—"But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness be!" He is speaking there to Gentiles and notes what a great blessing will come when the whole nation of Israel turns back to the God Who called them and made them His people.

In closing let us look at something that I have briefly mentioned already. The time that Hosea prophesied in was a time of prosperity.

The two kingdoms had gained back most of the territory lost since David and Solomon. Great buildings were being built and there was widespread luxury. If you didn't know human nature you would think that the people would be thankful to God and come close to Him. Instead, they were getting very prideful (2 Chronicles 26:10; Hosea 8:14; Amos 3:15; 5:11; Isaiah 9:10) and there was much dishonest gain, false balances, taking advantage of the weak (Hosea 12:7; Isaiah 5:8; Amos 8:5-6), oppression of orphans and widows even to the making of slaves (Amos 8:4, 8). That, of course, meant that religious conditions were terrible too. When men use their prosperity to build fortunes far beyond what they can use, build huge houses just to show their exalted place, etc., then you can know that God is taking a secondary place in their lives. I say that not to condemn anyone but to make every one of us think. Is God's will or my position most important to me? May all of us answer that question rightly!

VOICES from the FIELDS

"The Field is the World"

Joy Garrett

Ruwa, Zimbabwe

October 19, 1989

On Monday, October 16, we received the title deeds to Waterfalls church. Having almost lost their building, the congregation there is now a relieved and happy one. It is growing. Five were baptized at the end of August (4 teenagers and one older man whose family were members). They are doing the cleaning of the church building and gardening of the grounds. We have regular monthly business meetings where all members find out what is going on. The evangelists take turns filling the pulpit until the time when some members develop into lay preachers.

Saturday afternoon we took a truck full of Ruwa church members to Waterfalls for the regular monthly Bible Class. There was no one left around the house. When we returned at 5:30 p.m., we discovered two windows broken and later saw that the front door was damaged, two of the four hinge pins were missing, and the outside door handle stolen. "Beware" was scratched on the top half of the door. Because of burglar bars they failed to force an entry. They reached their arm in the office window and stole a calculator, scissors and a stapler off Bob's desk and six "Words of Life" tapes through the livingroom window.

Sunday, the 15th, we visited Zengeza for the first time since we have returned. They are meeting in a school classroom. The noise from four other church groups also using the school was very distracting. We have applied to the government for a church site here.

Another place needing a building is the congregation at the new township Kuwadzana. It appears we will get a favorable reply to our request for a site here. Pray for the outreach of the church with new mission points. There are 17 congregations in and around Harare.

About the Nakaharas:

Japan

November, 1989

We would like to give you an update on the *Nakaharas*. First, the work on the new buildings in Shizuoka City is making progress. Teruko has moved into a temporary apartment nearby so that the present facilities could be torn down. A concrete slab and foundation have been completed and work is now beginning on the new structure. Living accommodations for the *Nakaharas* will be on the first floor while worship and teaching activities will be on the second floor and part of the attic. Completion dates have been delayed until late February or March because of some delays in the arrival of the carpenters.

On October 7, 1989, I had the privilege of assisting in the wedding of Stephanie Nakahara and John Myers in Wheaton, Illinois near Chicago. They plan to make their home in the Chicago area. Teruko was able to be present. There was some concern for a while that she was not going to be able to come due to a serious physical problem she had during most of September. A blood clot developed in her leg and almost paralyzed one side of her body before the doctors could determine the cause of the problem. She is now feeling better and was able to make the trip for the wedding despite some discomfort.

—Bob M. Yarbrough, Treasurer Nakahara Mission Fund, Dallas

Robert S. Johnson

P. O. Box 82, Zebulon, GA 30295

December 6, 1989

Our plans for a new assignment in Mozambique, Africa, are still progressing. Corinne is taking some required educational courses to renew her Teacher's Certificate. There is a strong possibility for Corinne to minister in Mozambique as a teacher in the International School. This school, as all schools in Mozambique, is run by the government. As well as an opportunity for ministry, a teaching position with the government could contribute to our well being and the advancement of InterVarsity work in Mozambique. Next spring Corinne plans to interview for her teaching job. We ask you to pray with us for God, according to His will, to open this door. I am enrolled to continue another phase of clinical pastoral education in January.

I had hoped to drive my car back from Brazil last fall, but with the trouble in Columbia, Panama, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, the Lord knew that I shouldn't. My Brazil ministry started over 31 years ago.

We are excited about our new assignment in Mozambique and ask that you pray regarding the many details of relocating in a new country—visas, housing, transportation—and the student work we will be doing—contacts, new plans, working relationships. We expect the cost of living to be greater in Mozambique. Most food has to be imported. Medical treatment, beyond the most elementary, will have to be done out of the country. International travel will be twice that to Brazil. Educational responsibilities for our family have increased.

Crystal Hardin

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

December 1989

Ted is very concerned with trying to help those whose lives we touch to improve economically. He is trying to help some of the

younger ones get more education, and some of the older ones to save their money and purchase land. He would love to start a technical school for the neighborhood in the evenings at the Pinares school (where we teach). There are also some people interested in a Christian college. One of the administrators of a Honduran Christian school was talking to us just last night about the problem that there are no Christian schools to train teachers. They are all indoctrinated with humanism in the university and don't even know the difference.

Our family is doing well, although we are experiencing loss of some close friends this year who are returning to the U.S. That is one of the difficulties of this type of work, I guess. Several teachers are leaving. We are trying to cut the size of the staff in the high school, so may not be hiring too many. But I know we'll need some, so be on the lookout for any promising young teachers.

The 1990's – What May We Expect?

Part 2

Robert Shank

Israel

What is the agenda for Israel in the unfolding of the scenario presented last month? Let us rerun the scenario with Israel as the principal concern. For now, the Arab bloc will continue to wage diplomatic, economic, propaganda, and terrorist warfare against Israel while increasing their already massive military establishment aimed at the little nation. In the near future, impatient at having failed to achieve through *intifada* (PLO controlled and financed by \$600 million a year from Arab nations) their objective of severely reducing Israel's territory to cripple her defense capability in preparation for eventual destruction of the little nation, the Arab bloc will again resort to military attack—the sixth time since Israel became a nation in the Land in May 1948. This next time the Arab nations will lose, not just the war, but everything. Israel “will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place” (v. 6, Zech. 12:1-9, see my article “Israel: God's Firepot in a Woodpile,” *Word and Work*, Oct., Nov. 1988). With their weaponry destroyed, their cities devastated, and their populations decimated, the Arab bloc's threat to Israel will be forever ended. The world will be shocked by the fury and violence of little Israel (what else could she do, given the situation confronting her?).

Under the initiative of the Leader of the new United States of Europe, a treaty will be negotiated (the “covenant” of Dan. 9:27), with all nations concurring. A portion of the Land will be given to the Palestianians (Dan. 11:39). Israel's right to be a nation secure in the Land will be guaranteed, but she will be required to dismantle her military establishment (a reaction to the horrendous wipe-out of surrounding nations), making her dependent on her new “benefactor,” the Leader of the West bloc (U.S. of Europe). (When Gog invades

Israel at the end of the 70th Week, Israel will be "a land of unwallled villages . . . without walls and without gates and bars," Ezek. 38:11.) A temple will be built on Mount Zion on the exact location of Solomon's temple (without disturbing the Dome of the Rock or the Al Aska Mosque), and temple worship will be resumed, including the Mosaic sacrificial system (Rev. 11:1, 2). At mid-point of Israel's 70th Week of years (Dan. 9:24-27), the Leader (Antichrist) will "put an end to sacrifice and offering" (v. 27) and will appropriate the temple as the center of his New World Religion, proclaiming himself God (2 Thess. 2:1-12) and forbidding all other religion, demanding worship for himself and for "the dragon," Satan (Rev. 13:4-18). Many Jews will accept the Leader as Messiah-God (John 5:43), as will the great masses of Gentiles. But the God-fearing of Israel will not be deceived and will remain faithful, though they will suffer great persecution. Protected in the providence of God (Rev. 12), the faithful will await the coming of Messiah.

Near the end of the 70th Week (the end of the age and of "the times of the Gentiles," Luke 21:24), "the king of the South" will attack Antichrist and "the king of the North" ("Gog" of Ezek. 38 & 39) will come against him with great armies and fleets, sweeping through the Middle East and into Israel, God's "Beautiful Land" (Dan. 11:40-45). Antichrist, by covenant Israel's "protector," will flee. At long last Russia will conquer little Israel (which she has failed to do in several attempts through her surrogates Syria and other Arab nations, which in their coming sixth attempt to take Israel will all be "consumed"). After a short time, from his power base in Europe Antichrist will move against Gog, together with "the kings from the East." The confrontation almost immediately will escalate into a nuclear holocaust engulfing the world—Armageddon. Gog, Antichrist, and all their ungodly hordes and followers will meet with swift dispatch at the coming of Messiah in righteous judgment for the nations (Rev. 19:11-21). Special attention will be given to the enemies of God and Israel in the Land (Ezek. 38:21 - 39:6; Isa. 63:1-6; 34:1-8). Messiah will bring deliverance for the faithful of Israel who have prayed for his coming and prepared their hearts to receive him (Mt. 23:39; Hos. 5:14 - 6:3; Zech. 12:10-13). Jesus will then begin his glorious reign over Israel and all nations to the ends of the earth (Ps. 2:6-8; Zech. 9:10; Ps. 72:8-11, 17; Isa. 2:1-4; Rev. 19:15; 20:4-6; 2:25-29). "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

The Church

The departure of many from the faith, already far advanced, will continue (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4). In his description of signs of the end of the age and his soon coming, Jesus said, "Because wickedness will abound, the love of most [NIV, Gk. *ton pollon*, "the many"—the majority of Christ's followers] will grow cold, but he who endures to the end will be saved" (Mt. 24:12, 13). I see no indication in the NT of a great last-hour revival in the church or of any "worldwide triumph of the gospel" before the coming of Jesus, though there may be substantial ingatherings locally, principally in areas where the gospel has not been long preached and

where people have less of this world's goods than in affluent societies. There will indeed be a great end-time gospel harvest (as we will consider later), but not by the church. The influence of the church will deteriorate rapidly in days to come, and opposition and attacks against the church will increase, becoming more open, bold, and vehement, including violence against church property and Christians. In the face of growing persecution, the principal concern will be to encourage as many as possible to remain faithful until Jesus comes for the church (1 Thess. 4:15-18; 5:9-11, 4-8; Heb. 10:23-25).

What of the non-instrumental amillennial "churches of Christ" (as they choose to denominate themselves, and there is nothing wrong about that.) My expectation is that they will continue to reject the eschatological stance of the early churches. Church historians are unanimous in their affirmation that the apostolic churches were premillennial, that until the third century churches remained universally premillennial, and that not until the fifth century (after the death of Augustine, A.D. 430) did the preponderance of the churches abandon the realistic premillennial eschatology of the apostolic and early churches in favor of the new Alexandrian allegorical eschatology of amillennialism. My expectation is that the *a cappella* amillennial churches of Christ will continue greatly concerned to be like the early churches in their custom of *a cappella* music in worship (and there is nothing wrong about that), but (with possibly some exceptions) in the area of eschatology they will continue to choose to be totally unlike the apostolic and early-centuries churches, preferring instead to continue in the stance of the post-Augustinian churches. My expectation also is that, in the face of all the growing evidence in the world scene of the soon coming of Jesus, they will in the main continue to "sleep in" as long as possible as the Day approaches.

A Great End-Time Kingdom Harvest

Scripture indicates a great end-time gathering into the kingdom to occur in the Tribulation (in the early part, I believe). God's special agents in the great harvest will be 144,000 "servants of our God" whom he will choose from the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation chapter 7).

I believe "the woman" of Revelation 12 is the God-fearing faithful remnant of physical Israel which in all generations has kept the nation viable for the fulfillment of God's purpose and program of redemption for humanity as it relates to the role of Israel as a nation. From this faithful remnant came Messiah Jesus (Rev. 12:1, 2, 5; Rom. 9:5), virgin-born of Mary of Nazareth, of the tribe of Judah and the House of David. The dragon (Satan) failed in his attempt to devour the male Child in the days of his First Advent, and the Child (having completed his redemptive mission) "was caught up to God and to his throne" (Rev. 12:3-5). The Child is yet to "rule all nations with a rode of iron" when he returns to earth in righteous judgment (Rev. 12:5; 19:11-15; 2:25-29). At the beginning of the final three and a half years of "the times of the Gentiles" (which is also the latter half of the 70th Week and the time of "the tribulation, the great," Rev. 7:14, the Gk. text is emphatic), the dragon and his angels (those not

already in detention awaiting judgment, Jude 6) will be “cast to the earth,” and Satan will be denied further opportunity to accuse the brethren before God in heaven (Rev. 12:7-12). The dragon then will intensify his fury and rage against the woman, who will be providentially protected by God (vs. 6, 13-17).

Special mention is made (v. 17) of a particular segment of the Woman’s children, described as “the rest of her offspring, who [in contrast with the main body of her children, not only] keep the commandments of God [but also] hold the testimony of Jesus.” These faithful children of the Woman will retain their religious identity as Jews, “keeping the commandments of God” (Mosaic law and customs) in worship and daily life, but also “holding the testimony of Jesus” in their faith in him as the promised Messiah. These are Tribulation-days “saints who keep the commandments of God and the faith in Jesus” (Rev. 14:12, Gk. objective genitive). They are not part of the church, but are children of the Woman.

Included among these end-time “rest of the offspring” of the Woman who “hold the testimony of Jesus” will be the 144,000 “servants of our God” whom God will choose from the twelve tribes of Israel and “seal” for special service—the final preaching of “the gospel of the kingdom . . . to all the nations” before the end of the age and coming of Messiah in judgment can occur (Mt. 24:14; Rev. 14:1-7). The harvest of the gospel labors of the 144,000 will be “a great multitude no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language,” who will rejoice before God and the Lamb in heaven, having “come out of the great tribulation, and having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (vs. 9, 14 of Rev. 7:9-17). There will indeed be a great end-of-the-age kingdom harvest, reaped in the days of the Tribulation—not by the church, but by the 144,000 special “servants of our God,” chosen and sealed from among the faithful “rest of the offspring” of the Woman, “who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.”

In August, six orthodox Senior Rabbis in Israel spent part of a day at a kibbutz operated by “Messianic Jews” who believe in Jesus, searching the Scriptures concerning the Messiah. All six left the conference fully persuaded that Jesus is indeed the Messiah and rejoicing in their new understanding and faith. They video taped two hours of the dialogue, which they are sharing with other orthodox Rabbis in Israel. The number of faithful Jews who now believe that Jesus is the Messiah is growing rapidly, a sure sign that the hour is late and Jesus is coming soon. The final words addressed by Jesus to the nation Israel, spoken just before he left the Temple Mount for the last time during the days of his First Advent, were, “You will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Mt. 23:39). The time when Jerusalem will again hail Jesus with this great Messianic acclamation (Ps. 118:26; Mt. 21:9), and this next time with unshakeable final certainty, is drawing very near. Messiah is coming, and soon.

(Author’s note: I am sorry that demands on my time in recent weeks were so heavy that it was not possible to complete the article for this issue. In the next issue of the Word and Work, the article will conclude with a consideration

of my expectation of the soon coming of Messiah Jesus to reign over the nations, and consideration of some other observations.)

(Additional note by the editor: Another possible interpretation of "the rest of the woman's offspring," Rev. 12:17. Some Bible students believe this group represents the church, disciples of the Lord. G. R. Crow writes, "In a very real sense the Church has sprung from Israel. . . . In any case, if the woman is Israel the seed of the woman must be other than Israel, and the Church is a reasonable possibility." See Gal. 3:7, 29. And F. F. Bruce observes, "That Christians are meant is shown by the fact that they not only obey God's commandments but also hold to the testimony of Jesus—the very activity for which John was in exile (Rev. 1:9; cf. 19:10)." I recommend you keep in mind this interpretation as a possibility, along with the one presented by brother Shank.—A.V.W.)

TEACH THE BIBLE BETTER

What Keeps S. S. Teachers Teaching?

"I teach because it's good for my marriage," said Shelly Morgan, a kindergarten teacher from Houston, Texas. She and her husband Derryl team teach. "I talk and he, the quiet one, sits in class and holds the kids who don't have fathers. He's a daddy figure for them—a gentle lover. He'll put his arm around a child and say, 'You did a good job,' and the boy will beam.

"On the drive home from church, Derryl always lets me know how proud he is of me and how special it is to be married to someone who loves to teach the way I do. His affirmation stimulates my spiritual growth.

"I do love teaching. Sometimes I'll wake up in the middle of Saturday night with an idea and I'll get up and work it out. I can't wait until morning so I can tell my husband. I know he'll say, 'Shelly, I love you.'"

Jon Arvin is a senior high teacher from Plainfield, Indiana. "I teach," he said, "because the pay's so good! Just kidding—but on another level I'm not. It was a terrible Sunday in my high school class a couple of months ago—kids didn't hear a word I said. They chatted. They showed wallet pictures. I left feeling useless. Then recently one of those 'non-listeners' told me, 'Because of you I'm seriously thinking about Christ.' Yes, the pay's pretty good!"

Oleta Lovel teaches older elementary children in Hurst, Texas. When problem child Keith brought straight pins to her class and started sticking the girls, it was the last straw. She took the eleven-year-old boy aside and began her lecture: "You will not act like this!"

Years passed. Keith, now a junior in high school, came up to her one Sunday. He said, "I want you to know how sorry I am for acting the way I did." Oleta had no idea what he was talking about.

"You remember," he explained. "Sixth grade. You turned my life around by caring enough to discipline me."

The experience was an affirmation to Oleta: "Just about the time I feel I have used up my teaching resources, something positive happens to show me that the Spirit has worked through me—and I'm ready to keep going."

And so are over four million other Sunday school teachers who are committed to teaching week after week.

—David C. Cook Publishing Co.

GOD'S POWER TODAY:

Twelve Red Tomatoes

Mrs. Chas. E. Cowman

As we read the Gospels we catch glimpses of the way our Lord revealed Himself to His own during His earthly life. On the Emmaus road, to His two tempted followers who constrained Him to tarry with them, "he was known to them in the breaking of the bread."

After His disciples had "toiled all night and taken nothing," He bade them, "let down your nets for a draught." When John saw the net full to the breaking, his eyes were opened and he cried out, "*It is the Lord.*" They knew Him.

This happened when He was still upon earth. Have we ever had such a manifestation of Him that we have cried out, "This is none other than the living Christ?"

It happened on "this wise" in the year 1901, in Tokyo, Japan. We were new missionaries, and quite untrained in the life of faith. Our Lord had bidden us forsake and leave all to follow Him; and He bade us come to the mission field "without purse or script." He placed us in the School of Faith for which we shall praise Him throughout an endless eternity. We were compelled to learn by practical experience, not from books or hearsay, that "My God shall supply all your need." We had heard "by hearing of the ear" that He said, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine," but we had to learn that we were His heirs, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

Mr. Moody said, at the close of his wonderful life, that he had just discovered the truth of these words, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Wonderful discovery! It seemed rather easy to trust God for our own needs and those of our students and for the work to which He had called us, but there was always a test when guests arrived and we sat down to scanty fare. Naturally a housewife likes to have a well-filled table for visitors. Charles L. Stalker, one of God's choice servants, was sent to us. He had been on a missionary tour of the world and had traveled from India to Japan, arriving in Tokyo, our home, quite ill from the effects of Indian fever. It was in August when the thermometer daily registered one hundred and above.

What food would tempt a sick man's appetite, was the question revolving itself in our mind. We asked him and he replied, "I want nothing but some fresh tomatoes." The promise was given that he should have some for his supper.

In our home, as a helper, was a young girl who had been recently saved from heathenism and idol worship. I asked her to go to the

market and purchase tomatoes for our visitor who was ill. She took the order very thoughtfully but remarked, "I fear there are none to be found." However, she started out, the little wicker basket on her arm. In the course of an hour she returned. "I can find no tomatoes. *They are not!*" Again I bade her go forth searching in every market along a very long street, but again she returned, placed her empty basket down on the table, and burst into a flood of tears.

Her countenance was troubled, but she said, "Let us ask the living God to send them!" Down upon her knees she went and began to pray. It was in the kitchen beside an old stove, and the scene is yet a fresh memory. She prayed a simple prayer, telling God that one of His children had been sent to us and that he wished to have *tomatoes* for his supper. She *asked* and *believed*. Was I believing? What about my faith? A conflict was raging, a veritable storm! Honestly I was afraid, for *IF* no answer came what would this young believer do? Lose faith? My own unbelieving heart was searched through and through!

Five o'clock came, then six, then half past six—time for our evening meal. She calmly set the table, placing an extra chair for the visitor. My own heart was fainting. Harken! The gate bell is ringing. A young man is coming up the walk. He is now entering the house, a lad whom I had been teaching a few sentences of my mother tongue. He brought a gift and it was all wrapped up nicely in a "furoshiki," a cloth resembling a large handkerchief. His eyes were beaming and this is what he said as he produced the gift: "My Uncle is a gardener and he has been experimenting with some American seeds. He planted them in the springtime and these are the results. I know not what you call them." Opening the bag he brought forth its contents—*twelve large beautiful red tomatoes*.

And it was on this wise that Jesus revealed Himself to my unbelieving heart in the month of August, 1901, in Tokyo, Japan.

NEWS AND NOTES

IMPORTANT DATES in 1990

- Mark these in your calendars.
- Feb. 23 - 24, 16th Annual Tell City - Lilly Dale Workshop, at Tell City this year. See inside back cover.
- March 4, 4:00 p.m. Harold Morris, author of *Twice Pardoned*, will speak at Freedom Hall in Louisville. Good for young people. For more info. call 502-587-1746.
- Mar. 15 - 16, annual Lectureship of the School of Biblical Studies, Louisville. Theme: *Effective Churches*. Speakers: Julius Hovan, Joe Ellis, Sam Winger.

Aug. 6 - 9, 43rd Louisville Fellowship Week. Theme: "Bind Us Together, Lord."

Oct. 19 - 20, Belmont Church of Winchester, Ky.—Missions Conference, "Doors of Opportunity, 1990." This year home missions will be emphasized, along with foreign missions.

Nov. 12 - 15, Louisiana Fellowship Week, Glenmora, La.

Eastern Hills Church of Christ: Our present minister, Billy Jack Smith, has expressed to the elders that he wishes to retire January 31, 1990. We have been in much prayer about

this. Please announce in W & W: Eastern Hills Church of Christ is searching for a full time minister. Please send resumé to 1710 Wynn Joyce Road, Garland, Texas 75043.

—Bill Spurlock, Elder

Highland Church of Christ, Louisville

On December 31, I will finish my 39th year as minister of the Highland Church of Christ. Dwight Thomas, who has been my co-minister for several years, will take over as minister, and after school is out, he will move to 1267 Bardstown Road (The House Next Door to the church). Jack Blaes and I will continue, with Dwight, to be elders.

—Ernest Lyon

PRAY FOR IRENE ALLEN

Several recent phone calls from Alaska underscore the serious physical condition of Irene Allen in Eagle River. She has been having terrific pains in her legs and shoulders, and their cause baffles the doctors. Winston too has not been well lately.

LATEST MISSIONARY PRAYER LIST AVAILABLE

If you still don't have the prayer-booklet for missionaries published by Victor Broaddus in Nov. '89, copies are still available. Contact him at P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555; or at 606-269-1312. The booklet gives information & specific requests of various workers in various parts of the world: from Africa to the Solomon Islands, from Israel to Hong Kong. It also tells of various support ministries, and of prospective missionaries hoping to go out in the 90's.

Good News From the Jennings Church, Louisiana: During Oct. and Nov. the Lord added to our number—6 precious converts.

Our good works included fruit baskets for the elderly and shut-ins, Bibles to Maple Manor Children's Division, Bibles for our pews, Bible study books for a beloved friend and minister, Guest House (nursing home) services every 2nd Sunday, Six of 9 classrooms repainted and have new bulletin boards, Donations of books, etc. to Hathaway High School which recently burned.

Our planning and learning activities included Teacher Quarterly meeting Nov. 2, Elders and Deacons session Nov. 7, Ladies Day in Denham Springs

with Mae Broaddus and others, Nov. 11, Central La. Fellowship, Glenmora, Nov. 13-16, Teacher's Workshop in Alexandria, by Glenn Baber, Oct. 28.

Our fun activities included costume skate party for families, Oct. 30, Youth Retreat at CYE, Nov. 17-19, gumbo supper in Fellowship Room, Nov. 29.

Manila: World Mission Leaders Meet

More than 35,000 missionaries from third world nations are serving in the task of world evangelization, according to Wendell Broom, professor emeritus of missions at Abilene Christian University. That number is rapidly increasing, said Broom.

"Most of us have always thought that if the western, Caucasian world didn't evangelize the world, it wouldn't be done. We discovered something quite different," he said.

Broom, along with seven other representatives from the church of Christ, attended a July world conference on missions in Manila, Philippines. The Lausanne II Conference was attended by 4,000 church leaders from 191 nations, including the U.S.S.R. and China. Forty-seven workshops and three major addresses were conducted daily for the participants.

Broom said the conference gave him a "much more comprehensive view of the world missions movement of which we are a part." Associating with church leaders from around the world made him feel more optimistic about succeeding with the task of world evangelism.

"It also gave us an emotional kick to come home and get the job done," said Broom, who does mission work in Nigeria each year.

"I would like to see more of our international churches involved in sending out workers," he said.

The long-time missionary said the conservative, evangelical conference placed a strong emphasis on the role of the local church in training and financing missionaries, mobilization of members for missions and the authority of the Bible.

"It was a very powerful 10 days," said Broom. Listening to stories from Chinese church leaders who had spent 20 years in prison was most interesting, Broom said.

—from Christian Chronicle

Continued inside back cover

Our Changing World—and IMAGE

"Two principal communist nations comprise more than one-fourth of the great commission in our generation, and they are in turmoil. The issue in Gorbachev's USSR and Deng's China is different than ever before. Freedom is the issue.

"... Enormous change will rewrite the ways of the world. Burma has renamed herself. Hong Kong is to be returned to the People's Republic of China. Europe is moving toward Federation. India's population will surpass that of China in the next 25 years. By the year 2000 there will be 20 cities in the world with 10 million or more population, and 17 of those will be in developing nations. We are on the brink of an era when more 'Christians' will speak Spanish than any other language..."

—L. Wesley Jones, in *Image* magazine (*Image* is a good magazine representing those among "mainline" Churches of Christ who appreciate the grace of God and are fed up with legalism and sectarianism. Rather than adhering to some party line, it shows an open mind toward other believers and their ideas. Write for a sample copy, or subscribe @ \$15. *IMAGE*, 115 Warren Drive, Suite D, W. Monroe, LA 71291-7256.)

Southeast Church of Christ, Jefferson-town, Kentucky

Our choir did a fantastic job in the presentation of Christmas Cantata "Call His Name Jesus." We give thanks for Bonnie Colwick and all the singers. Also we praise God for the fine singing of Chad Colwick, Tim Rowe, David and Chris Wood at the J-town Prayer Breakfast. About 30 people from Southeast attended.

Tell City, Indiana

Coin Bank: The total amount collected for the Maple Manor Children's Division through the coin banks was \$194. May God bless those who contributed. Watch Night: Our joint missionary meeting and watch night service was held on December 31st at Lilly Dale. Special speakers were Bill Smallwood and Bob Morrow.

Johnson City, Tenn.:

CHRISTMAS CARD... A Christmas Card Poster has been put on the bulletin board. Rather than sending cards to those in the church you see regularly, you may wish to sign the poster,

donate the funds you would spend on cards and postage (use box below poster), and thus exchange greetings in this way. The money is to be sent to Children's Division of Maple Manor. Of course this is strictly voluntary.

[A good idea. Others may want to do this next Dec.—Editor]

Linton, Ind.

During the year of 1989 there were 14 responses to the Lord's invitation. Seven for rededication and membership, six for prayer & rededication, and 1 for baptism. Also during this year we had 7 of our number to depart this life to be with the Lord. Your minister assisted or conducted a total of 20 funerals during 1989 (17 locally and 3 in Perry County).

It has been very encouraging to see many of you grow stronger in faith and in faithfulness to the Lord and His church.

—Harry Coultas

Cramer & Hanover Church, Lexington:

Beginning this Wednesday night... with our young teen girls will be a series of lessons on Sex Respect. Sis. Hamilton is coordinating this study and has invited the mothers of these girls to be here Wednesday night. It is good to see Titus 2:4 come to life as our "young women" are being trained.

"TEN REASONS WHY I NEVER WASH" . . .

Thinking of the time-worn excuses people give, a preacher wrote an article for his church bulletin using the above title. Some of his reasons were:

"I was made to wash as a child."
"People who wash are hypocrites... they think they are cleaner than other people."

"There are so many different kinds of soap, I never could decide which one was right."

"I used to wash, but it got boring so I quit."

"I still wash on special occasions, like Christmas and Easter."

"I'm still young... when I'm older and have got a bit dirtier I might start washing."

"People who make soap are only after your money."

Perhaps you'll agree: Excuses For Not Going to Church **Just Don't Wash!**

—by way of Gallatin Tenn. bulletin

