

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



# *The Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

MAY, 1996

**I LOVE YOU**  
(But Sometimes It's Hard)

**GOD LOVES ME**  
(Is That Hard For Him?)

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Also,  
Are Conditions Getting **BETTER** or **WORSE?**

# 49th LOUISVILLE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WEEK

August 5-8, 1996

## "MAKING CONNECTION WITH THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH"

### MONDAY, AUGUST 5

7:30 "Am I Buying Satan's Lie?" --Earl Mullins, Sr.

### TUESDAY, AUGUST 6

9:00 "Understanding The Non-Believer" --Earl Mullins, Sr.

10:20 "Preparing For Personal Soul Winning" --Marvin Phillips

11:20 "Shall We Go Forward Or Backward?" --Joseph Shulam

1:15 "Becoming A Contagious Christian" --Julius Hovan

7:30 "My Personal Responsibility To The Lost" --Marvin Phillips

### WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7

9:00 "What Shall We Do Now:?" --Joseph Shulam

10:20 "Lifestyle Evangelism" --Earl Mullins, Jr.

11:20 "Conversational Evangelism" --Julius Hovan

1:15 "Attitudes That Make Soul Winners" --Marvin Phillips

7:30 "Do I Really Believe The World Is Lost" --Julius Hovan

### THURSDAY, AUGUST 8

9:00 "The Church The Lord Blesses" --Marvin Phillips

10:20 "Going Through The Open Door At The  
End Of The Age With Israel As A Key" --Joseph Shulam

11:20 "The Place Of Prayer" --Julius Hovan

1:15 "Congregational Involvement In Evangelism  
Using Both Traditional and Non-Traditional  
Methods" --Earl Mullins, Jr.

7:30 "Jerusalem, Judea, The World; What Does  
It Mean Evangelistically To Restore The  
First Century Church?" --Joseph Shulam

**DAY SESSIONS: Portland Church of Christ,  
2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212**

**NIGHT SESSIONS: Sellersburg Church of Christ  
211 South New Albany St., Sellersburg IN 47172**

**Prayer time daily at 9:45 am. Lunch daily at 12:05.**

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

**Alex V. Wilson, Editor**

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*As the Editor sees it--*

# ARE CONDITIONS GETTING BETTER OR WORSE?

Alex V. Wilson

Drugs. Pornography. Inner-city poverty and violence. Divorce. Racism. Abortion. Flaunting and promoting of homosexual lifestyle. Christian views and values barred from many public places. It's easy to see our land is plunging downhill at a devastating rate. Our society is falling apart in many ways.

James Dobson of **Focus on the Family** spelled out this moral free-fall in a chilling newsletter earlier this year. He showed how the music of our culture has drastically changed in a few decades. "The most popular sing in the U.S. in 1953 was sung by Eddie Fisher and was titled 'Oh! My Papa.'" Maybe you remember how it started--"Oh, my papa, to me he was so wonderful. Oh, my papa, to me he was so good . . . ." But listen as Dobson tells more about songs regarding parents:

The Doors released a song in 1968 entitled "The End," in which Jim Morrison fantasized about killing his father . . . . In 1984, Twisted Sister released "We're Not Gonna Take It," which referred to a father as a "disgusting slob" who was "worthless and weak." Then he was blasted out the window of a second-story apartment. This theme of killing parents showed up regularly in the decade of the '80s. A group called Suicidal Tendencies released a recording in 1983 called "I Saw Your Mommy." [I'll spare you having to read its gory lyrics.--AVW] . . . . For sheer banality, nothing yet produced can match "Momma's Gotta Die Tonight," by Body Count. The album sold 500,000 copies and featured its wretched lyrics on the CD jacket. Most of them are unfit to quote here . . . . My point is that the most popular music or our culture went from the inspiration of "Oh! My Papa" to the horrors of "Momma's Gotta Die Tonight" in scarcely more than a generation.

The evidence presented above surely documents the deepening degradation of our times. But WAIT--that's not the whole story. As Dickens wrote in **A Tale of Two Cities**, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Our Lord is moving powerfully even in these dark days, and we dare not ignore His mighty acts. We need not sit glumly and passively, bemoaning how bad everything has become. As the psalmist said, ". . . . Tell of the power of [God's] awesome works, and I will proclaim [His] great deeds" (145:6).

## For Instance

1. **PROMISE KEEPERS** and other men's Christian movements: Promise Keepers began in 1990 as 72 men dreamed and prayed about strengthening Christian fellows to live for the Lord in their homes, churches, jobs and communities. 4,000 men gathered in '91; 22,000 in

92; and 50,000 in '93--all in Colorado. During 1994 over 270,000 men attended conferences in 7 cities, and last year more than 720,000 met in 13 cities around the U.S.!

I know that numbers in themselves don't prove a movement is from God. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons can draw immense crowds too. But PK as a movement is Bible-based and Christ-centered. I attended the PK pastor's conference in Atlanta in February, and was deeply encouraged. 42,000 preachers listening to God's Word, praising Him, praying, confessing, and renewing vows to the Lord. We were stirred by powerful preaching from men like Max Lucado (outstanding writer and Church of Christ minister), Chuck Swindoll (president of Dallas Seminary), Joseph Stowell (president of Moody Bible Institute), Tony Evans and E.V. Hill (leading black preachers, from Dallas and L.A.).

A PK leader clarified its theological stance: "We are not a nebulous, undefined movement. We are evangelicals, or those who believe and preach the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and was literally resurrected from death. We hold to the fundamentals of the historic Christian faith revealed in the Old and New Testaments--the holy, inspired Word of God." That is *not* a direct quote, but merely the essence of what he said in summarizing the approach of PK. Right after he spoke, Max Lucado preached on the spiritual unity we have in our Lord Jesus despite our differing opinions and methods. It was Biblical and exciting. "In faith, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things, love." Where did we hear that before? Barton Stone and Thomas and Alexander Campbell would have wept for joy. At least I did. Of course no movement of this size is perfect, and blemishes may appear here or there. But hey, folks, God is at work!

**2. BIBLE STUDY FELLOWSHIP and other women's Christian movements:** In 1952 a missionary lady, who'd recently had to leave China because of the Communist takeover, began a Bible class with five women. That class taught by Miss Wetherell Johnson mushroomed into the Bible Study Fellowship, with over 200,000 students meeting in over 880 classes in 25 countries. BSF requires daily in-depth Bible study, including writing answers to questions. Also weekly meetings to discuss the passages together. It is strictly non-denominational. No one is ever allowed to say, "My *church* teaches that this passage means . . ." or "My *preacher's* interpretation of this doctrine is . . ." --but only, "This *passage* seems to teach that . . ."

Other women's Bible study movements have sprung up also: "Precepts," and Neighborhood Bible Studies, etc. Many women have had their lives enriched through deeper Bible knowledge and application.

3. **CONCERNED WOMEN OF AMERICA** is another force for great good. It aims to promote Christian moral values in our government and society, and also to expose and oppose ungodly practices such as listed in our opening paragraph. Although our mostly humanistic mass media give far more attention to the extremist National Organization of Women than to the C.W.A., Beverly LaHaye has built up the latter till its membership *far outnumbers* that of the N.O.W.! You may or may not always agree with the C.W.A.'s stand on some matters, but its heart is in the right place.

4. **FOCUS ON THE FAMILY ministries**, led by James Dobson. This radio program is the most widely listened to in the world, thank God! As of 1994 it was aired 18,000 times on more than 4,500 facilities worldwide. Dr. Dobson, a child psychologist and Christian counselor, gives practical advice and inspiration on a variety of subjects related to families: marriage, parenting, health issues, spiritual and emotional growth, political matters, etc. But he also has produced very helpful books and videos. FOF also publishes magazines for various ages and interest-groups (such as single-parent families, school-teachers, all citizens, teens, pre-teens, etc.), instructional videos, children's adventure-videos, monthly church-bulletin inserts, etc. A ministry God has raised us for such a time as this.

5. **TRUE LOVE WAITS** is a widespread movement among Christian teens who pledge by God's power to keep themselves sexually pure waiting for marriage. Starting among Southern Baptists, it rapidly attracted hundreds of thousands (if not more) of youth from scores of Bible-loving church groups. Hey folks, God is working!

### **Evangelism and World Missions Too**

6. **BILLY GRAHAM WORLDWIDE TELECASTS:** Last year Billy Graham's gospel meetings in Puerto Rico were transmitted by satellite to lands all around the world. More people heard of Jesus the only Lord and Savior on that occasion than at any previous time in history . . . until April of this year! At that time an even farther-reaching telecast was made by Graham. It stretched out to 160 countries, in 48 languages. In many areas it was shown at primetime hours on major TV channels (in the U.S. alone, airtime was purchased on 250 stations). It is estimated that 1.5 billion people saw the telecast during the month.

We wish Billy Graham would say more about converts being buried with Christ in baptism. But we rejoice that he proclaims Christ crucified and the need to repent and trust Him. Some who counsel the converts, and many churches which receive them, of course teach that baptism was commanded by Christ in the Great Commission and practiced by the apostles. So let's rejoice that the Good News of salvation by God's grace and Christ's cross is being widely disseminated.

7. THE GCOWE '95!! Sad to say, many Christians have no idea what that means. But in Seoul, Korea from May 17-25, 1995 there occurred what some world missionary leaders have called "the most important global meeting in history," the Global Consultation on World Evangelization. 4,000 key evangelical missionary leaders met to pray, plan and prepare for carrying out the most extensive and intensive missions thrust since the church began. Ralph Winter, a major missionary statesman and strategist, wrote:

Before this event took place I said this would be the most important meeting in human history. The event itself, however, exceeded every hope and aspiration I ever had for it.

In a way, the most momentous event of the conference was not even planned: the pervasive, profound mood of confession and repentance between different national groups, bridging centuries of isolation and hatred--Arab and Jewish, Turkish and Armenian, Japanese and Korean.

The final Korean youth meeting brought out 75,000 young people (in the rain). And this was a student *mission* meeting!

**This is the only large global Christian mission conference that has ever had more than half of its participants from the former mission fields of the world.**

This was probably the most widely represented conference of its size ever held, Christian or non-Christian, with people from 186 countries.

You may wonder, after reading that quote, what all the excitement is about. Well, it's about the possibility of making the Gospel known and planting strong churches among all the thousands of people groups in the world before too many years pass. In other words, fulfilling the Great Commission! If that's not exciting to you, dear Christian friend, then what is?!

### Among Churches of Christ

I'd like to write a lot about this, too, but Mike Cope's article in this issue does the job very well. I'll add only this: The restoration movement Unity Forum XIII held in Louisville last November, plus the Pepperdine University Bible Lecturship I attended in April, were both very encouraging. A good spirit of love for Christ and one another, powerful preaching, and a desire to shed the former legalistic and divisive spirit--all this was widespread. As the Lord continues this spiritual renewal among us, He can use us more and more.

Of course none of these movements is perfect. And the problems listed in paragraph #1 still remain and must be faced up to. And many churches are dead or at least dwindling. There is still a vast need to pray for a God-sent revival, nothing less than a great spiritual awakening such as occurred at three earlier times in American history (and at

other times and places). We need to renew our own hearts and minds, and work to renew our congregations too. So let's do all this, spurred on by the fact that the Lord is already doing some incredibly wonderful things, here and around the world.

Two other articles in this issue carry on with the topic of this editorial. Be sure to read what Mike Cope and Howard Norton have to say. But first we move to our main theme this month -- on "the greatest thing in the world."

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## **Theme: GOD LOVES ME, I LOVE YOU**

*Serving others as a doorway to evangelism*

### **WHAT SEMINARY CAN'T TEACH**

Doug Nichols

While serving with Operation Mobilization in India in 1967, I spent several months in a TB sanitarium with tuberculosis. After finally being admitted into the sanitarium, I tried to give tracts to the patients, doctors, and nurses, but no one would take them. You could tell that they weren't really happy with me, a rich American (to them all Americans were rich), being in a government sanitarium. They didn't know that, serving with OM, I was as broke as they were!

I was quite discouraged with being sick, having everyone angry with me, not being able to witness because of the language barrier, and no one even bothering to take a tract or Gospel of John. The first few nights, I would wake around 2:00 a.m. coughing. One morning, as I was going through my coughing spell, I noticed one of the older (and certainly sicker) patients across the aisle trying to get out of bed. He would sit up on the edge of the bed and try to stand, but because of weakness would fall back into bed. I really didn't understand what was happening or what he was trying to do. He finally fell back into bed exhausted. I then heard him begin to cry softly.

The next morning I realized what the man had been trying to do. He was simply trying to get up and walk to the bathroom! Because of his sickness and extreme weakness he was not able to do this, and being so ill he simply went to the toilet in his bed. The next morning the stench in our ward was awful. Most of the other patients yelled insults at the man because of the smell. The nurses were extremely agitated and angry because they had to clean up the mess. They moved him roughly from side to side to take care of the problem. One of the nurses, in her anger, even slapped him. The man, terribly embarrassed, just curled up into a ball and wept.



The next night, also around 2:00 a.m., I awoke coughing. I noticed the man across the aisle sit up to again try to make his way to the wash-room. However, still being so weak, he fell back whimpering as the night before. I'm just like most of you. I don't like bad smells. I didn't want to become involved. I was sick myself. But before I realized what had happened, not knowing why I did it, I got out of my bed and went over to the old man. He was still crying and did not hear me approach. As I reached down and touched his shoulder, his eyes opened with a fearful questioning look. I simply smiled, put one arm under his neck, and my other arm under his legs, and picked him up.

Even though I was sick and weak, I was certainly stronger than he was. He was extremely light because of his old age and advanced TB. I walked down the hall to the washroom, which was really just a smelly, filthy, small room with a hole in the floor. I stood behind him with my arms under his arms, holding him so he could take care of himself. After he finished, I picked him up and carried him back to his bed. As I began to lay him down, with my head next to his, he kissed my cheek, smiled, and said something which I suppose was "thank you."

It was amazing what happened the next morning. One of the other patients, whom I didn't know, woke me around 4:00 a.m. with a steaming cup of delicious Indian tea. He then made motions with his hands (he knew no English) indicating he wanted a tract. As the sun came up, some other patients began to approach, motioning that they would also like one of the booklets I had tried to distribute before. Throughout the day, people came to me asking for the Gospel booklets. This included the nurses, the hospital interns, the doctors, until everybody in the hospital had a tract, booklet, or Gospel of John. Over the next few days, several indicated they trusted Christ as Savior as a result of reading the Good News!

What did it take to reach these people with the Good News of salvation in Christ? It certainly wasn't health. It definitely wasn't the ability to speak or to give an intellectually moving discourse. Health, and the ability to communicate sensitively to other cultures and peoples are all very important, but what did God use to open their hearts to the Gospel? I simply took an old man to the bathroom. Anyone could have done that!

[When Doug was a missionary in Manila, we knew him & worked together in various kinds of ministry. He always had a deep burden for the lost, especially those who are poor & homeless. He now heads **Action International Ministries**, P.O. Box 490, WA 98041.--AVW.]

*"Learning how to talk changed my life." Loving words stimulate loving lives.*

# Can We Talk

Tim Stafford

Words are powerful. Many people, if they take time, can think of wise words from a teacher, parent, or friend that made a great impact on their life. Many people can spotlight an encouraging word that lifted them at a very low time. Many people can also remember some searing sentence, the memory of which brings blushing shame even today, years later.

My mother was a great knitter. She never went to a meeting without her ball of yarn and a sweater-in-progress. At home she was forever holding up sections of a new work against my arms or chest or back, to see whether they would fit. Unfortunately, not all of her sweaters were triumphs. Often the size or shape or color was decidedly odd.

I do remember one outstanding creation, however. When I was in the seventh grade, she gave me for Christmas a bright red, cable-knit sweater, very distinctive and attractive. I proudly wore it to school, where a boy noticed it and looked it over critically.

"It looks like a girl's sweater," he said.

I never wore the sweater out of the house again.

Our words matter. The Book of Genesis portrays God creating the world by speaking. In a related way, we create the world we live in through our words. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we pay attention to our words--both those we intend and those that slip out when we are not paying attention. And we also need to be conscious of *how* we deliver the words we use. No matter how encouraging the actual words are, they will lose their positive values if accompanied by an uninterested voice or lack of eye contact. The way we talk to each other can build a world full of love and security, or a world of bitterness and anxiety.

Take a married couple. The man does not talk. To compensate, his wife talks too much. In particular, she shoots off her mouth about his mother. If you pressed him, he would admit that his mother is far from perfect. But he simply does not want to hear it all the time, especially from his wife. To him, the running down of his mother is like a dripping faucet. It is not any particular drip that kills him; it's the wearing effect of the whole thing.

She, on the other hand, is worn down by his silence. She wants to hear that her husband loves her and likes the way she looks. He does compliment her cooking, but that does not help. She knows she is a good cook. Her attractiveness is what she needs affirmed.

Her husband is not a sentimental person, and she knew that when she married him. She did *not* know how wearisome it would be. She is tired of taking the initiative. She wants him to bring a little romance to the marriage. For a long time she tried to wheedle it out of him, but she has given that up. He just won't listen to her needs, she says.

Can anyone help these two? A moralistic approach will not work; they both can give you nine yards of reasons why they are justified in their behavior. You could take a more psychological approach, trying to delve into their pasts. But there is no certainty you will ever get to the basis of why they behave as they do, or that they would be able to change their behavior if you did.

Without taking anything away from a moral approach or a psychological approach, I would suggest another way. It would help a great deal, I believe, if both would learn how to talk. The woman needs to learn to limit her critiques of her mother-in-law. The man needs to learn some ways of saying, "I love you," so his wife can hear it. Both of them need to learn new ways of bringing up sore subjects without starting fights that make everything worse. If they learned such skills, it might not put an end to all their troubles, but it would be a huge and helpful start. It would stop the bleeding and begin to let their love flow through.

Such training in talking you do not get at school. You get it--if you get it--at home. It is typically transmitted mother to daughter, father to son. Unfortunately, a lot of people miss out. Such training takes time, and it requires confidence on the part of the parents. If they themselves do not know how to talk, they cannot very well pass it on.

I am peculiarly, painfully aware of this need for training because I missed out on so much of it. I grew up in a wonderful family, but it was the kind of family where, if you thought someone's opinion was stupid, you said so. We had great debates around the kitchen table, my siblings, parents, and I. I learned how to think in a family, but I cannot say I learned to talk. I was well into my college years before I learned that telling someone that his favorite movie is incredibly dumb may hurt his feelings.

Perhaps this had more to do with my personal makeup than with my family makeup. I was shy, and often shy people retreat into themselves, unknowingly giving the impression of unfriendly aloofness. In college, I began to realize that other people's image of me did not

match my image of myself. Those who did not know me well saw me as stern, aloof, and judgmental. Nobody told me so directly. Once I began to catch on, however, I was hit by the message from all sides.

This pained me deeply, because it was not true. I knew what was inside me. I was as aloof as a puppy dog. I was soft-hearted, if anything. I cared about people. I craved friendship.

I began to try to rewrite my life. I began consciously to say nice things to people, to let them know that I appreciated and liked them. I tried to act warmly. I began to hold my tongue when I had something to say that might be construed as critical or snobbish.

And I hated it. It felt horribly unnatural. I despised having to watch my words, having to mull over every interaction to see whether I had handled it well and gotten my message across. Why couldn't I just be myself? I was, I suppose, a true child of the sixties: I believed that acting sincerely was enough. Now I felt that I was acting insincerely, putting on an act.

My changes did bring noticeably better results, though. People told me I was different. They told me I seemed warmer, happier. People opened up to me. People sought me out. I liked those differences. And I found that I got used to the act I was putting on. Over months and years it grew comfortable. Eventually, it became liberating. It became me.

For years, I have coached youth soccer. Most of the under-10 kids I get only know how to kick with their right foot. They may be fairly skilled at kicking with their right foot, but when they try to kick left-footed, they look incredibly uncoordinated. Usually they give a pitiful weak kick that dribbles the ball a few yards in front of them. Sometimes they miss the ball entirely and fall on their rears.

As their coach, I know that soccer players have to learn to use both feet. So I encourage them to use the "off" foot. There is no magic trick I can teach them. They just have to do it. If they do, they will get better at it, and one day they will feel as natural kicking with their "off" foot as they do with their primary foot. Learning to talk is the same way. Sometimes you have to make yourself uncomfortable, do things differently-- strange as that may feel--until you become comfortable again.

What worries people about such an approach is that it seems calculated and artificial. It seems phony. I am sure that it could be. This was not my experience, however. On the contrary, though it initially felt phony, it helped me develop far deeper and more authentic relationships with people.

When I learned how to stop putting people off with my seeming aloofness, when I learned how to say that I liked people and to show an interest in their lives, I began to make more free and open friendships. They, in turn, made me into a far more confident, friendly person--naturally. I can honestly say that learning how to talk changed my life. It enabled me to be myself.

At the same time I was changing the way I talked to people, I was studying with a teacher who was a genius at mining dumb comments for gold. I took his seminar in nineteenth-century theology, and I don't think I was the only student at sea among the Schleiermachers and Kierkegaards. Again and again, we made blundering stabs at the thoughtful questions Professor Irish put to us. Often I did not know what my fellow students were trying to say, and I was not sure they did, either.

But Professor Irish could somehow see a kernel of relevance in those answers, draw it out, and move the whole discussion along. He made us feel we had remarkable insight-- and when he guided our discussion, we did! I began to see that learning to talk has implications beyond just one-to-one interactions.

When people know how to talk, they are not the only beneficiaries. Society profits. What kind of world would it be if every classroom, every business conference, every committee, every school board meeting, and every legislative body were dominated by people who knew when and how to speak for the mutual edification of the group? I know this for sure: it would be a world where I would not hate meetings so much.

Jesus taught that our words reveal our true selves. He said: "For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him" (Matt. 12:34-35, NIV).

Our speech is never truly accidental. If you listen to someone talk for long enough, you will know what kind of person he or she is. Careless words may reveal more than carefully planned speeches. A mouth opens, and out pops a heart.

If you have ever tried to change your way of talking, you have realized this. Just try, for example, to eliminate harsh words. This does not sound all that difficult. But the unwanted words always crop up in the most unruly way. They rush out of your mouth without warning. Through the effort you will discover how much meanness is in your heart, for it keeps bubbling up. You will have to face not just your careless words, but yourself.

Or try to begin honestly praising someone whom you find hard to affirm. Why won't the words come out? Why is it such an effort simply to say, "I love you," or, "Your friendship is very important to me," or, "I really appreciated your work"? The reason can only be that, at heart, you are not an admiring and a giving person. To change your words, you must change your heart as well. This kind of metamorphosis requires prayer, meditation, the help of loved ones, and above all, the help of God.

But it also requires a recognition that changing your speech is not merely a superficial and outward activity. If it is not "acting nice." It goes to the heart. Your talk is a rudder by which you can steer your life.

Years after I became aware that the way we talk is vastly important, I met the woman who became my wife. Popie was (and is) the warmest person I had ever met. I liked her right away, and I wanted her to like me. She obviously did, and let me know it. But then, she let everyone know how she liked them. She was lavish with her affirmation.

Affirmation is only one way of talking, but it is an extremely important one. Popie's affirmation of others was extravagant. I saw that it made an extraordinary difference in her friends. They were different when she was around them, and they stayed different after she was gone.

I saw this occur in Karen, a woman with whom Popie shared a house. Karen was quiet, almost reclusive. A computer whiz, she loved to stay up all night reading science fiction novels. She was emotionally intense but not terribly easy to talk to. Yet Popie was constantly encouraging her. Karen was a person who easily could get overlooked, but Popie did not overlook her. She liked her--she made a point of liking her--and told her so.

Many years later, when Karen was happily married and mother to two delightful children, she called Popie one day to thank her for those affirmations, which had made a crucial difference in her life. I was not surprised. I had seen the difference in action. Under Popie's affirmation, Karen had gained confidence and warmth. She had become more relaxed, more herself, and as wonderful as Popie had always seen that she was. Popie affected lots of people that way. And what was her technique for influencing their lives so powerfully? She said encouraging things to them.

Seeing how Popie affected others (and me), I began to see words as very powerful tools. I had always wanted to be a powerful person. I never knew it was so possible. The key was as close as the words that came out of my mouth.

The Bible has much to say on this very subject. Many of the Proverbs concern the way we talk. They teach the skill of speaking well in everyday conversations. And the epistle of James states, "If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check." Perfect? Was this sheer hyperbole? I used to think so, until I looked again.

James underlined the thought with two comparisons: "When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a very small part of the body . . ." (3:2-5, NIV).

These metaphors suggest that we can control our lives by controlling our tongues. Even more startling, they imply that if we are able consistently to choose our words well, we can make our lives all that they are meant to be, and all that God wants them to be.

You cannot direct either a horse or a ship by pushing. They are too big and unwieldily. You must use--skillfully--small instruments of control. For horses, the bit. For ships, the rudder. For human lives, the tongue.

[From *Christianity Today* by permission. Copyright 1995.]

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*Love holds us accountable --*

## **SALVATION BY GRACE--JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO WORKS**

R. H. Boll, 1934

Some may wonder how it is that salvation is by grace but judgment according to each man's work. Yet so it stands. Salvation is by grace, wonderful and free; "not of works, lest any man should boast." But judgment is to "every man according to his works." Even the child of God, though he "cometh not into judgment," must stand "before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

The answer to the question comes out in a statement by Paul. In 1 Cor. 15:10 Paul says, "By the grace of God I am what I am." That is true of every Christian. It was signally true of Paul. Was there ever a man who was so evidently the creature of God's grace as Paul? Arrested in the midst of his mad campaign against the Lord, in the very act of guilt, without any possible claim or plea, the glory of the Lord Jesus shone upon him and he was appointed to be His minister and witness.

He was saved from the depths, as it were, by Christ's free mercy. Was ever God's grace so wonderful in the case of any sinner? By the grace of God he was what he was.

But then Paul tells us another thing--and that throws light on our question: "And the grace that was bestowed upon me was not in vain, for I labored more abundantly than they all," he goes on to say. If he had not labored the grace bestowed upon him would have been *in vain*, that is to say useless, to no purpose, wasted. The works then determine whether the grace bestowed upon a man was or was not bestowed in vain. Grace received, enters into the heart and springs up into a new life and a particular sort of works. That is why the works are the test and the basis of judgment. If the works are not there, the grace was bestowed in vain. The heart did not receive it. Like the seed in bad soil it found no true entrance and scope. But where faith works by love, there the grace of God has been operative. The works tell the tale.

### God's Grace Looking for Fruit

It is God's way to expect something, corresponding to the good He has bestowed on us, to spring up in our hearts and conduct. In the parable of the Unmerciful Servant, for example, after the servant's great debt of 20 million dollars was freely forgiven (although nothing of that sort had been previously stipulated) it was expected that the great kindness he had received from his lord, would bring forth a like kindness in him toward his fellow servants. "Thou wicked servant," his lord said to him when he heard of his unmerciful act, "I forgave thee all that debt because thou besoughtest me; shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow servant even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors" (Matt. 18:32,33). Had he not been the recipient of his lord's great mercy, the unmerciful servant's conduct toward his fellow servant would not have been blameworthy. It would then have been merely an ordinary lawful demand and transaction, though somewhat uncouthly enforced. But for a man to whom all had been granted and forgiven by the mercy of his lord, such action was wicked and intolerable.

God always looks upon it in this light. The good that has been done to you must bear its fruit in your life and in your dealings with your fellow men. "What do you more than others?" the Lord Jesus asked of his disciples. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Gentiles the same? And if ye do good to them than do good to you, what thank have ye? For even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? Even sinners lend to sinners to receive again as much." (Matt. 5:46, 47; Luke 6:33, 34.) And why should they do more than others? The answer is that so much has been done for them. If nothing comes of it, the Lord reckons that His grace was not appreciated,



not appropriated, not truly accepted in the heart. The fruit tells. Hence judgment is according to works--not according to the intrinsic merit of the works in themselves, but as indicative of the work of God's grace in the heart.

### What Do Ye More Than Others?

If a Christian wonders how he stands with God--here is an easy test: "What do you more than others?" What is there in your life and actions that is not found in the life of the ordinary, unsaved man? It is not a question of morality and integrity--that is common worldly virtue even. Nor a matter of common charity or philanthropy; the world has that also. But what do you more than others? If you love because God first loved you; if you forgive others even as God also in Christ forgave you; if you are kind to the unthankful and evil, as He is (and has been to you); if you do good to His servants because they are His servants, and extend goodness and mercy to human beings because they are dear to *Him* and as He also was gracious to you before you knew Him, when you were yet in your sins--these are not works of law by which a man strives to attain to salvation, but the fruit of God's mercy toward us, the response of our hearts to his grace; and they are proof that we are His, and that His grace was not bestowed in vain.

### "Not I"

Yet there is another thing to be observed. "His grace that was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all--." But here Paul stops, and another fact breaks in upon his mind: "--yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." He is conscious that even as a response to God's grace his work was not his after all. Another power was working in him. "I labor," he says elsewhere, "striving according to *his* working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col. 1:29). It is His grace, nay, it is He Himself--not indeed against my will, but influencing my will, that works in me. My good works, though they be the fruit of His grace toward me, are not mine: they are His work in me--as the vine that bears fruit through the branch. These works of faith and love are themselves a manifestation of His grace (unmerited favor) toward me, lest again I might boast.

Was it not the grace of God in the churches of Macedonia that prompted them out of the depth of their poverty to give so liberally for the saints at Jerusalem? It is His grace that prompts, that impels, that works in us mightily. And we must *work out* with fear and trembling the great work He *works in* us: "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). "Now the God of peace . . . make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever, Amen" (Heb. 13:20, 21).

*Needed: Love from Above*

## THE ONLY HOPE for UNITY

C. Leonard Allen

In 1848 John Winebrenner published a book entitled *History of All the Religious Denominations in the United States*. It consisted of statement of belief from 53 different American denominations. Among them was a treatment of the "Disciples of Christ" by Robert Richardson, associate editor of Alexander Campbell's journal the *Millennial Harbinger*.

Some readers found Winebrenner's book disturbing. One who did was John W. Nevin, a theologian in the German Reformed Church. After surveying the book's 53 groups, Nevin noted that most of the groups held one basic thing in common: the claim to possess "no creed but the Bible." This claim, he concluded, was the characteristic feature of American religion in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Such a phenomenon puzzled and disturbed Nevin. What should one think of this motley and cantankerous group of sects all claiming to follow nothing but the Bible? "If the Bible be at once so full a formulary of Christian doctrine and practice," he asked, "how does it come to pass that where men are left most free to use it this way . . . they are flung asunder so perpetually in their religious faith?"

On the one hand, people claimed to follow "no creed but the Bible" and promised unity on that foundation; yet on the other hand, such claims and promises seemed only to multiply denominations endlessly.

Behind this fragmentation lay a profound transformation in American culture. It was an age of democratic ferment, a time when people were rising up against traditional authorities. Whether kings or clerics, exalted lords or learned theologians, people rebelled against them all. People increasingly claimed the right to interpret the Bible for themselves. The final measure of truth became, as Nevin put it, "the exercise of the single mind separately considered." The result was a sea of sects all claiming to possess nothing but the primitive faith and practice. With his anti-creedal reforming movement, Barton Stone had launched out upon this sea in the opening years of the century. As years passed he saw the strife and division escalate. He heard the bold claims to simple and exclusive truth, yet saw the realities that belied those claims.

Stone increasingly deplored what he called the spirit of "partyism." This spirit, he said, encouraged "heresy-hunting preaching"--a practice that he viewed as one of the great cancers in the Christianity of

the day. Stone, unlike Alexander Campbell, avoided religious debates because he believed that they appealed to people's carnal desires and created ever more divisions. Their effect, he said, was to "deaden piety, destroy the spirit of prayer, puff up the vain mind, annihilate the taste for the marrow and fatness of the living word, and destroy the comforts of true, heavenly religion." Very few people, Stone felt, possessed enough Christianity to engage in debates.

Further, in Stone's view, heresy involved not so much believing wrong doctrines but a lack of love and a rending of the body of Christ. He did not believe that a set of correct doctrines would ever unite believers.

What, then, was the basis for unity? Writing in 1833, Stone said that over twenty-five years earlier he had spoken of four different approaches. The first he called "**Book Union.**" This approach relied on the authority of creeds. It said, accept our particular creed and we will be united. But in reality such an approach produced only more division.

The second approach Stone called "**Head Union.**" This approach rejected all creeds and boasted of taking the Bible alone. Unity would result, it was claimed, when sincere believers agreed on what the Bible teaches. But, Stone said, sincere believers do not agree on what the Bible teaches, and so they end up making their opinions the basis for unity. "Each one believes his opinion of certain texts to be the very spirit and meaning of the texts--and that this opinion was absolutely essential to salvation."

Then what difference is there, he asked, between such opinions and a creed? None at all, he replied, except that a creed is written down. And if people intend to seek unity on this basis then "surely they act more wisely who have their creed put in a book." He thus concluded that it is better to have written creeds than unwritten opinions that carry the authority of creeds. "This plan of uniting on opinions," he said, "whether contained in a book, or in the head, is not worth a straw, and never can effect Christian union, or the union of primitive Christianity."

The third approach to unity he called "**Water Union.**" By this Stone meant a unity founded on the doctrine of immersion of believers in water. Such a union, he said, is "easily dissolved." Agreement on the doctrine of baptism simply will not keep believers united.

For Stone the only hope for unity lay in a fourth approach--what he called "**Fire Union.**" By this he meant the fire of the Holy Spirit by which hard and unloving hearts were softened and filled with a supernatural love. "Fire effects a perfect union," he said, "--so does the

spirit of burning, the spirit of Jesus; and no union but this will stand, no other union is worth the name."

Stone was convinced that schemes and plans of union were of little avail, indeed, that they easily became a source of more division. He wrote in 1831 that "a formal union on the Bible, without possessing the spirit of that book" would be "a stumbling block, a delusive snare to the world." Seeking unity primarily on that basis, he thought, usually proved a hindrance to the quickening, sanctifying work of the Spirit. "Men have devised many plans to unite Christians--all are vain. There is but one effectual plan, which is, that all be united with Christ and walk in him."

"The great secret," he urged, "... has been almost forgotten. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer and member of the church." The "want of the spirit" is the "grand cause of division"; "this spirit restored will be the grand cause of union." With this Spirit, he continued, "partyism will die."

Stone said that he once thought that the "Bible would unite the sects." But he soon came to believe that it would not work, because "none but those who have the spirit of the Bible can really unite on the Bible." "We may take the Bible alone, without note or comment, as the only standard of faith and practice," he wrote, "yet without the Spirit, union can never be effected, nor continued." One might as well try to unite iron and clay or fire and water.

"Let every Christian begin the work of union in himself," he admonished. "Wait upon God, and pray for the promise of the Spirit. Rest not till you are filled with the Spirit. Then, and not till then, will you love the brethren . . . [only] then will you have the spirit of Jesus to love the fallen world."

"O! for a revival of God's own work in the world!" he often exclaimed. "May all that profess the name of Jesus be filled with the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, and goodness. Amen."

Stone believed that unity was the work of God, not of human beings. Faced with a sea of sects all claiming "no creed but the Bible," unity would emerge only as the Holy Spirit worked in human hearts, instilling in them a love divine and thereby transforming people into God's new creation.

[Condensed and reprinted by permission of the publisher from **Distant Voices: Discovering a Forgotten Past for a Changing Church** (Ablene Christian University Press, 1993). You would enjoy the whole book.]

*"Let the Peace of Christ rule in your hearts"*

# WHEN CHRISTIANS SQUABBLE

Fred W. Schott

The Bible offers us a wonderful picture of what church life ought to be in Colossians 3:15-17. In some of his most radiant language, the Apostle holds out to us a compelling picture of a united congregation full of love for each other, inspired by wonderful singing and vibrant worship, teeming with gratefulness to God, grounded in the Word, and serving a beloved Savior in word and deed.

The description begins with a call "to let the peace of Christ rule" in our hearts. In fact, says Paul (vs 15), peace is a natural part of our calling. God intends for his people to live in and be at peace.

Not just in this age, but in every age since Christ promised the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her, the Church and its many congregations have seldom, for very long, even come close to living out this inspired portrait of church life. We long desperately for it and when it comes, even for brief periods, well, "Blest be the tie!"

And what of peace? Where is peace to be found when the church you attend has too many people who do not even seem to like each other? What if the differences of opinion--theological, programmatic, pastoral, or financial--are so deep that some, or even you, have decided to change church membership? Or, what are you to do when another Christian, perhaps even a member of your own family, continues to harbor ill feelings toward you? In the thick of such pain and great tension, is it possible for the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts?

Yes. The answers are found in the previous verses (3:12-14). Whether we ever end up resolving whatever issue it is that for now divides us, regardless of how we are treated, no matter what, peace can be found if we do three things.

First, we must be kind to one another. Second, we must seek and grant forgiveness. Third, we must love each other. Once again, the language of the passage is beautiful. It is also direct and clear. We are not asked to "try." We are told to behave in these three distinct ways.

## Be Kind

Paul begins by reminding us that we are God's chosen. God has loved us and made us holy. As such we are, without qualification, to "clothe ourselves" in kindness, compassion, humility, gentleness, and patience. Christians, of all people, must have strong convictions and opinions. What is more, Christians are compelled to act on belief. But, it is humility that requires us to acknowledge we might be wrong, that we do not always see or understand everything perfectly. It should be so

in all walks of life, but especially among those who together follow Christ, to be gracious to those with whom we disagree.

## Forgive

When debate is heated; when passions run deep; when conviction dictates our decisions and actions, it is easy to be hurt and to wound. In any tense and trying circumstance the chances are we will not always be kind. Christians must be quick to ask forgiveness. Equally important, we must forgive. Even when others do not seek our forgiveness, we must forgive. Even when those in the "opposition" demand apologies without apologizing; even when we feel more wronged than wrong, Christians have no options. "Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

## Love

"Over all these virtues" our brother, the Apostle, tells us to "put on love." More than a virtue and much more than feeling, love is above all action. Not something that just happens to us in these contexts, love is a purposeful choice, a decision to act. Our heart tells us that "if we just love them, things will work out." This scripture seems to confirm it: "love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." But, our experience tells us differently. Some of our most painful differences are with people we love more than others. It is because we love, that it can hurt so bad. On closer examination of this passage, it is not people who are united by love, but all other virtues. Again we learn the timeless lesson, even if I master all virtues, "but have not love, I am nothing."

In all circumstances, to be kind, to seek forgiveness and to forgive, and to love. In these three pillars of Christian life, one does find the promise of perfect unity among God's people--someday. To remember, in the midst of disagreement and controversy to be kind, forgiving, and loving will go a long way toward unity. It will certainly help in raising above the fray of petty squabbles. But, when things go poorly among Christians--and they will because we are human-- individuals and even congregations can find in these three simple acts today, everyday, the "peace of Christ."

When estranged from other believers and family members, be kind in whatever contacts you do have with them. Ask their forgiveness and forgive them whether they ask or not. Never quit loving them and always ask God's best for them. To do these three things is to do our best, to do what we can do. Then, we can trust God to work in our hearts and in the distance that separates us. Therein lies the peace of Christ.

And, in all things, give thanks and especially in those rare times when "the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above."

# "WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST . . ."

Right after World War I Herbert Hoover was made administrator of U.S. aid for Europe's orphans. The American people gave vast sums of money to help these children, many of whose towns had been broken up by the war, and they appointed Hoover to be in charge of distributing these funds. Though people gave generously, still there were not adequate funds to help the staggering number of orphans who needed help.

A newspaperman saw and reported this incident: He was in one of the centers where this program was administered, and a man and his little daughter came in. The man was very thin, with unnaturally bright eyes and sunken cheeks. The girl also had signs of extreme malnutrition--eyes too large and bright, her abdomen distended, her arms and legs skeletal in appearance.

The man said, "I would like to have my little girl enrolled on your list." The worker asked, "This is your little girl?" "Yes." "Well," came the reply, "we're sorry, but our rules limit us to helping full orphans. Our funds are so limited, and there are so many orphans who have lost both parents, that we don't have enough to help those who still have a parent."

The man seemed bewildered, and said, "Well, you know, I can't work. I'm sick. I've been abused, I was a prisoner of war, and was half-starved and I'm ill and can't take care of her . . . so I brought her to you to take care of her, because I can barely stagger around. Can't you feed her?"

The worker replied, with sympathy but firmness: "We're very sorry, we wish we could, but we just can't accept any children except full orphans--those with no parents at all."

The father then got the point. "You mean that if I were dead, you'd feed and care for my little girl, and she'd have clothes and a place to stay?" "That's right," mumbled the worker.

The father stooped over and picked his daughter up, hugging her skinny frame to himself for several minutes. Then he put her down and placed her hand in the hand of the worker. He said, "I'll see to that," and walked out and shortly afterwards took his life . . . .

The Psalmist wrote, "*As a father pities his children*, so the Lord pities those who fear him." Jesus said to the Heavenly Father, "Here are our creatures, doomed and helpless and about to die. But I'll see to it that they need not die. I'll see to that." And He came down and gave His life that we might live.

--Adapted from a sermon by A.W. Tozer



## Is Your God Picky, Grouchy, a Bookkeeper?

Get Yourself a loving God, and make Him your friend. You're going to need Him, every day. Is it easy to get yourself a loving God? I suppose for some people it is. Some people do grow up in loving homes right from birth, surrounded by love. Their teachers teach them about a God of love . . .

But I certainly didn't grow up with a very loving God. Mine was a bookkeeping god who carefully kept track of all my sins. And many of the things that I thought about, during the teenage years at least, were sins. My god was a *picky* god, a *condemning* one, a *punishing* one--not a bit easy to love. As a little kid I lied a lot: I told him often that I loved him. But that was only because I was scared. I thought he would beat my brains out or strike me dead if I didn't say I loved him.

Is it easy to make God *your* closest friend? Maybe, if you've known a friendly God. But the god I grew up with always seemed to say, "KEEP YOUR DISTANCE, BUB! I'm almighty, I'm nine miles above you. You approach me only on your knees. Don't try talking to me like you talk to your friends. You speak to me only in special God-language." At one time I thought I even had to talk to God in a special tone of voice. What a bunch of nonsense!

So why should I lie to you and tell you it is easy to love God and make Him your friend? It hasn't been for me, and many of you were raised with a god like mine--and it hasn't been easy for you either.

I can't even tell you how to know that you need God as your friend. But if building love [in your family] comes as tough for you as it sometimes does for me, I think you'll know you need a friend who is much wiser than you are.

Making Him your best friend, making His will the most important thing in your life--how easy it would be to build a truly loving home, if we could just do that. If we made a truly loving God the most important person in our lives, all of the false gods that we worship and that interfere with our loving would slowly go away . . .

--Urban Steinmetz in a tape series, **Our Marriage is You and Me**





## A Wise Mother

A boy told his mom, "My Sunday school teacher said loving God was our greatest duty. So for the past fifteen minutes I've been saying, 'I love God, I love God, I love God.' But I don't think it's helped."

His mom said, "Why don't you start saying, 'God loves me'?"

Later: "You're right, Mom. I've been saying that over and over, and I really love God now!"

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# LOVE

## Have you Found It?

Paul S. Knecht

The promise of God, understood and believed, creates a deep and powerful hope capable of sustaining and transforming human lives. The result of this transformation, this "metamorphosis", Jesus said, is what unmistakably identifies his disciples: they love one another (John 13:35). The Apostle John wrote, "He that does not love, does not know God, and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows him"(1 John 4:7,8). Love is the evidence of being born of God. Love is finally what makes a Christian a Christian.

There is much talk of love in religious circles, but a transformation of life, a real "metamorphosis", a loving fellowship, is harder to discover. I am not here speaking of hypocrisy. Rather, I am raising some questions about why among those who hope strongly in the promises of God, there often is so little love. Perhaps it is because we suppose that love is to descend mystically upon us and it doesn't happen that way. I rather believe that love is both produced (and defined) in the obedience of faithful discipleship. Out of the discipline of obedience we come to discover and then accept our fellowman, in the discovery and acceptance of ourselves. Such a process may just be how love is brought about.

Most Christians recall readily that Jesus commanded his disciples "to do to others as you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12), but this instruction in practice seems to get lost in a clutter of lesser do's and don'ts and more subtle pressures for conformity to religious tradition. There is good reason to believe that Jesus intended this "golden rule" to be the key-stone in the arch of Christian behavior: the essence, the very core of Christian discipleship.

If I seriously undertake to live the golden rule (I have), certain things must happen. For the first time in my life, I have to consciously ask myself, how do I want to be treated? This question makes no sense

out of context but the context is immediately obvious: if I were in the other person's place, how would I want to be treated? I was on new turf. I did not know how to put myself in the other's place nor did I know how I wanted to be treated. This is what God wanted me to learn--to try to understand where someone else is, to discover why they are behaving as they are. Jesus commanded his disciples to do this, and from this new perspective to get better acquainted with one's own self. I reacted strongly. I understood rules; when you break them, you are punished. You deserve it, you expect it, it is the nature of cause and effect, law and order, of justice itself. But Jesus came to bring a new order. "Revolutionary" is hardly adequate to describe it. Perhaps there is no adequate word. Jesus gave us a wholly "other" basis for moral decision making. He invites us to discern what is moral and what is immoral. When I treat you as I in your circumstances would truly want to be treated, it is moral. It is right. When I fail to do so, it is immoral. It is wrong. This is God's standard of morality for each of us. There is no other. How dreadful is the weight of this! Can we possibly take Jesus seriously in it? If not in this, in what?

In attempting to do it, I have made many false starts. I treated others as I thought they wanted to be treated. This is not what Jesus commanded and it fails miserably. It excludes the essential ingredients of putting yourself in the other's place and revealing yourself to them. I have since discovered many Christians making the same mistake. In another misstep I tried to apply the golden rule within the parameters of accepted sex role stereotypes. The two are incompatible. Roles are artifacts of play actors and theaters. Relationships can only develop among real people when they are not play acting.

I also learned that I have legitimate needs and desires, that there is a place for me in the way God wants his world to run, and that I can no longer work to meet the standards imposed by others to win their approval. I learned that the old rules of sexual morality derive directly from the golden rule and that the problems in my marriage probably grew out of the false notion that men and women have such fundamentally different emotional needs that they really can't hope to understand each other. The golden rule is wholly liberating--and restricting. It liberates from all that is contrived and it restricts to all that is real--as real as sincere human perception can structure. And all this I am just beginning to learn.

If we then pursue this course, what can we expect? Can I expect that my wife, children, students, neighbors will like what I do? Not necessarily. That they will understand my behavior? Almost certainly not. That the action will resolve our problems? Unlikely. What then is achieved? The most difficult of all tasks that God has undertaken will have moved forward. I will have made some feeble efforts in the direction of discovering myself and someone else, in the process of let-

ting my real self be known to that person. I will have opened a tiny hole in the wall that made communication impossible, and created an environment where we can begin to discuss significant issues. I will have discovered in part how to love myself and I will have loved someone else to some degree in the same way.

And I will have obeyed the commandment of my Lord. I may also have offended many, have broken with tradition and propriety, have acted out of the role I am expected to play, and for the first time, have truly let the Holy Spirit be my guide. Happy, happy thought!

But human interaction is complex and the Golden Rule immediately spawns two corollaries. The first deals with our habitual reaction to failure in others. Jesus warned us unequivocally, "DO NOT JUDGE." He went on to say, if you do not judge, you *will* not be judged - but if you do, you will be judged, and you will be judged by precisely the standard you applied to others. Jesus clearly wants his disciples out of the judging business. He declared that *he* did not come to judge (John 12:47), that judgment is the exclusive prerogative of the Father and that all who trespass into that domain shall find themselves held by God to their own exacting standards.

In the face of such strong prohibition, why do we still judge? King David's anger, burning against the callousness of the man in Nathan's story, cried out, "the man that has done this is worthy to die!" Nathan replied, "*You* are the man!" It is our own failure that we see most clearly in others and our words of condemnation illuminate the dark recesses of our own souls. If we but listen, we can learn from our judging, who we are, what festering evils we have yet to acknowledge, and how much we are a part of all that is human - of failure, of pride, of need for pardon, and transformation. In this hostile battle ground we can find ourselves and our neighbors, in the same struggle, facing the same enemy, covered by the same love - and embracing the same hope: That we have eternal life, and come not into "judgment but have passed out of death into life.

The second corollary is an extension of the first; moral failure cannot be undone but it *can* be forgiven. And once more, in his teaching on forgiveness, Jesus provides a mechanism of self discovery. God's offer of forgiveness is extended freely to all and it is without limit - *except* for limits I, as receiver, impose. Jesus again was very clear on this: "Forgive us our trespasses *as* we forgive those who trespass against us." And with perfect clarity and great force, "If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive your trespasses." Once again, this time in the matter of forgiveness, I have to look within - to see if I can afford to be unforgiving. I cannot. As difficult as it is to forgive the deep hurts of the past, my forgiveness is appropriated only by letting it flow through me to others. My grudges, if I will let them, compel me to reflect on my own need for forgiveness. As I learn to forgive, the abscesses within finally begin to heal and spiritual health comes. I can un-

derstand better the deep hurts of others and their need for the same experience of discipleship with Jesus. I can begin to love others. The metamorphosis is in process. My attitude and my behavior are my testimony that I am a disciple of Jesus. There is no other acceptable witness.

These are strong statements with powerful implications for Christian living. Are they really warranted? When Jesus was asked which is the first and great commandment, he replied without hesitation, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind . . ." And a second like it is this, "you shall love your neighbor as your self. *On these two commandments the whole law hangs, and the prophets.*" The passages we have been considering simply operationalize these two commandments. Both come from the law of Moses, and they are re-established by Jesus as the core and key to moral living, to human survival. No other religious writings must be allowed to mute or nullify, or in any way diminish the power of this message to the disciple of Christ. The remainder of the New Testament, and all subsequent decisions of the church must reflect and implement the intent of this teaching.

Somehow it has gotten lost in the shuffle, and the writings or the apostles and church leaders have become separate legal entities--all Christians are to be subject to church officials, wives to husbands, and children to parents . . . and no one has to treat anyone else as *they* wish to be treated. Results? We have *lost ourselves*, and our testimony to the world that we are disciples of Jesus.

Albert Einstein once wrote, "If one purges the Judaism of the prophets and Christianity as Jesus Christ taught it of all subsequent additions, especially those of the priests, one is left with a teaching which is capable of curing all the social ills of humanity." Surely this is Christianity as Jesus Christ taught it. And if there is even a remote possibility that it could solve *some* of the social ills of humanity, why is it not the subject of inquiry in every university, in all centers of government, why not even in the church?! Einstein went on to say that if anyone "makes an honest attempt in this direction without being crushed and trampled under foot by his contemporaries, he may consider himself and the community to which he belongs lucky." The golden rule could really change the world.

Great God - please help us to understand that the path to love, and the coming of your kingdom will be hard fought battles. Renew our hope, deepen our conviction, and give us a taste of that love that makes it all worth fighting for.

Amen

[Condensed. For a complete version write the author at 8013 Circle Drive, Georgetown, IN 47122.]

# God-Given Renewal In Churches of Christ

Mike Cope

As long as God's Spirit is alive, renewal can break out anywhere and at any time!

As I listen to members of Churches of Christ these days I hear healthy signs:

1) I sense that we're talking much more about God--the one who has called us by his grace (rather than by our doctrinal fine-tuning) and who has called us to holy living.

2) I sense that we're focused more on "Christ and him crucified." *In 1986 I finished a sixteen-week series on the cross and had an elder ask when we were going to return to talking about the gospel.* But now I hear more people who know that Jesus Christ, the Crucified One, is the core of the gospel.

3) I sense that we're discussing more freely the Holy Spirit. We're learning about and experiencing his guidance, his renewal, his conviction. (Our doctrine never got farther off course than when some claimed the Holy Spirit's work is limited to the work of Scripture.)

4) I sense that we're realizing that our primary job isn't to master Scripture but to be mastered by it. Scripture isn't primarily there for us to explore, rather, it explores us. It shakes our worldview, jars our easy presuppositions, challenges our idolatries, and demands our obedience.

5) I sense that we're admitting that God has many other faithful children than those in our small "brotherhood." We're returning to our wonderful roots: "Christians only, not the only Christians." We long more, pray more, and work more for unity.

I don't mean to imply that we've finally arrived. Nor do I intend to say that this healthy renewal is coming from a new generation. (Quite the contrary: It is older Christians of courage and deep holiness who have led us!)

Nor would I bury my head in the sand and pretend that everyone likes what's been happening in Churches of Christ. Some will continue to deliver breastbeating jeremiads about how we've left "the old paths." But they're wrong! If anything, we're falling in love more fully with the true old paths.

The test of this new identity quest will be our growing openness to God. Are we growing in prayer? Are we more humble before him? Are we displaying his compassion? Are we letting him use us to build

relationships with people who need to hear the gospel? Are we committed to holy living that resists the temptations of materialism and cheap success?

A funny thing has happened in my heart. I've known the faults of my spiritual heritage for a long time. (It's made up of people like me, so it's bound to fall very short of perfection!) But I'm beginning to appreciate its strengths more than ever before. I'm realizing that as we continue to talk about our identity, our spiritual heritage has many strong resources to offer. May all the praise and glory of our feeble attempts go to Jesus Christ, who alone can renew us!

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## America May Be Changing for the Better, say Analysts

Howard Norton

America's moral and spiritual mood has shifted drastically in the last 30 years. William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education, has carefully documented the moral decline of the United States in a little book entitled *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*. He points out that since 1960 "there has been more than a 500 percent increase in violent crime; more than a 400 percent increase in illegitimate births; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes; a tripling in the teenage suicide rate; a doubling in the divorce rate; and a drop of almost 75 points in SAT scores." Bennett concludes, "Unless these exploding social pathologies are reversed, they will lead to the decline and perhaps even to the fall of the American republic."

Fortunately, however, some segments of society seem to be waking up. In the December 1994 issue of *Emerging Trends*, a monthly publication of the Princeton Religion Research Center, George H. Gallup, Jr. addresses this phenomenon. Gallup says, "There is a great deal of evidence--survey and other--to show that Americans are beginning to break their secular chains, that we are, indeed, in a period of spiritual renewal . . . Despite the grim statistics about society, the unremitting voices of gloom and doom, and the sometimes desperate search for reasons and answers, the healing process is underway. We are, it would appear, a nation 'in recovery.'"

Gallup proceeds with evidence to back up his claims, and some of his arguments are encouraging. He believes that because 94 percent of our people believe in God and 84 percent believe in a personal God with whom they can communicate through prayer, there is a basis for

spiritual recovery. In addition to American's faith in God, Gallup sees the movement now underway for people to seek love and support in small groups as a sign that people are in the mood for spiritual change in their lives.

He suggests that the media is finally becoming aware of the importance of religion, that psychiatry is developing a more positive view of religion's importance, that some in Hollywood are attempting to produce films that inspire rather than degrade, that educators are seeking ways to instill character in the classroom, and that religion does make a difference in human conduct.

George H. Gallup, Jr. notes the fact that "Harvard economist Richard Freeman discovered that inner-city youth with strong religious orientation have a 47 percent lower high school dropout rate, are 54 percent less likely to use drugs and 59 percent less likely to commit crime."

Although he believes we have a long way to go before society becomes what it should be, Gallup says. "These are prominent signs that America is at last beginning the process of spiritual recovery." We hope that his interpretations prove to be true.

Here are some specific signs for the better that some of us have noted recently in news magazines. "Sex in America" was the cover story in the October 17, 1994, issue of *Time*. While the article reveals a sexual pattern in America that is far from the biblical norm, there is good news that our people are not as immoral as the soaps and sitcoms would have us believe. "Adultery is the exception in America, not the rule," say the authors. "Nearly 75% of married men and 85% of married women say they have never been unfaithful. There are a lot fewer active homosexuals in America than the oft-repeated 1 in 10. Only 2.7% of men and 1.3 % of women report that they had homosexual sex in the past year."

*Newsweek* (Nov. 28, 1994) carries a cover story entitled "The Search for the Sacred: America's Quest for Spiritual Meaning." Although the search does not always happen in the right way nor lead to the right destination, we can still rejoice that the quest is taking place.

*Newsweek's* editor introduces the story by saying that "millions of Americans are embarking on a search for the sacred in their lives. Whether out of dissatisfaction with the material world or worry about the coming millennium, they are seeking to put spirituality back in their lives. For careerist baby boomers, it's even OK to use the "S" words--soul, sacred, spiritual, sin."

"Shame: How Do We Bring Back a Sense of Right and Wrong?" is *Newsweek's* lead story in the Feb. 6, 1995, issue. The introductory blurb says, "Fed up with everything from teen pregnancy and broken homes to drunk driving and violent crime, Americans are eager to restore a sense of what's right and what's wrong. *Newsweek's* Jonathan Alter and Pat Wingert make the case for a bit more enlightened intolerance."

Finally, *Time* features marriage in its cover story of Feb. 27, 1995: "For Better, For Worse: The Growing Movement to Strengthen Marriage and Prevent Divorce." The authors tell us that no one would be surprised if churches were trying to save marriages and raise morals because that is precisely their job. "But a growing recognition that marriages are not to be entered into--or dissolved--lightly because of the enormous social and economic costs," they say, "is dawning in some unlikely places and crossing political lines." And increasing number of divorce lawyers and marital therapists are even beginning to assume more responsibility for attempting to save marriages.

Maybe America is on the verge of change! Shall we pray about it?

[Reprinted by permission from **CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE**; copyright 1995. Though this article was written a year ago, the trends--both good & bad--are continuing.]

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## Portland Christian School Approaches 75 Year Mark

September 2, 1924. That is a long time ago. Calvin Coolidge was the 30th president of our 48 United States; Babe Ruth was terrorizing opposing pitchers; and Henry Ford was boasting of "a car in any color, as long as it is black". Also, the doors of Portland Christian School were opened for the first time in Louisville, Kentucky.

Actually, the start of PCS can be traced back to 1915 when the desire for a Christian school was expressed by members of the Portland Avenue Church of Christ and their minister, Brother Robert Boll. Although this wish did not materialize that year, enthusiasm remained strong and special prayer meetings were called concerning the establishment of a school.

In the summer of 1923, these prayers began to be answered with the move of Brother Stanford Chambers and his family to Louisville. Bro. Chambers had previously served as a Christian educator in New Orleans, Louisiana. His move intensified the interest of the Portland congregation in starting a school.



Concerning the venture, Bro. Boll stated that "the matter needs no argument. If it is right for the church to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to make provisions for the sick, it is right for the same reason, in the same way, to provide for a need even sorer than that of the bodies - the proper teaching of children."

A unique feature of the new school was its financial setup - it would operate on a non-tuition basis, relying solely on gifts from the school's supporters. (This no-tuition practice continued until 1985 when the first tuition was charged for students.) The opening day of the school proved interesting, with 65 students vying for 50 desks. A meeting of the leading brethren of the church was hastily called to solve this problem. Their solution? "The Lord sent the extra fifteen and He will enable us to take care of them. Order fifteen more desks!" The foundation of operating the school on a faith basis was laid down that very first day.

The first year closed with 9 grades, 85 students, and a staff consisting of Bro. Chambers (who served as both principal and teacher), Miss Alice Waters, and Miss Lura Jones. Bro. Chambers would remain at PCS for 23 years and Miss Jones (later to become Mrs. Philip Bornwasser) for 39 years. Miss Waters was forced to leave after just 1 1/2 years due to sickness in her family.

The summer of 1925 was spent converting the cottage on the rear of the lot into a large schoolroom. This was necessary in order to accommodate the 150 students who had signed up for the school's second year. The second year of high school was added and the school newspaper, the Broadcaster, began circulation.

Further expansion occurred in the summer of 1927, with two classrooms being built on the rear of the cottage. The close of the 1927-28 school year resulted in the first high school graduating class, which was 11 members strong. The school yearbook, the Totem, was also published for the first time.

In 1930, Bro. Chambers was made president of PCS and Brother Claude Neal, who arrived on the scene in 1925 with his wife Florence, was named principal. The Neals would remain at Portland for 36 years.

In 1931, Portland Christian School was accredited by the Kentucky State Board of Education. The next eighteen years saw enrollment figures stay at or near capacity, with more and more students having to be turned away due to a lack of space. During this time some important additions were made to the teaching staff. In 1943, Mrs. Lloyd Adams, daughter of Bro. Chambers, came to PCS where she would remain for 33 years. Two years later came the arrival of the Campbell

sisters, Mona Belle and Lois. In 1948, Sister Lois McReynolds joined the PCS staff where she would remain for 25 years.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of Portland Christian School began in grand fashion with a ground breaking ceremony on September 19, 1948. The next year the two-story building was completed, housing six classrooms, a science laboratory, a kitchen and cafeteria facilities. The enrollment immediately increased and during the 1958-59 school year surpassed the 200 student mark for the first time in the school's history. It would not dip below that level again.

In 1959, Brother Earl Mullins, Sr., joined the PCS staff, where he remained for 31 years; first as teacher, then as principal, and then as administrator.

The next expansion began, June, 1968, and resulted in six new classrooms, a library, a home economics room, all-purpose gymnasium, and an industrial arts building.

The 1973-74 school year marked the fiftieth anniversary of Portland Christian School. The year closed with 259 students and a staff of 25, including 19 part or full-time teachers.

Student enrollment increased significantly and in the 1977-76 school year reached the 300 mark. Expansion plans were again born of necessity. One proposal involved enclosing the area between two buildings thus allowing for more classroom space. The quoted cost for building this structure reached \$75,000, but God had greater things in mind. . .

In April, 1977, the doors were opened for PCS to purchase the Emma Dolfinger School, located just one block away at 25th and Montgomery. When the renovation was complete, Portland had at its disposal an additional 14 classrooms, an office, a cafeteria, an all-purpose room, and three portables. This campus became known as Portland Christian School-North and is presently the home of grades K-6.

Don Rucker, a 1974 graduate, came back to teach in 1978, was Assistant Principal for one year in 1989 and served as Administrator/High School Principal from 1990-1995. Jodell Seay, a 1977 graduate, came back in 1981 to teach and has been the Elementary Principal since 1990. J.R. Satterfield, a 1956 graduate and former Board member, is the current Administrator and High School Principal. The current Board Chairman for Portland Christian School is a 1934 graduate of PCS, R.H. Von Allmen. So, you can see the rich heritage continuing.

With the graduation of the 16 members of the class of 1996, this year the number of alumni of Portland Christian School now totals over 1,000. It is by the grace of God and the support of the alumni and other groups that PCS now approaches its seventy-fifth year of service.

# NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaas

## Letter From Bro. Forcade

"I am now blind in one eye and have restricted vision in the other. Thank God I can still read even small print with my reading glasses and a magnifying glass. This is to let you know I still love you, pray for you and look for the Lord to come any day which even a blind man can do. I hope to be able to read the W&W one more year at least.

"I had another operation which we hope will keep my cancer from growing. I was 88 years old 3/15/96. Esther will be 94 years old 4/14/96. We hope to celebrate 67 years 'on our way to forever together,' on 5/25. And I hope to celebrate 61 years as a preacher 6/23 by preaching a sermon on that date somewhere on God's good earth. All these hopes are subject to the Lord's will.

"Since moving to Gatesville 2 years ago, we have helped 2 congregations to begin to fellowship each other after about 59 years of not doing so. I teach a weekly Bible class in the nursing home where Esther is, & am allowed to circulate tracts freely. I have been shown more love & fellowship by this 'mainline' church than any other I have ever attended." -- J. Miller Forcade, 302 S. 34th St., Apt. D, Gatesville TX 76528

## Utica Church of Christ

For more than a century, the red brick building of the Utica Church of Christ has been a place for believers to worship, study the Word, and preach the Gospel. Records indicate that the church was established around 1860. The Utica church building was originally dedicated in 1877. After the devastating flood of

1937, it was painstakingly restored and was rededicated at a ceremony in October, 1937. It has seen the re-joining of weddings and the mourning of funerals, and has been the place where many decisions were made for the Lord, with the resulting baptisms taking place only two blocks away on the banks of the muddy Ohio River.

On July 21, 1996, the Utica Church of Christ will give thanks for those who have built and rebuilt, worked and worshipped here over the past 136 years with an Old-fashioned Homecoming. We would love for you to join us and share in this day. Special singing, fellowship, and "dinner on the grounds" are planned for the day, as well as lots of reminiscing! Any photos or other memorabilia you have would be most welcome for our "family album."

Please call or write to let us know if you will be able to attend: Utica Church of Christ, Charles V. Knecht, Minister, (812) 283-9372.

## Prairie Creek Church, Dallas

For 2 years Prairie Creek Church of Christ has been using students from Preston Road Center for Christian Education instead of a fulltime minister. (The Center is a ministry that began at the Preston Road Church of Christ but now is in Irving, TX.) The students are scheduled on rotation at 8 or so churches and thus get practice in preaching and teaching, plus receiving a few dollars for expenses. We have the benefit of 2 wonderful sermons weekly, and are privileged in having a small part in training preachers/missionaries. At the same time our money outlay is not as much as a fulltime minister needs, freeing \$\$ to

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be used in other areas of the Lord's work.

We have only 19-20 members now, with 12-15 attending regularly. Wayne LeDoux usually leads singing and the Wed. Bible study. Various students who preached for us earlier but now have graduated have gone on to various ministries: Scripture translation, inner city missions, church work in congregations small and large from California to Vermont.

As far as we know, Prairie Creek is the only "pre-mill" church involved with this. There has only been one conversation on future events (that I'm aware of), and we agreed that we "agree on more than we disagree on."--Sandra Rehorn Seitsinger

### **Concerts By Music-Camp Singers**

Music Week at Antioch Camp near Frankfort, KY will be June 23-30, including these public concerts: Jn. 28, noon, Fort Harrod. Jn. 28, 7 p.m., Ebenezer Church, Salvisa, KY. Jn. 29, 7 p.m., Utica Church, IN. Jn. 30, 3:00, Antioch Church, Frankfort.

### **Hear Them Before They Leave**

Martin & Susan Brooks have an exciting & challenging missionary

presentation. Before they leave for Mozambique in early Aug. your church would benefit from hearing them: (502) 957-4010.

### **To Order Church Bulletins**

If ordering Church bulletins through W&W, call Louise Wells, (502) 775-8243.

### **This Month's Article On PCS**

... is reprinted from the Mid-America Regional News, a bulletin of the Assn. of Christian Schools, International--who reprinted most of it from W&W years ago!

### **Cherry St. Church of Christ**

We want to welcome Lecky Gough and Dub Wilson to our congregation. These young men are taking classes at the School of Biblical Studies. They will be our neighbors as they will be living in the annex apartment (a place of fond memories for the Marshes). We're sure that they will be a valuable asset in the work at Cherry Street.

(Hint to all of the Louisville area Churches -- Growing the School of Biblical Studies could be a VALUABLE ASSET TO YOU, TOO.)