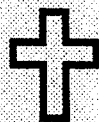
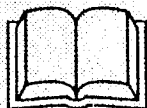


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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Jack Blaes, News

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Theme: Church Meetings and Church Leaders

CHURCH HOUSES, CHURCHES IN HOUSES, AND LET'S HEAR IT FOR SMALLER MEETINGS TOO

Alex V. Wilson

We share with you a short quotation and then two articles related, in various ways, to the matter of church meetings. Stanford Chambers and Gordon Linscott challenge us about mutual edification rather than passive spectatoritis during "church." Then Leroy Garrett presents the advantages of meeting in homes.

There is no "one-and-only-right-way" of conducting church meetings. But there are certain basic principles to follow as we seek to meet people's needs and churches' goals. No one weekly meeting can fulfill all those needs and goals. That is why attending more than one gathering is urgently important--*if* the gatherings are not carbon copies of each other. If we are to stand in these evil days, we shall need more than ever to grow strong in worshiping the Almighty, studying His Word, ministering to one another and reaching out to the perishing with His love.

If you want to study these subjects more, past issues of *W&W* may help you. "When Christians Gather" (3/89); "A Balanced Diet" and "Fellowship Groups" (8 and 9/90); "Doing Things Differently" (7/93) plus several issues during 1992 carry stimulating material. Some of these are still in plentiful supply; other are almost extinct! You may order them @ \$0.75 plus postage.

A Question Answered

Stanford Chambers

(This is the quote referred to in the following article.)

Does not the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians, the 12th also, show that the N.T. church was very democratic in the public services? "Each hath a psalm, hath a teaching (doctrine), hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation." See 14:26.

There was, indeed, much mutuality. The true, spiritual edification of the body depended and depends upon each several member performing its purposed function. Even with Paul the great apostle present at Troas, it is written that he "discoursed with them." They were therefore not mere listeners. Mutual edification is certainly the scriptural way. But to be spectators or guests attending the services, services rendered by one or a few at the most, that is quite agreeable to the many and is an easy

way of avoidance of responsibility. Let the Minister (the Reverend Doctor or the Priest) do all the "officiating." How easy then to fall into the unedifying habit of sitting back, looking on, listening in, and criticizing! Yes, the Head of the church would have every member of the body feel that he is significant.

MUTUAL EDIFICATION

Gordon R. Linscott

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

What is "Mutual Edification"?

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

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

Is It Workable?

In recent years I have discussed this matter with a number of preachers and church leaders. Not one ever questioned that it is the Bible pattern. But almost all raised this objection: "It won't work!" To that

objection there are two answers. First, if we agree that God says do it, we would do it, regardless of what we think about it. Our responsibility is to be found faithful.

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

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

The consequences of obedience

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

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

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

WE MUST DISCOVER THE GREAT LOST SECRET

Leroy Garrett in *Restoration Review*

Let's face it, the Churches of Christ are in the doldrums. Our services are often boring, lifeless, gloomy. I'm convinced that our most loyal members attend regularly because they are just that, loyal, and not because they find it joyous and exciting. We are not growing. An outsider would never see us as imaginative, creative, or innovative. Except for some encouraging exceptions, we are not a changing people and we are not out on the cutting edge. We are going to have to get with it or we will not be "saved" [i.e., we won't survive].

That other denominations are in the same predicament does not justify our own stagnation. As a well-known automobile executive says on TV: *Lead, follow, or get out of the way.* It is not all that different with the churches. If we don't get with it, we will not have to worry about what will happen to us. We'll be left behind.

At the heart of our problem, as well as other churches, is that we are caught in the trappings of our own institutionalism--or churchism might be the word. We have expensive edifices to pay for and to maintain, staffs to support, programs to fund. Our Achilles heel is the System. The System resists change, except occasional cosmetic change. Nothing real or substantial. The System demands conformity, and it is uneasy with thinking people around, especially a thinking preacher or a preacher that says something.

The System must maintain the status quo, and it must preserve itself at all cost. This is why it seeks to keep everyone satisfied by reacting rather than acting. And most significantly, the System is tied to the

building. Regular church attendance, along with generous giving, is the essence of "faithfulness."

This brings me to the one thing above most everything else that we must do to be saved. We must recover--or is it *discover*?--the great lost secret of primitive Christianity. That secret was the dynamic of joyous, Spirit-filled gatherings in homes. Primitive Christianity knew nothing of buildings that never seem to get paid for. They did not have to bother with building an educational wing or getting the parking lot resurfaced, which are major tasks for the modern church. The early churches were house churches; as they grew they took in more homes. It wasn't until the third or fourth centuries that they had edifices and eventually "sanctuaries." This is the great secret of the early church that we are indifferent to--they were house churches while we are cathedral churches. They had a Holy Spirit-complex while we have an edifice-complex.

The edifice-complex has pews lined up one behind the other where we look behind each other's ears and may not even know the people who sit on the same pew--and may not even speak to them, week after week. The Holy Spirit-complex expressed itself in the home with sisters and brothers gathered in a circle, sharing their stories from out there in the world, drinking and eating together, rejoicing together. They were usually a persecuted people who took refuge in each other in the family circle, which was truly the Body of Christ.

Acts. 2:46 tells us about them: "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts." There are four references to "the church in thy house" and at least 20 instances in Acts and the letters where Christians met in homes. They were in the temple grounds, in synagogues, in the streets, in homes, but they never "went to church" in a building set apart for that purpose, not for at least 200 years. This does not mean that it is wrong for us to have buildings, but we need to realize what we have allowed the System to do to us.

In home gatherings they knew each other and grew close to one another. Everyone could take part. They didn't have to worry about a woman "getting in the pulpit" since there was no pulpit. They shared together, with each part functioning unto the edifying of the Body. They did not look to an employed functionary to deliver sermons; there were no sermons. They didn't have to worry about how to dress; if one came in smelling of fish it was OK. If a congregation needed to expand, it took in another home; if it needed to be dissolved, no problem since it had no mortgage to pay off. In the home they were "members of one another," rejoicing in the Spirit. The great lost secret of the primitive church is that they were empowered with the Holy Spirit in home gatherings.

I do not conclude from all this that we should close down our buildings. We cannot be the first century church, but as the 20th century

church we can discover the great lost secret of the primitive church and make it applicable to our own time. Our buildings can be used for small group gatherings as well as large congregational meetings, but they should be more intimate and open to the leading of the Spirit than the usual Sunday school arrangement. Let eight to ten men and women gather in a circle each Sunday and Wednesday evenings long enough to get intimately acquainted. They could start by sharing what Jesus means to them, and from there they could talk about their fears, hopes, problems, family, etc. They would learn to pray together as a family of sisters and brothers, and they would eventually unburden their souls to each other.

Along with this we could get away from our buildings and into homes more than we now do. A congregation could take a Sunday evening each month to meet in homes, with something like ten to twelve people to each home. We need to be in each other's home, come to know each other better, love each other more, learn to pray and share together in a way that cannot be done in the big "sanctuary" at church. In such an atmosphere the Holy Spirit can teach us more about the meaning of unity and fellowship.

The same circle could continue meeting on a longterm basis, but in time the circles could rotate so that a greater number in the church would know each other more personally. It is when we can share our long-kept secrets with each other, along with our hangups, that we really become "members one of another" where when one suffers all suffer and when one rejoices all rejoice. This is Body life and this is the great lost secret of the primitive church.

These small groups are also ideal for friendship evangelism. Outsiders can often be introduced to spiritual things in the informal atmosphere of a private home rather than in a church setting. The joy and spontaneity of the home gatherings can also transfer to some degree to the public assemblies if only we will be less rigid. When our services are reved up and there is "a sweet spirit that fills this place" we will be more inclined to share it with others. Who wants to invite a friend to a boring service?

To discover the lost secret we must be more open to change. We must get beyond the institutional church to Christ himself. We must become vulnerable to each other as sisters and brothers, fervent in the Spirit, serving the Lord.

To do this we do not need to think big in the sense of huge congregations and mega-churches. The lost secret is not big programs, large crowds or huge budgets, just as it is not necessarily big government and big business that makes a nation truly great. We may rightfully become disillusioned with "big" things. Our hopes might better lie with quiet processes and small circles where transforming events may take place.

CHRISTIAN LEADERS and CHURCH "LEADERS"

Thomas G. Bradshaw

In this article I want to tell you about some people I've met in different churches over the years. You may have met these people, too. I want to tell you about two sets of brothers and one pair of sisters. There's Elrod and Eldon Elder, Dudley and Dean Deacon, and Delilah and Dorcas Deaconess.

First let me tell you about Elrod Elder. Now Elrod's been an elder in the church about as long as he can remember. In Elrod's church, the way it goes is "once an elder, always an elder." And it's a good thing, good for Elrod anyway, because if he got to be an elder because he was doing a good job being an elder he would have gotten booted out of being an elder a long time ago!

But Elrod wants to be an elder. He likes the title. It sounds good. It's got a ring to it--"Elrod Elder." It makes him feel good. Elrod, an elder of the church. Elrod, a Christian leader. Boy, he likes that! But Elrod never does much. He doesn't come to church that often. Oh, he's there maybe half the time. He never sings. He doesn't like to pray. Oh, he does it every once in a while, and when he does he tries to think of something pretty to say--after all, an elder is supposed to pray every once in a while, isn't he? Elrod never gives much money to the church. They ask him to talk up the offering every once in a while, though, and when they do, he says that everybody oughta dig deep, but he never does. He's glad the church keeps the details of everybody's giving a secret, because he doesn't want anybody to know what he's doing. Now he likes to lead the communion service. It gives him a chance to perform. He dresses extra nice on those days. And when he's sitting up front he does his best to look so pious. Yeah, he likes that. But he doesn't like the elders' meetings. They're always scheduled when his favorite TV show is on. And sometimes they carry on for hours, like what they're talking about is really important. And then they start praying, and they expect him to pray, too. You'd think enough was enough.

Sometimes they get to talking like the elders ought to spend more time calling on people, visiting with them, praying with them. Elrod would rather not be bothered. He'll come to church when they need him, and he's glad to help lead the communion service, but he doesn't particularly want to do much else.

You might wonder how in the world Elrod ever got to be an elder in the first place. Well, one year, the established leaders were having a hard time finding enough people to serve. And somebody said that it said somewhere that there had to be at least six elders. Well, they only

had five. So, they looked around, and pickin's were kinda slim. But when they looked, they saw Elrod. And somebody said, "How about Elrod? He's a good ol' boy. Why don't we make him an elder?" "Why don't we?" somebody else said. And so they did. And many a time they've wondered why since then. Yeah, Elrod the Elder. He likes being an elder. At least he likes some of it.

Now, as I told you before, Elrod's got a brother whose name is Eldon--Eldon Elder. Now to look at Eldon and Elrod, and the way they go about doing things, you'd never know they were brothers--they're so different.

When Eldon long ago was asked to be an elder, the first thing he did was to pray. He prayed a lot anyway. And he thought being an elder would be an awesome responsibility, so when he was asked to do so, he knew he'd better pray about it.

And that's not all he did. He studied his Bible. He was already a good student of the Bible, hardly ever missed Sunday School, but when he thought about being an elder, he figured he'd better look at the Bible to find out what an elder was supposed to do.

Do you know what he found? He found, among other things, that the elders were appointed in the churches by the apostles and their co-workers to carry on in the leadership of the church when the apostles could no longer work directly with the church anymore themselves. So, like the apostles, the elders were to oversee the work of the churches. It was their job to do their best to make sure that the church was being the church, doing what Jesus had called it to do--to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to go into all the world and make disciples The elders were to oversee and to lead the work of the church. Eldon got to reading in 1 Peter 5. There he found, to start off with, that Peter, one of the leading apostles, referred to himself as a "fellow-elder." He was probably one of the elders of the church in Jerusalem. It would be an honor to serve in the same way as some of the apostles did. He went on reading and he found that Elders were to shepherd the flock of God, to care for the people of the church like a shepherd cares for his sheep. Well, what does a shepherd do for his sheep? For one thing, a shepherd provides food for his sheep. He makes sure they are nourished.

One of the last things Jesus had said to the apostle Peter was to "Feed My Sheep." Now Peter was passing on this command and this responsibility to the leaders of the local church--the elders. They were to make sure that the people of God were fed.

Maybe that's why, in another place (1 Tim 3), it says that an elder should be able to teach. The elders needed to make sure that their flock

was being nourished, and the Christian is nourished by the word of God. If they weren't teaching directly, the elders needed to make sure the people of the church were being taught adequately. They needed to make sure the sheep were being fed. Eldon got to thinking more about shepherding the flock and he realized that they needed a lot more than just food. They needed protection, they needed supervision, discipline, and guidance. Shepherds did a lot for their sheep. It seemed that it might be a big job being an elder.

But Eldon was willing to serve as an elder. He considered it an honor. He read in the Bible that being an elder is a "noble task." And that's just how he saw it. So Eldon agreed to serve as an elder. And he's been glad he did ever since. Eldon takes his job seriously. He works hard for the people who are entrusted to his care. He figures that if he is going to be an overseer of other Christians, he's going to have to get involved in their lives. So he visits them. He talks with them. He prays with them. He tries hard to get to know everyone in the church, at least those whom he is directly responsible for. If someone's sick, he finds out, and he prays for them and encourages them. If there's a cause for celebration, he's celebrating, too. If there are problems, he's trying to help the people work their way through them. He shepherds the flock. He takes care of the people. And he does so willingly. You can call on Eldon any time, day or night, if you need someone to talk to, to pray with you, to help you, you can call on Eldon.

You see, Eldon wants to be like Jesus. He wants to care for you like Jesus cares for him. You know another thing Eldon read in his Bible? Elders are supposed to set a good example for the flock. Eldon takes that to heart. He tries to be the best Christian he can be. He loves the church, and he participates in all the activities he can. Whether it's Sunday school or worship, Sunday night, a mid-week fellowship, or a special meeting--if there's any way possible, he'll be there. He'll teach if needed. At board meetings, he's there and involved. He serves on at least one committee. He wants to stay informed and he wants to help.

Eldon wants to be a good Christian, a good example, a good elder--and he is. Eldon was surprised that he didn't find anything in his Bible about the Elders taking the lead in communion services. But that's alright, it's another opportunity for him to help, and for him to teach about the importance of Communion. So he's glad to be involved in that. He sees it as a special privilege.

Eldon and Elrod, the Elder brothers--Don't be like Elrod. He likes the title, he's proud of it, but that's about it. Be more like Eldon--humbled by the opportunity, motivated to set a good example, willing to serve, willing to lead, working to care for others and to help them to grow in Christ, praying for the direction and blessing of the Lord.

Two Other Brothers

Let me tell you about some more folks I've met over the years--the Deacon brothers--Dudley and Dean.

Dudley Deacon and Elrod Elder are good buddies. They think a lot alike. Dudley is proud to be a deacon. He likes being an "officer of the church." He's been lobbying at the board meetings to get all the deacons to wear badges. After all, police officers wear badges, why not church officers? Wouldn't it look nice--a shiny star or maybe a cross? Maybe they could call him Deputy Dudley Deacon.

Oh Dudley--he doesn't know much about being a deacon. It never occurred to him to look in his Bible and try to figure it out. Dudley's glad they publish a serving schedule for the deacons so he knows when he's supposed to come to church. Someone thought that if they made him a deacon he might come more often. Well, it didn't work. But he's proud to be a deacon. And he's glad to help serve communion when he comes. But that's about all he does.

But his brother, now that's a different story. Dean Deacon, when he was first asked to be a deacon, he went to the Bible to find out what a deacon was supposed to do. You know what? He found more about the kind of person a deacon is supposed to be than about the kind of work a deacon is supposed to do.

He found out that deacons, like elders, are supposed to be model Christians. He got to reading in 1 Timothy 3 and he found out that deacons are supposed to be worthy of respect, sincere, self-controlled, and honest. They're supposed to "hold on to the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience," it said. They're supposed to be tried and true Christians--faithful in marriage, honoring Christ in the home.

Well, Dean wondered if he would be able to live up to that, but with God's help, he purposed to do his best. He wanted to be a Christian leader. But he still wondered, what's a deacon supposed to do?

He studied his Bible a little harder. He found out that the meaning of the word deacon itself was "servant." So, he figured if he was going to be a deacon, he was going to be a servant in the church.

That was fine with him. Jesus said that he didn't come to be served but to serve and to give his life for others. If being a servant was good enough for Jesus, it was good enough for him. Besides, Dean wanted to help in the work of the church however he could. He wanted to serve.

He did some more studying. He got to reading in the book of Acts, and he came across chapter 6. He read about a time when the church

was growing and the needs of the people were great. The apostles were doing their best to respond to the needs but they found that, as the church grew, the demands grew. They just couldn't keep up with it all and still provide the kind of leadership they needed to provide through prayer and the teaching of the word. So they found seven men--men full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom. And they appointed these men and commissioned them to do the work of providing for the material needs of the people. The particular work in Acts chapter 6 was caring for the widows in the church by seeing to it that they had enough food.

These seven men have often been called the first deacons. They did a work of practical service which freed the apostles to spend their time in prayer and teaching and preaching. They worked to provide people's physical needs, if you will, so that others could focus on providing for their spiritual needs. Both ministries were vitally important, they were just different. In a similar way, as the church grew, the **elders** were entrusted with a ministry which emphasized prayer and teaching of the word of God, while **deacons** (deaconesses, too) were given the responsibility of working out the details of caring for other needs of those in the church, doing the "nuts and bolts" of ministry, so to speak. Now that's not to say that deacons never did the work of teaching or that they left all the praying and more "spiritual" pursuits up to others. On the contrary, deacons often served as spiritual leaders, too. Well, Dean Deacon saw all this in the scriptures and he decided that he would gladly serve as a deacon, and he still does. Someone said that he ought to be promoted to being an elder. Well, he didn't find anything in the Bible about an automatic deacon-to-elder promotion. He did find a lot about different people having different gifts for ministry, and he felt like he was better gifted to serve as a deacon than an elder, and he sees his service as a deacon as being just as much an honor as being an elder. So he's happy just being Dean Deacon.

And he's looking for ways to serve. He helps serve communion and he helps pass the offering plate and he helps in ushering because a deacon is a helper. These are ways that he can serve. He doesn't find anything specifically about serving communion in the Bible. But he counts it an honor. A special opportunity to serve. He serves on a committee because he knows the church needs helpers in every area of ministry, and a deacon is a helper. And he's always looking for more ways to serve. He's checking on the widows and the single people in the church because he knows they often need a helping hand. He keeps an eye on the elderly 'cause they might need him. He's available as much as he can be and he's willing to help. Dean Deacon, he's a dandy deacon. Be like Dean, forget about Dudley, and you can look forward to hearing those precious words from your Lord Jesus, "Well done, thou good and faithful **deacon**--(or, the same word in Greek)--**thou good and faithful servant.**"

Two Sisters, Too

Well, I've got two more people to tell you about briefly--Delilah and Dorcas Deaconess. (It seems to me that 1 Tim.3:11 refers to this role, rather than to deacons' wives. The Greek says "women," not wives. Remember, they are servers, not rulers. Study it for yourself.) Delilah Deaconess, as you might guess by now, is kinda like Dudley Deacon and Elrod Elder--glad to be called a deaconess, but not really doing the work of a deaconess. She tries to make it when it's her turn to help prepare the communion, but sometimes she does and sometimes she doesn't. She tries to be a good Christian woman--sometimes she is, more often she isn't.

But Dorcas is different. Oh, she's not perfect--often she does well, but sometimes she doesn't. But Dorcas reads her Bible. And there she's found some things that help her to be a good deaconess. First, she's found that to be a deaconess is to be a woman deacon. Men and women are both called deacons in the Bible, and it means the same for both--servant. So Dorcas does her best to be a servant--to please God by being a blessing to others. She's found her name in the Bible, in Acts chapter 9, and she tries to live up to it. It's an interesting story about a woman named Dorcas who is described as a disciple of Jesus who was "always doing good and helping the poor." It's told how she had a ministry of making clothing for the needy, and she was dearly loved. She wasn't called a deaconess, but she was one (like lots of women today). Dorcas Deaconess wants to be like her. In reading her Bible, Dorcas Deaconess also read about Phoebe. She found her in Romans 16. She's described as a "servant" of the church (same word in Greek as "deacon"), of whom the apostle Paul said, "she has been a great help to many people, including me." That's what a deaconess does, she's a servant, a helper. When needed, she gladly helps prepare the communion, because it's an opportunity to serve. She works on committees, because she wants to help in the work of the church. She listens and observes in ways in which women are particularly gifted, being sensitive to the needs of others and working to meet those needs. However she can help in the work of the church, or with a brother or sister in need, or with anyone else in the name of Jesus, she willingly helps. She's a deaconess. She's looking forward to hearing "Well done, thou good and faithful **deaconess**, thou good and faithful **servant**."

May **all** of us--whether elders, deacons, deaconesses, or regular members of Christ's body--work faithfully for Him and hear His words of commendation and gratitude.

Finally, two more people I didn't tell you about before--Joe and Jane Christian. They're not elders or deacons, they're just Christians. And they may or may not be official members of the church here, but they are an important part of the fellowship here, faithfully participating in vari-

ety of ways. I thank God for Joe and Jane Christian. They're humbly happy to be called Christians. They don't need to be called elders or deacons or deaconesses. There is no more wonderful name to wear than that simple name Christian. And they want to be just that--Christian, Christ-like. They want to be faithful and live a life worthy of that name. If they're asked to serve as deacon, deaconess, or elder, they would gladly serve. But if not, that's OK, they're still Christians, and that's the name that matters most, that's the calling that really counts.

We know they are Christians by their love. We are all known as Christians by our love. In love, may we serve one another, as we seek to be faithful in serving the Lord. No matter what our office, we are called to be servants. May we serve the Lord in such a way that we can all look forward to the day when we can hear him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Survival of Older Churches Takes Vision

Bailey B. McBride in *Christian Chronicle*

The survival of small, older churches requires immense vision, continuity of leadership, a perpetual spirit of renewal, and a dedication to winning and keeping souls, not just surviving.

The history of most rural and urban churches does not inspire much confidence or hope. The cycle seems all too pat -- a promising beginning by people of great faith and total commitment to the church, a period of growth and numerical success, and then a lingering decline with a few periods of revival.

An exciting exception to this pattern is the Gloster Street Church of Christ in Tupelo, Mississippi. Tupelo, a city of about 25,000 people, is the county seat of Lee County. The Gloster Street church is the oldest in the county, having its origin shortly after the turn of the century. Lee County has a total population of about 50,000 with eleven churches of Christ. Four of the congregations were started by the Gloster Street church.

Although Tupelo is not a large city, Gloster Street has experienced some of the stages inner city churches face. The church is located downtown on a major state highway. The location near the center of town was ideal in the beginning, but as the town has grown outward, people have moved away from the center of town.

The Gloster Street church saw the opportunity for growth and helped financially in starting new congregations in newer neighborhoods. The last congregation spawned from Gloster began with a hundred members, most from Gloster, and a meeting place built on land purchased by the Gloster Street church.

One member observed the church seemed unable to recover from the loss of members to the last new work. Fifteen years ago the handwriting was on the wall -- the church seemed likely to die. The dying process had set in and the membership was mostly elderly -- 39 widows and 69 members over 70 years of age out of the 175 members. Membership was continuing to decline, and a general indifference was reflected in failure to maintain the building.

The past 15 years have seen reversal of the cycle. The church has grown again, and the signs of vitality are evident in everything from the facilities to the programs. Although many of the elderly members have died in the past 15 years, the church has grown. Sunday morning attendance averages 276. New members have come to work at Gloster Street, and the church has worked patiently to encourage the restoration of many former members who had stopped working or attending church. The church began working hard to bring a renewal through programs and personal relations.

Visitation became a very important part of the church's life. Those who had stopped attending church were visited. Those who visited worship services or Bible classes were visited. The church developed a strong reputation for friendliness and determination to help people with personal needs. Joe Connell, who has been preaching at Gloster Street for the past 14 years, says, "Enthusiasm began to spring from the hearts of the members, and a strong bond of unity set in. The new members were quickly made to feel a working part of the congregation. Over 100 are involved with our visitation program."

One of the fascinating aspects of the Gloster Street work has been the development of facilities. The church had never owned any parking areas, but had used the parking lot of a supermarket for 35 years. Four years ago the supermarket closed and the building was up for sale. The church purchased the property, remodeled their auditorium, and added 12,000 square feet of classrooms and offices. After 14 months of remodeling, the church had an auditorium to accommodate 350, their own parking lots, and spacious offices and Bible classrooms.

In addition, the church purchased two houses adjoining the property. The houses have been remodeled and the church has begun a retired preachers program modeled after the work in Lovington, N.M.

At a time when many churches have been paralyzed by debt, this Tupelo church has a wonderful success story. Joe Connell describes the funding plan: "The renovation and addition to our building was about \$800,000. We decided to go on a 48-week budget and keep all our mission work, etc. intact. We asked the members to give generously on fifth Sundays so we could pay for the building program from these special contributions. We set five years as our goal to repay the bank. In two years and nine months we met this goal." A church with a membership of 250 paid for an \$800,000 purchase in less than three years.

The church continues to plan visionary activities and to fund those projects through special contributions. During this past fall the congregation gave \$11,500 for foreign missions. In December a \$2,000 offering was given for special benevolence. An end-of-the year contribution, which had a \$25,000 goal, brought in \$28,253 to help pay for the houses purchased for other programs and for the educational fund. The Gloster Street church has a strong commitment to Christian education. For four years the church has provided every high school senior one year at a Christian college. This past year they sent four freshmen to Christian colleges, paying tuition, room, board, books, and transportation if the student needed it.

In addition to the program for retired preachers in which the church provides housing in return for visitation, teaching and other ministries, this congregation has an intern program for younger men who have finished their education but need practical training and experience. Brian Galloway, a graduate of the Harding Graduate School of Religion, is currently working at Gloster Street. He preaches regularly on Sunday night, has the opportunity to work with the three elders, and assists Joe Connell in ministering to the church.

Tupelo, Mississippi, is a typical town of 25,000 people, but the Gloster Street Church of Christ is an exceptional church. It has survived the throes of giving birth to four new congregations, and it has approached the brink of death, but has revived to serve the community and to teach the power of salvation in Jesus Christ.

No one is quite sure what elements were most important in making the Gloster Street church's revival possible, but those who have shared in the work have great faith that God wants the church to serve and to inspire. Another characteristic of those involved is friendliness to each other and to strangers. Also the people are very open so that strangers can get involved and find their own niche. Finally, peace and harmony characterize these believers and their approach to each other.

Old congregations can grow.

R. H. BOLL and the *Titanic*

[Editor's Remarks: R. H. Boll was W&W editor from 1916-1956. Born in Germany and reared as a Roman Catholic, he came to saving trust in Christ through members of Churches of Christ. Hans Rollman shared those same three experiences, and, like Bro. Boll, emigrated to North America. Thus he has a keen interest in our former editor, and in fact hopes to write a book about him. Bro. Rollmann sent us this article. (His 11-year-old son, Peter, typed it.) The father is a professor of religion in Newfoundland, Canada, and has a website regarding the Stone-Campbell movement (with a "page" about R.H.B.) on the internet. Its URL is:

<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/people/rboll.html>

Introduction by Hans Rollmann

The *Titanic* continues to capture our imagination as the recent success of the film *Titanic* demonstrates. In St. John's, this eastern-most city of North America, in the wind-swept Atlantic island province of Newfoundland, only 590 kilometers north-west of the luxury liner's watery grave, the fate of the *Titanic* has always been a topic of conversation. In the local museum a life vest from the boat can be viewed, and only recently was a log of the final wireless transmissions released by a family whose members had recorded them with horror, but were unable to help. Around the world, the name *Titanic* has become synonymous with disaster, since the seemingly unsinkable ship sank in little less than three hours with a loss of 1522 lives when struck by an iceberg. Here human confidence in technology bordering on hybris had been mercilessly put to the test, and lost. Only later did some of the causes and circumstances of this great catastrophe come to light: the lack of life-boats; the poor evacuation and response; the blatant class preferences during the evacuation....

The *Titanic* has become a supreme warning example for the religious world, an incentive for preparedness in the face of uncertainty and human precariousness. It is thus not surprising that the religious writers and preachers have used this topic ever since the tragedy happened. In the annals of Church of Christ periodicals, the Gospel Advocate and its front page editor, Robert Henry Boll, featured the fate of the *Titanic* in the 25 April issue of 1912. Permit me to share with you Boll's narrative and reflections, written shortly after the boat sank.

THE DISASTER OF THE TITANIC

by Robert Henry Boll

At this writing the awful news has gone forth that the Titanic, the largest ship in existence, with about sixteen hundred lives on board, has sunk in the depths of the Atlantic. The ship was as long as three city blocks. It was magnificently built, equipped, furnished, a floating palace with all the appointments and luxuries for the comfort of the person and delight of the eye human ingenuity could invent. On board were about twenty-three hundred persons. It was a city in itself. It was a little world, and the great and small, the splendor and glory, the wealth and wisdom, the sin and vanity of the world were represented there.

Among its passengers were numbered some of the richest men in the world. There was John Jacob Astor, possessor of a fortune of one hundred and fifty millions, returning from the honeymoon trip of his recent ill-reputed marriage. There were several who were worth one hundred millions, and a good many more who were multimillionaires -- big merchants, heads of manufacturing concerns, railroad magnates. Among other items, pearls and diamonds to vast value went down. Then there was a long list of second-cabin passengers, and a longer one still perhaps of third class. Also a crew of about eight hundred and sixty men. The third-class passengers were unimportant people, the papers I saw gave none of their names.

On Sunday night, April 14, the ship was proceeding on her course. There was the usual amount of light and frivolous chaffing, no doubt, of hilarity and pleasure, of vain exhibition, of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, that one may observe at any time on such ships. No anticipation of any disaster. Were they not on the greatest and safest ship afloat? Who would be pessimistic and apprehensive in the gay crowd? About ten o'clock the Titanic struck an iceberg. Forthwith, as soon as the seriousness of the collision was realized, the wireless apparatus flashed forth insistent calls for immediate help. The stations on land and the ships within a radius of two hundred miles caught it, and there was a rush to carry relief. But, according to closest calculation, the nearest ship could not reach them till Monday, 10 A.M. Would the Titanic be able to keep afloat that long? The signals kept up. Now she was sinking by the head. The company declared the Titanic was unsinkable. If she did list downward on one end, there were many watertight compartments which would certainly keep her afloat.

The signals kept flashing in, more insistent: help, help, immediate help they needed. Now they set out the lifeboats -- a small fleet of them, filled chiefly with women and children, about eight hundred persons in all. The Titanic was still afloat, for she kept signaling. There was general assurance that she would hold out till relief came. About 2:30 A.M. the

last wireless from the Titanic. It was indistinct, confused, blurred, and stopped abruptly. After that, silence. Every apparatus, ashore or afloat, was tuned and strained to catch the faintest signal. No more signals! A heavy, deadly agony of fear fell upon the anxious ones on the shores as they awaited the further details that would reveal the fate of their loved ones. The news account declares that the Titanic lies buried two miles deep in the great Atlantic, having carried with it the greater part of the lives of the passengers and all the crew, and its vast wealth of jewels, and all its pomp and glory.

A Few Reflections

A catastrophe like this should not pass over the minds of the people of God without making its deep impression. It is, as it were, a miniature reproduction, and, like the destruction of the cities of the plain, a type forewarning and foreshadowing the goal of the world. Just as the Titanic sank, just so shall pass away the world and the lust thereof. So unexpectedly; so utterly beyond the reach of help; so irretrievably, shall it all perish, with its pomp and its glitter, its social distinctions, its pride, its folly, its wealth, its sins; and so shall it all be swallowed up in ruin.

"Salvation" was a great word that night on the Titanic. They may never have known the significance of it before. But they learned the meaning and the value of it that night in at least its temporal aspect; and possibly in its eternal import also. Most of them too late. Yet there was a remnant that escaped.

And was it not a privilege to each one of those that were called and permitted to enter the lifeboats, even if they did have to leave their things behind, and perhaps some friends and loved ones; even if they did have to endure discomfort and exposure on the small boats? But there are the many to-day, Christians, too, who "mind earthly things;" who count the salvations of God too difficult and inconvenient; who cleave to the world, and shall therefore be engulfed with it in its ruin and condemnation. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Finally, if you or I had been before enlightened of God as to the fate that awaited the Titanic on this voyage, we should have felt bound by every consideration of honor and regard for human beings to warn them each and all; and we would have endured their skepticism, their jeers and ridiculing and scorn, insults even, if by any means we might dissuade some from the ill-fated ship. But God has told us what shall come and must come to the world and how "the end of all things is at hand." If you know the Savior, if you know the Way of escape, will you not for His sake and for the sake of perishing souls go tell it today?

REDEMPTION and CONVERSION

Alex V. Wilson

Let's begin this study by doing a little algebra. Maybe you, like me, haven't done much algebra for decades. Never mind. The lesson, though important, is quite simple to understand.

Here are some formulae to consider: $R+C=S$. $C-R=L$. $R-C=EB$. Have you got that memorized yet? Here is the interpretation thereof: **Redemption plus Conversion equals Salvation. Conversion minus Redemption equals Legalism. Redemption minus Conversion equals "Easy-Believism."**

I. SALVATION

Salvation can be considered from two angles. Redemption is God's provision. Conversion is man's response.

A. Redemption: This word was widely used in ancient times. To be redeemed was an experience that thousands of slaves and prisoners of war yearned for intensely. It meant **to obtain freedom from slavery or captivity by paying a ransom price.** "Redeem" and "redemption" are found dozens of times, in the Old Covenant scriptures as well as the New. Here are just a few samples:

"I will free you from being slaves to [the Egyptians], and I will redeem you with...mighty acts of judgment." "O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for...with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins." "[We are] justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." [Notice the contrast between "freely" and "redemption"--paying a price. Justification is free to us but terribly costly to Christ. "Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe."] "We ourselves...groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for...the redemption of our bodies." [So there's an aspect of redemption which is still future.] "Christ...gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness." [Not from our guilt alone, but from our wickedness.] (Ex.6:6; Psa.130:7f; Rom.3:24 & 8:23; Tit.2:14.)

B. Conversion: In ancient times and still today, this simply means **turning or changing.** It may refer to religion ("He converted to the worship of Baal"), morals ("She was converted from extreme selfishness to great generosity"), or everyday experience ("I converted our family room into a study"). God's demand for sinners to change direction and turn to Him sounds from one end of Scripture to the other, as the following verses indicate. Examples could be multiplied.

"If my people...will turn from their wicked ways, then will I...forgive their sin." Elijah prayed, "O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that...you are turning their hearts back again." David promised, "I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you." "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to...our God, for he will freely pardon." "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?"

"Unless you change/ Unless you turn/ Except ye be converted (NIV/RSV/KJV) and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." "Repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out...." "They told how the Gentiles had been converted." "Epenetus...was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia." "You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God..." "You were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd...." "Whoever turns/ brings back/ converts (NIV/RSV/KJV) a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins." (2 Chr.7:14; 1 Kngs.18:37; Psa.51:13; Prov.28:13; Isa.55:7; Ezek. 33:11; Matt.18:3; Acts 3:19 & 15:3; Rom.16:5; 1 Thes.1:9; 1 Pet. 2:25; Jas.5:20.)

II. Two Deadly Errors

If salvation consists of God's provision and man's response, then to omit or downplay either aspect can result in catastrophe. And this has happened repeatedly.

1. C-R=L. When preachers put all their emphasis on conversion, man's part, and say little about Christ's redeeming death, that is legalism. Over and over Paul was confronted by Jewish legalists who relied on their obedience to God's law. He kept showing them the impossibility of earning salvation by our efforts. He kept pointing them to God's grace and Christ's cross--the only means of having "blessed assurance" in our relationship with the Holy One (Rom.5:1-2; 8:1).

Sadly, legalism didn't die out in the first century. It's alive and well in our day. I saw a Sunday school quarterly that said, "Becoming a Christian is a lifelong process of trying to be like Christ." If they'd changed "becoming" to "being," it would be true: "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ" (1 Cor.11:1). But as it stands, it's hopeless self-confidence instead of Christ-confidence. It's studying hard to make a passing gradepoint average, but never knowing when you might fail an exam and flunk out of school. It's ceaseless wondering if you're gonna make it to heaven or not. What a travesty of the great salvation God wants us

to have and to know that we have. "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me **has** eternal life and will not be condemned; **he has crossed over** from death to life." "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life." (Jn.5:24; 1 Jn.5:13.)

Regrettably, legalism has often flourished in the Stone-Campbell movement. Back in 1874, T. W. Brents wrote **The Gospel Plan of Salvation**, a book which influenced generations of Church of Christ preachers. Richard Hughes observes, "This plan, according to Brents, was centered less in what God had done for humankind than in what human beings must do in order to be saved. There is not a single chapter devoted to the atonement, to the cross, or to God's grace....The plan of salvation consists of faith, repentance, confession and baptism. Of the 382 pages he devoted to the 'plan of salvation,' 327 focus on baptism."

Similarly, in the mid-1900s, popular preacher and editor Foy Wallace Jr. published a sermon entitled **The Certified Gospel**. It was **five pages** long, but contained **only five lines** on the themes of the cross and atonement. Again, redemption was minimized, conversion was maximized. No wonder, then, that in the 1950s my wife heard a Church of Christ preacher say several times, "I think of my life as a bushel basket into which I put deeds done for Christ. I hope that by the time I die, my basket will be full enough so God will accept me into heaven."

Also it's no wonder that about the same time, a conference in the Philippines (not for the public, or even Christians in general, but for preachers and elders) contained three almost identical sermons in a row. All were preached by Filipino preachers, and all were about faith-repentance-confession-baptism-enduring to the end. The only difference was the illustration used: a stairway with 5 steps; a hand with 5 fingers; a ladder with 5 rungs. That's **all** those preachers had ever heard from their missionary tutors: what sinners must do to be saved, what sinners must do to be saved! But they'd never heard what **God** had to do so we could be saved. Dennis Allen preached on the grace of God, and a missionary there who had never heard such a message was transported from Sinai to Calvary. He became a proclaimer of the cross of Christ from that time onward.

Perhaps you've noticed that in this series of articles, "What the Bible Teaches," we've already included four articles on God's grace and Christ's death--more than on any other topic. That's because they are the **source of all other blessings**. Without them there is no gospel at all. Without them, close up the church and go home! May these themes always be at the **core** of our faith and our preaching.

2. **R-C=EB.** But legalism is not the only grave error. If Satan can't push us to one extreme, he'll pull us to the other if he can. So, in reaction to self-righteousness and its results (pride when you do well, despair when you fail), some preachers and churches have swung to **easy-believism**. They talk loud and long about God's mercy (that's good) but whisper barely a word about His holy justice (that's bad).

Some stress the power of positive thinking, and the importance of self-esteem. While there are valuable truths in what they say, there are gaping holes due to what they don't say. Some proclaim the gospel, which is essential, but don't preach God's law which makes the good news good. The gospel is glorious, but the law too is good (1 Tim.1:11,8). We need Sinai as well as Calvary! Without Sinai we feel no need for Calvary (Rom.7:7-12).

Such teachers and churches love the verses we quoted about redemption. But they muffle the ones about conversion. They say a lot about believing and faith but little about repentance. (And not much about James 2. either.) They imply that sinners can take Jesus as their savior while not bothering to surrender to Him as lord. (They say that surrender is an optional 2nd step for super-Christians.) Am I exaggerating? Am I beating a straw man? Ponder the following true examples.

a)When in college I heard a wellknown radio preacher speak in chapel about Matt.11:28-30. "Many of you have accepted Christ's invitation, 'Come unto me.' So you are saved. But you have not accepted His 2nd invitation, 'Take my yoke upon you.' You really need to do that, to take the yoke of serving Him. Oh, you'll go to heaven without ever doing that, but your Christian life will never satisfy." [Can we really split up Jesus' invitation that way? Can we divide asunder what Jesus joined together?]

b)Years later I heard a seminary professor say in chapel, "In Luke 14:15-35 Jesus taught about two subjects. His parable about the man who invited many guests to his banquet--that's about **salvation**. The banquet was free: nobody paid anything to attend. But then He talked about counting the cost of following Him. That's about **discipleship**. Never confuse those two. True, we should urge all believers to go on and become disciples as well, but we must never present discipleship as a requirement for heaven. That would be legalism."

[Wait a minute! Of course salvation is free, as we stressed above. But can anyone who reads Lk.14:25-33 conclude that bearing our cross and following Jesus are optional extras for a Christian, like cruise control in a car? Is "disciple" an advanced stage of "Christian," or are they different terms for one and the same person? See Acts 11:26c.]

c)An evangelist from America, preaching in open-air meetings in Manila, repeated this statement 2-3 times: "**You don't have to give up anything to be saved!**" (Do you know any contradictory verses?)

d)Some meetings were held in Toronto emphasizing the church's worldwide missionary task. After one meeting "four or five young men, rather angry, came up to talk with the speaker. He had been emphasizing the claims of Christ as Lord upon every Christian. They said, 'We came forward to receive Christ at a meeting some months ago. **We were assured that we did not have to give up anything to become Christians. All we had to do was believe.** Now you insist that if we are Christians Christ has a claim upon us, that we must seek His will for our lives. If this is true, we don't want to be Christians. We're not prepared to follow Christ in this way.'" (C. Stacey Woods in Some Ways of God.)

What Does Scripture Say?

Well, we already quoted thirteen verses about conversion. And they didn't make it sound optional. (We could have quoted many more.) Paul spoke of a double conversion, a turning from and a turning to. Turning to God is faith. Turning from idols, including self, is repentance. Everyone agrees that faith is required, but repentance is just as essential. Jesus twice said, "Unless you repent, you shall perish." Peter instructed all his hearers to repent and be baptized in Jesus Christ's name (i.e., believing in Jesus as the Messiah) in order to receive forgiveness and God's gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul boldly declared, "God commands all people everywhere to repent." [Doesn't sound like cruise control to me.] (1 Thes.1:9; Lk.13:3,5; Acts 2:38 & 17:30.)

The letter to the Romans is the mountain peak of Scripture's teaching about salvation by grace through faith. Yet both in its opening and closing chapters a significant idea is found: "We [apostles] call people...to the **obedience that comes from faith.**" "...to bring about the **obedience of faith.**" Also in Acts, Luke tells of many priests in Jerusalem who "became **obedient to the faith.**" And in Hebrews we read the daring statement, Christ "became the source of eternal **salvation for all who obey him!**" Such verses by themselves sound legalistic. But they're not. They are clear declarations by the God of grace.

He redeemed us who did not deserve mercy but did deserve wrath. He saves us not because of our goodness but despite our badness. He does not save us because we obey. But also He does not save those who refuse to obey! (Rom.1:5 & 16:26[RSV]; Acts 6:7; Heb.5:9; 2 Thes.1:8. Compare James 2.)

R+C=S. C-R=L. R-C=EB. It's important to get it right.

Christian Education and the LEARNER

(Conclusion in a series of 3 articles)

Paul A. Clark

Persons fearfully and wonderfully made are the focus of Christian education. Being made in the image of God means more than that we have the physical features of God. We can think, make decisions, and make our lives effective. We even have a free will to decide whether or not we will be good as God wants us to be. All of these are God-like characteristics designed to give us the potential for learning and also designed to bring us closer to God.

A prevalent theory about learners is that they pass through specific life stages. During the first infant stage, children actually learn a great deal about persons, environment and language. If children are in a Christian environment all of their learning is from the Christian point of view even as infants. In the next stage, children who are now able to talk and walk begin to learn more about language, about explanations of the world, and about sensitivity to other persons. Even though their interpretation of the world is just beginning, children need to express themselves through questions and statements about the world. Indeed, children make considerable progress as learners between two years old and seven years old.

Elementary school age children learn that things that appear to be different can sometimes be the same. They learn that reality is not established by looking merely at the outward appearance. Children learn to read and to compute. Children are attractive and full of energy which can be harnessed for important projects. At the end of this period, at approximately age twelve, children can read the newspaper and begin to read the Bible with some understanding.

At age twelve, children begin to understand abstract problem solving and the symbolic (language). Children become sensitive enough to be able to sympathetically understand the point of view of others. Highly interested in ideas, children may be frustrated to some extent as they examine the different ideas and the points of view that exist in the world. One psychologist believed that adolescents need to find themselves and become more self aware by thinking through who they are and what they want to do in this world. Perhaps it is this kind of thinking that causes many young persons to become aware of personal sin and seek real identity by believing in Christ and becoming a Christian.

Other educators believe that children do not develop in orderly stages. Children become interested in various topics. As they become interested in a topic they will learn about it as they can handle the complexity of the topic and the ability to solve problems related to it. Chil-

dren are capable of interest in spiritual things and they are interested in the Bible to the extent that they can talk about a surprising number of facts and truths. Young learners are curious and they enjoy being involved in various activities in the learning experience as opposed to having the teacher talk to them all of the time. The Sunday school materials which I have examined do provide activities in addition to suggestions for teacher talk. Christian educators should search for student interest and encourage interest in all kinds of learning, especially spiritual ones. Spiritual learning should be fun for the child but not to the extent that there would be no lesson content in the activities.

The Christian educator needs to be concerned not only about the content of the teaching but also about the characteristics of the learners. Children respond to Christian caring. Lessons are to be meaningful. The teachers must tailor lessons to the characteristics and needs of each child. Each child is important because he or she is a person for whom Christ died.

[Keep praying for Bro. Clark's health.--AVW]

Personal Expressions

Learn From Life's Lessons

Joyce Broyles

Quietly slipping into the library, she slumped into a chair at the back corner table. Most mornings she sat near my desk, laughing and talking about her job. This morning, however, her head gradually lowered to her arm on the table, and I could see her shoulders shaking.

As unobtrusively as possible, I worked my way over to her table. "Have a run in with your mother first thing this morning?" I whispered, my hand on her back.

Nodding her head, she sniffled. "Are you alright?" I asked. Sometimes, a student may have been abused, but this time I knew it was not so. She looked up, wiped at her eyes, and nodded again.

"She won't let me go!" Her face screwed up and the tears returned again. Hesitantly, she poured out her story, misery apparent in her countenance.

I tried to comfort her as I hugged her. I listened to her, and then tried to give some suggestions. Later, I realized that I had been speaking to her from my heart. My own experiences had taught me much, and I wanted to share it with her.

My daughter was almost four years old when she became a part of our family. Because I had missed those first important years of her life, I wanted to keep her with me as long as I could. It was very difficult for me to realize that she would not stay that sweet little girl always. Indeed she was growing up faster than I wanted her to! "There's a world of difference," my mother used to tell me, between a pre-adolescent and a teenager. It was perplexing to me to watch my little girl develop her own personality and grow away from what I had been accustomed to. She preferred being with her friends on weekends rather than staying home with me. No longer did she enjoy crafts and cooking, or shopping and sewing with me. As her wants and needs changed, I fought to hold on to her, to protect her, and to keep her close to me.

While all of this was happening, I did not understand the significance of it. I thought that I was being a good mother, keeping an eye on my daughter, and teaching her all the right things. It did not occur to me that I should start letting her make decisions, even if they were wrong or different from mine. I just wanted to keep her from being hurt.

As I told of my own realization and remorse, the young lady who was crying in my library saw a little of the frustrations that her own mother must be feeling. "She loves you very much and is only trying to protect you," I told her.

I recommended that she schedule some time with her mother each week. And, when they were both in a good mood, the girl could explain to her mother that along with her job had come changes in what she likes to do. "Reassure her, though," I added, "that your changes do not mean you have stopped loving her." Most of all, I advised patience for both of them.

Perhaps the most agonizing duty of a mother is to let her daughter go. As her darling grows away from a family-centered life for a time, she must find out how to deal with choices and consequences without having parents to bail her out. It means letting her get hurt and learn how to overcome the pain. Gaining that knowledge now will help her acquire character for adulthood.

I do not know if the young lady learned anything from me this morning or not. She smiled at me as she left the room, but she may have decided to go her own way and keep fighting for her independence. Her mother may continue to fight, also.

I just know that once I let go, my daughter found her way on her own. By doing so, she left our house, but not our home. Because of that, she visits often now, and we continue to proudly enjoy her personal expressions.

Voices From the Field

Mark and Candy Garrett

Feb. 10, 1998

We have watched God provide our financial support over the past few months and it builds our faith! Little by little pledges have come to us and now we find ourselves at 99% of the required minimum. With just 1% left to be pledged, we've already bought the tickets for a February 16 return to Senegal, confident that God will provide that remaining "little bit." The Lord is truly our Jehovah-Jirch! We are so thankful for the way you have supported us during this home service. You have been God's hands ministering to us!

Kathryn and Bryan tell us every day now, "I can't wait to get to Senegal! How many more sleeps is it?" We are excited too. We are counting the days and packing like mad. The chore, of course, is deciding what to take and what to leave. We look forward to the challenges of this new term, eagerly anticipating what God will do.

Aliou S. started his walk with the Lord with great enthusiasm. His attitudes changed for the better, and he enjoyed listening to the Scripture. He learned to read Wolof (one of the four languages he speaks) and seemed to be devouring what he read. But while we have been in the States, reports have been a bit discouraging. He no longer frequents the company of Christians and seems to be (from reports we received) struggling with the love of money. Please pray that he will see the error of his ways, that he will turn to the Lord as his provider, and return to fellowship with God's people. We do care about him and hate to hear of him walking this way.

We Thank God For:

refreshment as you've shared how God has been working in you.

encouraging supporters who have been faithful in giving and praying for us.

good health, and a happy addition to the family: Ethan, now 4 months old.

Please Pray For:

Wolof-speaking believers, that they stand strong.

short-term missionaries to help us in teaching English conversation classes.

TO GET OUR NEWSLETTER: The Garrett Grapevine,

c/o 399 College St., Winchester, KY 40391 USA

I am not a man of mouth and head, but rather hands, feet and heart, sort of speaking. In a non-Christian country like Japan, and particularly in this area of the countryside where the Nichiren Buddhism has been deeply rooted in the hearts of people for hundreds of years, a word or preaching does not attract nor convince people, generally speaking.

But they can watch us how we live and serve, or how we are willing to identify ourselves with their daily life and needs of various kinds. Wherever there are people there is always the need for Jesus and His love. They can sense rather easily that the strange crazy man like myself or my wife has "Something different" than an ordinary countryman of their own. We can not fully identify ourselves with our local people who can not get themselves out of their ancient orders and culture or religious binding force in rural community, but we can smile at them, laugh with them and weep with them over their sorrow and pain.

Dec. 29th, I believe it was, there was a phone call from a local vet, asking me if I would conduct a funeral service for his pet pig that died suddenly that morning without him noticing it. I had never heard of a Christian minister in Japan conducting a "Christian funeral service for a pig" in my whole life here in Japan. Have you in America?

I asked the Lord, "Lord, what are you going to do?" He smiled at me saying, "My son, you know the answer." (The wife of this young vet in our mountainous rural community happened to be one of our Sunday School pupils in Tokyo many years ago. I do not know if this was His providence, or just a coincidence, but she was the one suggested her husband to ask me for the funeral services. He and myself have been working together to take care of the abandoned dogs in the mountains.)

I told the vet to invite his close friends who love animals to gather together around the corpse. It was a heavy snowing day, but several gathered together just wondering what I was going to do.

I had prepared a sheet of paper in which I wrote some Scripture verses concerning our own life and death. I also prepared several gospel songs to sing together, something they had never sung before in their life, except his wife.

I told them that (1) I do not know if animals have souls like ours, (2) I do not know if their "souls" would or could go to heaven. But I also told them that (1) God is our Creator, (2) He has created animals for us as we learn in the very first chapter of Genesis, (3) He was gra-

cious enough to save them with Noah and his family in the ark, (4) Jesus our Lord and Savior paid attention to birds of the field and foxes, (5) that we have sin in our heart, (6) that sin prevents us from going to God's Palace when we die, (7) and for that God sent His own Son to die on the cross, (8) and that we do need to accept Him to be our Savior and Lord, and (9) since God is a God of grace and love, if He so wishes there would be pets in Heaven to help us praise His love together. The important thing for us is to consider our own heart of sin and accept Jesus Christ in our heart. I invited them to come to our Bethany Home to study the Bible together.

I asked them to join their hands together to make a circle and asked them to bow their heads in prayer for our souls and thanked Him for His giving us His Son for our sin. I know people in Japan do not hug or hold hands like you do in America. So these were also entirely new experiences for them who had had no direct connection with Christians. It was good to watch them sing Christian hymns and gospel songs. The following day we had its cremation.

In the mountains I am a minister, a servant, a slave for Jesus and His people. As long as they need me I am always willing to be with them. If it rains and I hear someone crying in the west, then I will rush toward the west. If the wind blows from the east with a weeping cry, then I want to go to the east to be with them. So, in the non-Christian rural community, I am enjoying Christian ministry. I wish more people could come and enjoy His ministry in this part of the world, instead of just watching the Olympic games. The Lord is always so gracious to us all.

A Letter Of Testimony

My name is Warren Frank. I am an alcoholic. I tried everything, detoxic, AA, but it wasn't until Jesus Christ came into my life that I could put alcohol aside and have not touched it since. Chaplain Frank Mullins (now a close friend) introduced me to Jesus and I am now a "born again Christian" and put my life in Christ. I am now a devout studier of the Bible and Frank gave me one of your quarterly lesson books, which I found very inspirational in my daily Bible study.

Christ and Culture Conference

Jerry Carmichael
Linton Church of Christ

The Westlake Church of Christ in Indianapolis, Indiana was the host for this conference on November 14-16. "Understanding Unity" was the overall theme. Speakers included Rubel Shelly, Bob Duncan, Victor Knowles, Russ Blowers, Carson Reed (the minister of the Westlake church), Ed Powers, Curtis McClane, Gary Collier, Kent Ellett, and myself, Jerry Carmichael.

Theme lectures were delivered by Shelly, Reed and Knowles. The others were involved in classes.

I was asked to do a workshop class on working together with other churches. I was able to share what the Lord has led me to do in the various ministries that I have had in the churches where I have ministered. I believe there are areas where we can work together with other churches without sacrificing Biblical truth and without being in competition with each other. For example, in meeting the needs of the community churches can cooperate together and still maintain their own identity.

Every church needs to have a reason for existence in reaching out to its community. Some churches have daycares, some weight programs, others have youth programs that are opened up to the community.

I was able to share how the Churches of Christ in the Louisville area began and continue to support the work of the School of Biblical Studies, which is a wonderful example of church cooperation among our fellowship of congregations in the Kentuckiana area. Woodland Bible Camp is another evidence of the spirit of cooperation among churches. God continues to bless these ministries as we work together.

There was a spirit of unity throughout the conference. I felt welcomed and appreciated in the meetings.

Westlake is special to us because our daughter Sharon and her husband Cameron Cox are very active in the congregation. Cameron is on the counselling staff at the church and works as a part time custodian. Some from our congregation who live in Indianapolis also attend there.

Tapes of the lessons are available by contacting the Westlake Church of Christ, 612 N. Highschool Rd., Indianapolis, IN. 46214. Their phone number is 317-244-3974.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

Linton Church of Christ

1997 was a great year at the Linton Church of Christ. During the year we had a total of 29 responses. There were 12 that placed membership, 4 baptisms, and 13 for rededication and prayer. The young people put a challenge to the minister last spring that if we got 150 on a Sunday morning that I had to preach from the rooftop. Well, we did! And I did! On April 20th we had exactly 150 for worship, but the weather the following three weeks prevented us having worship outside. So we had a beautiful outdoor service on May 18th. I climbed the ladders to preach from the top of our building and the sermon was about rooftop experiences of those in the Bible! There was television coverage by WTWO-TV out of Terre Haute for the occasion.

In March of 1997 we purchased a 15 passenger van and have it nearly paid for. We have been able to make two or three payments each month since the purchase. We thank God for the use that both our youth and adults have had out of it already.

Four years ago we began going on fellowship trips to the Smokies and to Branson. In 1997 we took two trips to Branson for four days. We went in the spring and again in November so we could take in the

Christmas shows. A great time was enjoyed by all. There are usually about 44-46 of us on a charter bus, about half are from the Linton congregation. Once our church signs up we open the trip up to the community. We go a lot cheaper than other tour groups go, and see and do more than they do! We have a great bus driver for Turner Coaches. Lloyd Turpen, one of the elders at the Dugger Church of Christ, gets us there and back, along with the help of the Lord.

Our church continues to support the work of Woodland Bible Camp. We are heavily involved in the ministry there. I continue to serve on the faculty and board of the School of Biblical Studies in Louisville. God is richly blessing both of these ministries and we are thankful to be a part of them.

Our revivals in 1997 were conducted by Brother Nathan Burks and Brother Don McGee. Both are tremendous speakers for the Lord. A great time of fellowship was enjoyed with them.

-- Jerry Carmichael

Jennings Church of Christ

Each year, some of the best speakers from area churches are asked to teach a class at First Church on May Street. The effort is called Christian Workers Clinic, and is for anyone who loves the Lord and wants to learn

more. Lessons were from the book of Ephesians this year, and Bro. A.J. Istre taught Thursday evening, Feb. 5. Other speakers were Robby Bacon, Brian Hamilton, Mike Little, Hank Tankersly, Eddie Hendrix, Bruce Runner, and Dennis LeDoux.

Feb. 22-25 God used Bro. Sonny Childs to break the Word and give us a feast. We were challenged, exhorted, and instructed to look into our lives and serve the Master! Thanks to John and Janet Prather for keeping the Childs and to each who took them into their homes for fellowship. God has blessed us richly.

Portland Christian High School Chorus will be here to sing Sunday, April 12, at the morning worship.

Congratulations to Donna Lasserre for being honored by the Jennings High Quarterback Club as the Most Supportive Member for 1997. The club also sent a note of thanks for the breakfast given to the football team.

Locust Street Church of Christ, Johnson City TN

The Milligan College music group Highest Praise joined us on March 22nd for the evening service. Emily Lawyer, the granddaughter of the late Vernon Lawyer, is part of this group. Highest Praise is blessed with

tremendous talent and the evening was certainly a blessing to all who attended!

Paul and Virginia Kitzmiller are in Kenishma! Paul will likely be teaching over 300 children in several different locations. They are very encouraged by the initial response to their work in Russia. Please keep them in you thoughts and prayers.

Paul Clark is home from the hospital! He even preached and taught a few times, but now must quit. He will probably begin chemo-therapy. His address is 1912 Sundale Rd., Johnson City TN 37604.

Tell City Church

Saturday Morning Men's Fellowship meets at 6:00 a.m. at the church. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Are we Christians before baptism? Come let's search the Scriptures together!

Our "Families at Risk" workshop will be held on Friday, Feb. 27 and Sat. Feb. 28th, with Earl Mullins as our speaker. Please keep him and his wife Phyllis in your prayers. A catered dinner will be provided on Saturday. All the members can pitch-in with desserts only.

Rejoice with us as Roy and Donna White, both baptized believers, have placed their membership with us!

ACTS to the MAX!
Monthly Seminar For Youth
Led by Sonny Childs
Sellersburg, Ind. Church of Christ
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

APRIL 18 - "Does God Hear a Sinner's Prayer?" (Acts 10:11)

MAY 9 - "'Go Ye' Means 'Go Me'"
(Acts 13-14)

JUNE 25-28: TRIP TO THE SMOKIES

ADULT SEMINAR - "God, Family & Entertainment"

TEEN SEMINAR - "Movies, Music & Main Street"

JULY 11 - "Would You Go There If God Asked You To?"
(Acts 16-17)

AUGUST 22 - "Bloody Heads, Rebaptism and a Riot"
(Acts 18-19)

SEPTEMBER 12 - "Bound by Ropes, Yet Free in Christ"
(Acts 21-22)

OCTOBER 10 - "Politically Correct but Morally Incorrect"
(Acts 24-25)

NOVEMBER 14 - "Turning Tragedy into Triumph!"
(Acts 27-28)

DECEMBER 12 - Review "Acts to the Max!"