

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

JULY, 2002

QUESTIONS and LIES

that Fill the Airwaves and Classrooms:

"Why is that wrong?" "Who says so?"

"Who are YOU to say?"

A widespread book among young people, **Conversations with God for Teens**, gives the appearance of being Christian but instead is far-out New Age deception. It has "god" telling them things like, "There are no bad people, only people you have called bad. You make judgments and I don't make judgments." This "god" also says, "I forgive no one, for there is nothing to forgive.... There is no judgment-book. There is no such thing as right or wrong; only what works and what doesn't work."

Discuss those lies with your children and grandchildren, showing them how the true word of the Real God contradicts such nonsense. Yet be sure to show that though He is judge He also has provided salvation at enormous cost to Himself. He offers it freely to **all** who receive Jesus as lord and savior -- no matter how far they've fallen.

ONE DAY AT A TIME

Edward Fudge, GracEmail

He faced a career decision, the young professional said, and he wondered if I could offer any spiritual wisdom. His years of hard work were paying off financially. Now another company was dangling a golden carrot to entice him to join them. The move would mean more money and less managerial responsibility, but more hours away from home and family. "My family," he told me, "is more important to me than anything else on earth."

"It sounds to me that you already know what you want to do," I said. "But what if I turn down this opportunity now, and my own business goes sour some time in the future? Will I have hurt my family by choosing not to go with this other company?"

"We only live one day at a time," I said, "and we have to make the best choices we can one by one. It's much as when one takes a motor trip that involves driving at night. You can drive 750 miles through the night using your headlights, and the headlights only shine a few hundred feet in front of you at a time. But by the time you travel where you can see, the lights illumine a little farther. That's the way God guides us in life. One day at a time. One decision at a time."

We talked about seeking first God's kingdom principles and trusting God to provide for our needs. "If you tell your children that you are making this decision because you treasure them more than money and want to spend time with them, do you really think they will ever criticize you for lacking the extra money you might have earned?" "No," he replied. We closed in prayer and my friend thanked God for helping him apply spiritual principles to daily life.

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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Guest Editorial

“Why Is It Wrong?”

William E. Brown, President, Bryan College

Ever wonder why people get away with saying anything they want about sex or bodily functions or immoral activities and no one seems to care? Do you wonder why our country has such a difficult time making moral decisions and following through?

I can summarize it best by relating a discussion I had with an acquaintance. He began by saying: "Nobody has the right to tell me what to do."

"Is that so?" I asked.

"Sure," he replied. "That's the whole purpose of freedom. We get to choose what we want to do without any outside interference. The only restriction is that my rights end where yours begin. I can't do anything that hurts or restricts you."

"But what if I like to hurt other people? Wouldn't that be restricting my right to choose my actions if you tell me it's wrong to hurt others?" He paused for a moment. "No. You can't hurt other people."

"Why not?" "You just can't," he said, irritated. "Why?" I asked again. "Because it's wrong!" he said.

"But why is it wrong?" I asked.

"Just use reason and your common sense. Everybody agrees that to hurt another person is wrong."

I shook my head. "Not everybody agrees--Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris. I can give you a long list of people who would say that hurting certain people is all right."

"But those guys were wacko."

"By whose standards?" I asked. "How can you say they were wrong if you keep telling me we are free to choose whatever moral choices we want?" He was really irritated now. "But we use our reason to determine what is right and wrong. Hurting others is clearly wrong just by using simple cause and effect reasoning."

"Ah," I said. "If we use **your** cause and effect reasoning. Everybody should be free to use their own reasoning and some are not going to agree with you."

"This is stupid. With the right education people will agree on what is right and wrong."

"Oh, really?" I asked. "Are you convinced that would really happen? Germany was the most educated country in the world when Hitler took over. The most heinous crimes are often committed by the brightest and most liberally educated."

He paused and took a deep breath. "I know what you're trying to do. You're trying to get me to say that without an objective moral law we cannot say that anything is right or wrong. I know that's not true. I just can't think of a way to communicate it right now. Let's talk about something else." So we did.

Anything Goes

My conversation with him is one I have frequently with those who hold to a non-Christian worldview. If we have no ground for morality, we find ourselves in a culture that has no boundaries and anything can be justified. After all, isn't personal choice the only virtue in America?

Most of you have read about the newly released book, *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children From Sex*, by journalist Judith Levine. In this rehashing of questionable studies, Levine says that sex with children can be beneficial for the children as long as they are consenting and not physically harmed. The greater harm, she says, is when adults keep children from expressing themselves sexually.

Our moral landscape has changed so much that people who promote pedophilia (sex with children) are praised as cutting-edge societal thinkers. Such is Tom O'Carroll who concluded his remarks at a recent international convention on sex in Paris with these words:

"Ladies and gentlemen, should you be in any doubt, I can assure you that pedophilia is indeed an orientation, entirely analogous with homosexuality or heterosexuality. It is not an unfortunate condition, with symptoms. It is a vital part of the identity of those, like myself, who experience a deep and abiding love of children throughout their adult lives: deny it and you deny the essential humanity of the person concerned and thereby commit a grave infringement of human rights."

The most disturbing part of this is that by today's moral reasoning, who can say Tom O'Carroll is wrong?

Truth and Sincerity

As a result, we have a difficult time calling any action "wrong." Too often we hear, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere." Even the 9/11 terrorists are frequently portrayed as sincere and passionate believers.

But the nineteen terrorists were not misguided zealots. They were not men who merely were sincere about a belief in a God who does not exist. They were not in prayer and worship the night before the terror attacks; they were in strip bars. While their fellow Muslims abstain from alcohol and their women hide under burquas, they spent their last night gazing lustfully at naked dancers and getting drunk. They thought their suicides would absolve them from any sins they committed. They saw this final act of self-destruction as a way to get seventy-two virgins, eternal pleasure and complete forgiveness. The nineteen terrorists were not religious heroes; they were self-absorbed, self-serving opportunists who destroyed others for selfish gain. They were evil.

A Moral Game of Chaos

Imagine a field full of players. You roll a ball out among them to start a game. But what game? What if some play by the rules of soccer, others football and still others play rugby? What if some make up their own rules as they play? What kind of game will this be? It is chaos! Modern American society is much like this chaotic scheme where we are free to choose our own moral rules.

Objective Morality

But the moral law is not like rules for a game that are made up and agreed upon. The Scriptures are clear that moral rules, like physical laws, are discovered. We either follow them to our triumph or ignore them to our peril. In fact, there are two who are convinced of absolute truth and morality: God and Satan. The biblical worldview tells us that God has written His law on the hearts of every person (Rom. 2: 15). This, of course, does not mean that every person lives up to this law because clearly many "suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Romans 1:18).

The moral decisions of a person, a family, and even a nation, are built upon their own worldviews that serve as a foundation. It is time for Christians to speak compellingly and clearly about the importance of objective truth and morality.

Making a Difference

Over the past decade, educators have faced the shocking reality that this generation of college students have drunk so deeply of moral relativism that they are incapable of calling any person or any act immoral. Even Adolph Hitler escapes. A rapidly growing number of young people cannot bring themselves to admit Hitler did anything wrong. What if these young people are the ones to set the moral agenda for the future of our country?

We desperately need people who have the ability to think deeply and broadly about the world and who can communicate clearly the es-

sentials of biblical moral truth. This generation of college students is the generation that will frame the moral structures of the next generation.

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The 8th COMMANDMENT

“You shall not steal.”

A survey by researchers Patterson and Kim shows that American workers spend more than 20% of their day goofing off. That translates into about 7 hours a week of no productivity. They also found that half of the workforce calls in sick regularly when not sick. **But can such practices be called anything less than stealing?** It's taking pay for no work. “One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys,” says Prov.18:9. That is, the vandal destroys something that exists; the lazy man by work he doesn't do causes something not to exist in the first place: same result in the end. Other forms of such thievery on the job include doing shoddy work, and pilfering office supplies.

On the other hand, some companies exploit their employees in various ways. These would include not paying them fair wages. Or maybe taking advantage of the ignorance of foreign or poorly educated workers. On the other hand, some bosses cheat their underlings by claiming credit for the latter's innovative ideas or outstanding work. We knew a brilliant young lady in Manila whose boss won raises in pay and even a promotion due to her excellence -- which he covered up. His lies prevailed, and justice was denied her. Such tactics also are nothing else than **robbery**, especially if workers seem locked into their jobs by their age or other circumstances which render them hardly able to find work elsewhere. [This was written before the Enron rip-off.]

God's Word speaks to such concerns. For instance, James sounds like a labor union leader in his denunciation of bosses who are tight-fisted, unjust and even violent:

"Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. You have hoarded wealth.... Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears

of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you." (James 5:1-6, NIV.) The Living Bible paraphrases verse 5: "You have spent your years here on earth having fun, satisfying your every whim, and now your fat hearts are ready for the slaughter."

To the contrary, the Lord calls on His people who are employers to show Christian concern and responsibility for their employees: "You slave owners must be just and fair to all your slaves. Always remember that you, too, have a Master in heaven who is closely watching you." Col. 4:1, LB.

At the same time, He urges slaves, the lowest of employees, not to cheat their bosses but do their best even when they could get away with less.

You slaves must always obey your earthly masters, not only trying to please them when they are watching you but all the time; obey them willingly because of your love for the Lord and because you want to please him. Work hard and cheerfully at all you do, just as though you were working for the Lord and not merely for your masters, remembering that it is the Lord Christ who is going to pay you....He is the one you are really working for. And if you don't do your best for him, he will pay you in a way that you won't like - for he has no special favorites who can get away with shirking. (Colossians 3:22-25, LB.)

Respectable Thievery

Well, we haven't gone far in exploring this subject, but already we see that Command #8 applies to far more than picking pockets and robbing banks. There are numerous forms of stealing, and many of them are practiced by respectable people. I still remember a scene painted by Norman Rockwell decades ago. It portrayed a butcher in his shop weighing a turkey for a nice-looking lady customer. Both of them look so friendly, flashing broad smiles at each other as they stare intently at how much the fowl weighs. But Rockwell lets us see the butcher secretly pulling down on the scales with his finger, while she on her side of the counter secretly pushes up! Using inaccurate weights and measures isn't new. Deut. 25:13-16, Prov.11:1, and Amos 8:5 are merely three of many denunciations in Old Testament times.

It is common for folks to steal from the public without feeling any twinge of conscience. My dad used to tell of a customer who purchased an item at a small store. It cost exactly \$20. Thinking he was giving the cashier one \$20 bill, he unknowingly handed him two twenties stuck together. The cashier thought to himself, "I sense a moral dilemma here: must I tell my partner about this?" Present-day compa-

nies find more sophisticated ways to rip off their consumers. Exaggerated ads on TV make toys look bigger than they are and move faster than they do.

And the public steals right back! When Dad was a businessman, motels ordered pictures from his company to hang in their bedrooms. But they specified that their dimensions should be larger than suitcase size, lest customers steal them right off the wall. Incredible!

Robbers Galore

Cheaters in school steal from the hard work of their classmates to make up for their own laziness. They get unearned grades while cheating *themselves* of what they would learn if they studied more.

Does much of our **“borrowing”** actually become stealing? Oh, not intentionally. But sometimes we become much better bookkeepers than we should be! Constant carelessness crosses the line into crookedness somewhere. An ethics book in the Philippines devoted an entire chapter to **“How Christian Is Our Borrowing?”** And James Packer mentions that in a powerful spiritual revival in Belfast, Ireland during 1922-23, repentant shipyard workers brought back so many tools and equipment which they had **“borrowed”** from their workplace that one company had to build an additional storage shed to hold them.

The Bible is practical, isn't it? It speaks to the matter of refusing to repay debts. **“The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously.”** says Psalm 37:21. Paul in Rom.13:8 wrote, **“Owe no man anything.”** Or did he? That's how the ASV translates him, but it gives a wrong impression. It sounds like all borrowing, charge accounts and credit cards are wrong – which they are not. Of course whoever *plans ahead* not to pay his debts is a thief indeed. But the conscientious borrower is not blamed. And credit buying is lawful, though many people would be better off if they cut to bits their credit cards and learned to live within their limits. Within c-a-r-e-f-u-l and c-o-n-t-r-o-l-l-e-d limits, for easy credit is literally ruining millions of individuals and families in this land. Yet what Paul meant is accurately expressed by the NIV: **“Let no debt remain outstanding.”** It's not the debt which is wrong, but the refusal to repay it.

It's Not a Game

One of the saddest trends in the late 1900s was when **gambling** went from being legal hardly anywhere to being legal and wildly popular almost everywhere! **“When will they ever learn?”** The gambling industry robs the public, which seems happy to be so swindled. The system is contrived so that over a period of time the vast majority will lose much more than they gain. Statistically John Doe has less chance of winning the state lottery than he does of being struck by

lightning. Thus gambling violates the Christian principle of careful stewardship of what the Lord entrusts to us.

The gambling industry hurts the very poor more than anyone else, alluring them in their despair to keep looking for that one quick fix which will solve all their problems. Many times gambling gets tied up with organized crime. One of its worst features is that it is extremely addictive to a number of people. It often results in an increase in debt, divorces, bankruptcies, foreclosures, and people going on welfare. "Gaming" they like to call it now, but It's Not A Game! It's piracy that ruins lives and families.

Even if the odds were not so one-sided, gambling is contrary to other Biblical principles: It is totally founded on the attempt to get something for nothing. Its get-rich-quick approach contradicts basic virtues such as disciplined work habits, thrift, and generosity instead of greed. A Christian may find himself not addicted to gambling (though there's no way to know that fact ahead of time!!), but what if his example influences someone else to start the practice -- and that person does become hooked? Christ gave terrible warnings against causing others to stumble.

Hope for the Guilty

The Lord offers forgiveness, but there are conditions. What does He require of thieves (whether respectable or gross ones)? **Repentance** of course, but **restitution** too, if at all possible. If someone in ancient Israel was tempted to steal, God's law would cause him to think twice: "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep" (Ex. 22:1). This principle is amplified in Numbers 5:6-8, and illustrated in Zacchaeus' offer to repay fourfold anyone whom he had cheated (Luke 19:1-10). To counteract our inclination to take what is not ours, the Lord calls us to do the opposite: **give generously** to others. "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need." (Eph.4:28.) We need to learn in experience that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Christian Stealing?

The Lord questioned Israel through the prophet Malachi, "**Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me...in tithes and offerings.**" (3:8.) We Christians are God's New Covenant people, and not under the Old Covenant law to Israel which required tithing, or giving 1/10 of their income to God. But He has blessed us more highly than He did them, so our gratitude should stir us to give beyond any mere legal require-

ment. We know "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for [our] sake he became poor so that [we] through his poverty might become rich." Such love impels us to give to His worldwide work -- willingly, eagerly, according to what we have, and cheerfully (2 Cor.8 & 9).

"You shall not steal." Hmmm; does that apply to Christian "sheep-stealing"? Is it right to allure active members from other gospel-preaching churches to our own? The Golden Rule should apply here, shouldn't it? On the other hand one big-church preacher makes this point, "We don't steal sheep, but we do plant grass." Yes, let's do that. And surely it's not sheep-stealing if we can convince a thriving church to let some of its members "hive off" to help a troubled church or -- better -- form a new one. That happens too rarely.

What about church-A calling church-B's preacher to leave B and join them? Is that stealing? Well, there seem to be no Biblical rules in this area -- except the Golden one, which should not be ignored! But various factors enter into each situation. What will be the effect on church B? Is it satisfied with the preacher -- and vice versa? Is the preacher hoping and maybe planning to move elsewhere anyway? Naturally the preacher will need to prayerfully consider many questions: his family; the opportunities to use his spiritual gifts at A compared with B; how effective his ministry is at B compared with what he feels it would be at A; the effect on B if he leaves; perhaps his (or his children's) opportunities for schooling. Surely the preacher and the leaders in both churches will want to act prayerfully and ethically, that they might have a clear conscience before God.

Non-Christian Stealing

The Worst Thief of all is anyone who refuses to give himself back to God. We should urge the unconverted to face this fact: "You mean so much to the Lord, yet you are robbing Him of what He desires most -- yourself! Everyone who knowingly rejects the Lord's rightful claim on his life steals from Him. All of us belong to Him, both because of creation and redemption: He made us and He died for our sins on the cross. What a price He paid to possess us again, after we rejected Him. How can you continue to spurn such staggering love? To rob Him in that way is an appalling, frightful crime. So go home to God. Turn yourself in, and He will eagerly welcome you."

Shades of Seizure

Bill Hybels

"You shall not steal." Exodus 20:15

Many of us respond to God's prohibition against stealing in the same way we react to His prohibition against murder: "Why waste time on this commandment? I'm no thief. I would never seize another person's possessions. Let's move on."

But I think I can safely say that just as it's possible to murder a man in more than one fashion, it's also possible to steal from him in a variety of ways. There are shades of seizure that seem almost innocent on the surface, but in reality, they fit squarely within the context of theft.

What about employees helping themselves to company supplies without permission - automotive parts, tools, staplers, paper, pencils, pens, notebooks, computer disks, food? Just take a little here and there. It's no big deal. Or is it? Is helping yourself to another person's property a biblical means of acquiring property? You didn't labor for it. You didn't invest, barter, or trade for it. You didn't pray for it. You didn't even ask for it. The fact is, you stole it.

Several retailers I know have said they lose more merchandise through employee theft than through public theft. They fear their allies more than their enemies. They're more paranoid about being ripped off from the inside than from the outside. What does that tell us? It indicates that people are getting very comfortable with the practice of helping themselves to what is not rightfully theirs.

Another shade of seizure is long-term borrowing. What about the neighbor's ladder you borrowed two years ago? Or that paintbrush or punch bowl or serving platter? How about those books, tapes, and CDs? You said you'd return them, but did you? Did you truly borrow them? Or did you quietly claim them as yours simply by neglecting to return them?

I challenge you, as I've had to challenge myself, to take out a pencil and paper and make a list of everything in your possession that is not rightfully yours. List everything you've taken from your place of employment, everything you've "borrowed" from the shop, everything you've received on loan from friends and neighbors. Then, make a covenant between yourself and God to return everything on your list to its proper owner by the end of the month.

Maybe you'll have to pack some things up in a UPS box and send them back to their owner. Perhaps, you'll have to send a money order to cover the cost of supplies and articles you've already used, lost, or broken. You might want to include a note explaining that you now realize what you did was wrong. You've decided to honor God and cleanse your conscience by admitting your sin and making restitution.

You could sign your note, "A Convicted Christian," but I think "A Liberated Christian" might be more accurate. Stealing jeopardizes our self-esteem, produces anxiety, and destroys our credibility as Christians. But repentance and restitution free us. They release us from the binding chains of guilt, and allow us to establish peace with ourselves, with others, and with God.

--Excerpted from *Engraved On Your Heart, Living the Ten Commandments Day by Day*, Cook Communications Ministries, 2000. Used by permission. Bill Hybels is the Senior Pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, IL. He is a husband, father, speaker, and also the author of numerous books.

The 9th COMMANDMENT

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor" (NIV).
"You must not lie" (Liv. Bib.).

Certain occupations have a reputation for lying. When someone saw a tombstone with the inscription, "Here lies a lawyer and an honest man," he asked why two men were buried in the same grave. (Sorry about that, Earl C.)

A cynical diplomat once said, "The purpose of words is to conceal thought." That statement is "too true to be good," observes James Packer.

A comic strip in a Manila newspaper showed a boss chewing out the office janitor: "Johnny, you're a liar! *You know what I do with liars?*" Johnnie, who had been looking very scared, now smiles hopefully and replies, "Yessir, you make them your salesmen."

And how often have you heard one or more of these lies? "Open wide, this won't hurt a bit." "This toy is easy to assemble; just follow the directions." "The check's in the mail." "This car belonged to a little old lady who never drove anywhere except to church and the grocery store." So we have come to take lies for granted in business, politics, the mass media and elsewhere.

The book *The Day America Told the Truth* demonstrates that lying has become an integral part of American culture. It estimates that 91% of Americans lie on a regular basis.

Even so, this news item was a bit of a shocker: *The Wall Street Journal* revealed that a class at Harvard University Business School taught its students how to lie. The professor claimed this was done so that students would be able to detect when they were being lied to. Thus they could avoid being misled. But students who were interviewed disagreed. They openly admitted that on their jobs they themselves would most likely practice the techniques they learned in the class. This story becomes even scarier when we realize that 14% of that school's alumni are presidents or chief executives of their firms -- and many of those firms are among the "Fortune 500 companies."

Oh well, does it really matter? Yes! A former head of the F.B.I. said, "Truth-telling, I've found, is the key to responsible citizenship. The 1,000s of criminals I have seen in 40 years of law enforcement have had one thing in common: Every single one was a liar."

It also matters because the fabric of any society is torn apart when conditions get so bad that nobody trusts anyone else. That happened to Judah in its last years before Babylon conquered it. Six hundred years before Christ, the Lord lamented through His prophet Jeremiah, "Beware of your friends; do not trust your brothers. For every brother is a deceiver, and every friend a slanderer. Friend deceives friend, and no one speaks the truth. They have taught their tongues to lie; they weary themselves with sinning. You live in the midst of deception; in their deceit they refuse to acknowledge me," declares the LORD. (Jer. 9:4-6)

We've already seen that the U.S. is going the same way. Here's more evidence: A poll asked the public about how confident they were of leaders of various major institutions. Ten years later the same questions were asked again. During that decade those who had "a great deal of confidence" in the leaders of medical institutions dropped from 73% to 42%; in the chief executives of major corporations from 55% to 16%; in law firms from 42% to 12%. Distrust is running wild in our land.

Most of all, dishonesty matters because the Lord, the Most High, tells us to be people of truth, for He is a truthful God. He says, "You must not lie."

An Oxymoron: "Dishonest Christians"

Sad to say, sometimes Christian believers and organizations are deceitful. One example is the use of exaggerated statistics about the

number of converts or churches established. Another is lying about the use of money. Years ago an evangelical church in the Philippines received funds from World Vision to use in helping very poor families in that church's neighborhood. The pastor and deacons of that church seriously considered using some of those funds to buy new robes for their choir instead. They finally decided not to, but the fact that they considered it at all was a sad failure.

In the Bible the wise man tells us what other people think of a promise-breaker, whose word you can't trust: "Putting confidence in an unreliable man is like chewing with a sore tooth, or trying to run on a broken foot." He also mentions seven sins which the Lord detests, and two of them are "a lying tongue...and a false witness who pours out lies." (Prov. 25:19 LB, 6:16-19 NIV.) And lest we think that "just telling lies isn't really very serious," the last chapter of the Bible should set us straight. "Outside the city [of heaven] are...*all who love to lie, and do so.*" (Rev.22:15, LB.) Jesus said that the father of lies is Satan himself (John 8:44).

Various Kinds of Deception

Of course there are **plain, flat-out lies** -- and they are common enough. But other forms of deceitfulness abound as well.

Promise breakers are as numerous as flies at a July picnic. I'd be rich if I had a nickel for every time someone promised me they'd start attending meetings regularly, or just be at church the next Lord's Day. Then there are folks who promise to help in some way, but don't take it seriously enough to remember it -- or else just change their mind but don't notify us. Even in the service of our Savior it happens.

The Bible says, "If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin." Again we read, "When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin." (Deut. 23:21; Eccl. 5:4-6.) Thank God that the Promise-Keepers men's movement impacted many lives in the past decade. Let's hope that it and other such ministries keep growing, and Christian men of character will multiply.

A statement need not be 100% false to be a lie. Some folks have strong tendencies to **exaggerate**. When you realize that their statements are often about 125% true (!), you lose confidence in what they say. You never know what's true and what's not. Exaggerators may just be trying to enliven the conversation with humor, but many are desperately trying to draw attention to themselves. Either way, it's a

form of untruthfulness that may create a reputation for undependability.

It's surprising how often Scripture condemns **gossip or spreading rumors**. Some versions call gossips "whisperers" (Rom.1:29, ASV), or "talebearers" -- "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people." (Lev.19:16a, NKJV.) Here is a helpful definition of gossip: "Talking about the sins or failings of someone when you are neither a part of the problem or of the solution." Ponder the following Biblical proverbs: "A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends." "A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much." "Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down." (Prov.16:28; 20:19; 26:20 NIV.)

Paul too makes some strong statements about gossip -- and also the idleness and snooping, meddling, prying attitudes that often breed gossip. He disparages any young widows who "get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to." Speaking to Christians in general he counsels, "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you." And he got distressed when he heard "that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies." (1 Tim. 5:14; 1 Thess. 4:11-12; 2 Thess. 3:11 NIV.)

I love the true story of George "Papa" Ecos, an immigrant from Greece to the U.S. in the early 1900s. He was a cobbler, and since he was also very friendly his repair shop became a neighborhood gathering place. At times the conversation would take a negative turn. Someone would start running down another person who was absent. Then Papa would reach for a small black notebook he kept to record unfamiliar English expressions. He would hand it to the derogatory speaker and say, "You know, I still don't understand the language too well. What you are speaking about him is not clear to me, so would you write it down in my little book? Then I can study it when I get home tonight."

The rumor-monger would blush and shake his head. Then George would quietly say, "You know, if we cannot write it down in the book, maybe we should not speak it either." During his lifetime and even for years afterward, whenever anyone would start to bad-mouth a person, somebody would say, "**Remember Papa's black book.**"

Among religious people **hypocrisy** can become a blatant form of dishonesty. The word originally referred to actors in the theater. They played a part, saying or doing things they might never actually do in

real life. That's what drama is all about. But unless we are acting in a play, we should "say what I mean and mean what I say" -- like Horton, Dr. Seuss' elephant. Our Lord Jesus blistered the Pharisees because they put on a good religious show but most of them were only pretending. They performed good actions for bad reasons. They prayed, fasted, and donated large sums -- and made sure reporters and photographers were on hand to put it on the front page the next day.

And not all Pharisees died out in the first century. Many churches today have members and even leaders who regularly perform religious activities but by their attitudes and lifestyle contradict much that Christ taught. Jesus still asks, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46). He warned us against counterfeits. Yet may we too, who love Him, search our hearts as well, especially if we've been disciples for a long time. I find there's a slippery slope toward hypocrisy, toward just going through the motions without heart. God forbid.

Bob Russell pointed out that we can be **deceitful without saying an untrue word**. "You can lie by arching your eyebrow or with the tone in your voice." Yes, there are many forms of dishonesty. No wonder David prayed, "Surely you desire truth in the inner parts, in the innermost being -- honesty from the heart; yes, utter sincerity and truthfulness" (Psa.51:6).

White Lies?

What, then, about "white lies"? Is lying ever justified? To say "Yes" might cause people to excuse themselves when their deceit is not right at all. Yet to say "No" is not totally accurate either. Some Christians differ with me, but my bottom line answer is -- Yes, lying may sometimes be justified, but *Very Rarely*, and should never be done except for *Very Weighty Reasons*. You may totally disagree with that opinion, but let's think about it carefully and weigh the alternatives.

Rahab hid the Israelite spies in her home and then lied, denying they were there. The result was she saved the lives of the spies, and later on the life of her own family too (Josh.2:1-21; 6:25). And the N.T. praises both her faith and deeds (Heb.11:31; Jam.2:25). The Egyptian midwives disobeyed Pharaoh's command to kill the Israelite boy babies, and lied about it to save their own lives (Ex.1:15-21). Jonathan seems to have lied to protect David from Saul's murderous intent (1 Sam.20:28). (These cases were different from those of Abraham and Isaac, who lied to save their lives but thereby exposed their wives to danger and shame: Gen.12:13; 20:2; 26:7. Their lies were despicable.) James Packer observes,

There are people to whom it is clearly not right to tell the whole truth: Invalids [who are unable] to take bad news; enemies in wartime, to whom one should not give information, and from whom, like Rahab and Corrie ten Boom, one may have fugitives to hide; mad [i.e. insane] folk and bad folk, who would use what you tell them to harm others.... In these cases responsible persons must dissemble. But does that square with the 9th commandment?

In principle, yes. What is forbidden is false witness against your neighbor.... The positive command implicit in this negative is that we should seek our neighbor's good. When the love which seeks his good prompts us to withhold truth which, if spoken, would bring him harm, the spirit of the 9th commandment is being observed. (From *I Want to be a Christian*)

Packer is saying that on rare occasions we can and should distinguish between bearing false witness **for** one's neighbor (for the sake of his life or liberty), in contrast to bearing false witness **against** him.

He mentioned seriously sick people who ask about their prospects. Certainly we should not lie, "Oh, everything's great; the tests all turned out fine." They need to know if their condition is critical. But they need not always be told the *whole* truth. That might make them much worse -- and even hasten their death -- from psychosomatic effects. And in any case medical tests sometimes mislead. And no doctor can be 100% sure about this matter. Some deaths, and some recoveries, amaze them. "The doctors are not sure," is a true statement.

Allen Verhey wrote in *Christianity Today*, "Sometimes covenants are broken by the demand that the truth be told. Consider a story Dietrich Bonhoeffer told: 'A teacher asks a child in front of the class whether it is true that his father often comes home drunk. It is true, but the child denies it.' Bonhoeffer says the child is not wrong to lie. He suggests that it is the teacher who is at fault here rather than the child, by abusing the [family] relationship and the expectation that the truth be told within that relationship.'" If the teacher had a valid reason for asking the child (whose own safety might be at risk if the dad's drinking leads to violence) such a question -- and did it privately -- that would be a different matter.

But in any case, *we dare not use such exceptions to water down the usual rule. Still stand the commands, "Do not lie. Do not deceive one another."* "Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor." "Speak the truth in love." (Lev.19:11; Eph.4:25,15.)

The Biggest Lie

An unsaved person can't be saved till he faces up to the truth about his sinful condition before God. She must be honest enough to admit and confess her desperate need for a savior. The Bible says "He who conceals [hides, pretends, lies about] his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

Hear the Lord through Jeremiah again: "Return, faithless Israel," declares the LORD, "I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful," declares the LORD, "I will not be angry forever. Only **acknowledge your guilt** -- you have rebelled against the LORD your God...." "Return, faithless people, I will cure you of backsliding" (3:12,13,22).

Counselors Column

Should I confess an Affair?

Dennis Kaufman

Question: I had an affair about six years ago that my spouse does not know about. At times, I have thought about confessing this, but, our marriage is stronger now, and I don't want to risk the possibility of messing things up for us. Do I need to unveil this secret, or is my confession to God alone sufficient?

Answer: You have raised one of the most difficult and delicate issues in the field of marriage, and family therapy. You will likely find counselors who lean either way in dealing with this knotty problem, but I will try to share some principles that may help you with your decision.

Some of the more recent research does seem to indicate that this kind of secret puts a definite ceiling on the level of intimacy a couple will experience. A precious covenant has been broken, and while forgiveness is available in Christ, there are definite earthly consequences. Therefore, to choose not to divulge the past affair may very well mean you are settling for less than your best potential as a couple.

Spouses I have walked with through this process usually get stuck around one key assessment. They are convinced that if they confess, their mate will blow up, and the marriage will be over. Thus, they feel it is better to have a relationship with a secret than to have no relationship at all. It is possible that being truthful could lead to divorce, so

this course of action must be prayerfully pondered. However, I find that often people underestimate the power of their marital alliance.

Spouses are generally devastated at the initial news that there has been an affair. But, often they soon realize the courage it took to confess and the deepened integrity that is now desired. Some couples who have walked this journey refer to the pain as horrid, but describe the recovery process as taking them far beyond their former level of marital closeness and joy.

A few other questions you may want to ask yourself include

1) Has God provided good "containment" of this secret, or do I find it "leaking" into my marriage in ways that negatively affect my relationship?

2) What is my main motive in not confessing? To avoid pain for *myself*, or my *spouse*?

3) If you were in your spouse's shoes, would you want to know?

I don't know that anyone can tell you what to do on this one. It must be a matter of prayer and discernment of the Spirit's leading, but if you want my bottom line, here it is. In the long run, I believe it is more appropriate to risk the truth, trusting that God will honor the faith and courage it took to make that step. If that decision simply does not seem feasible, it is my prayer that God's grace will be sufficient for your marriage to grow as much as is possible.

AFRAID OF GOD?

Edward Fudge in GracEmail

A brother writes that "the God of the Old Testament does fierce and horrible things to people, and this makes me pretty nervous. I know that perfect love casts out fear. But I understand that I show my love by my obedience and that leaves me scared again."

* * *

The New Testament also exhorts us to contemplate "the goodness and the severity of God" (Rom. 11:22), and it warns us that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. 10:31).

However, from Genesis to Revelation, God reveals himself as indescribably gracious and generous to the person who is repentant in

heart, who seeks his face, who lives with a spirit of creaturely reverence, dependence and submission (Psalm 32:1-2; 103:10-14). But the defiant, the haughty and the willfully rebellious had better watch out! There is a great difference between the way God deals with sinners in the first category and the way he treats sinners of the second sort.

Let us always remember that God's love is not a response to our love, or to our obedience. We love God because he first loved us (1 John 4:10, 19). He loved us while we were still sinners, helpless, enemies -- so much that he gave his Son for our sins (Rom. 5:6-9). And if he loved us that much then, how much more does he love us now that he has reconciled us, washed us, made us holy, and adopted us as his children (Rom. 5:10-11)?

Knowing that we come short, that we sometimes intentionally sin, that we never measure up to God's perfect standard, we come again and again to the Cross, as it were, and say to God, "Thank you that Jesus died for sinners. I am one of them. Thank you for reconciling me to yourself in the person of my Savior, my Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ! Help me respond better to your great saving work. I cast myself on your mercy and love for sinners which I see demonstrated on that Cross, and I claim your forgiveness and acceptance which I see demonstrated by that Empty Tomb."

And, saying that -- and meaning it -- we stand acquitted in God's sight. By his holy pronouncement, we are "justified by faith." Through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are at peace with God. And God is at peace with us (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:16-18; Col. 1:19-20).

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yoU are important

JOYce Broyles

Antoine de Saint Exupery, author of *The Little Prince*, wrote "You know you've achieved perfection in design, not when you have nothing more to add, but when you have nothing more to take away." I have not yet reached perfection, but I know that each day, God keeps trying to take away things that keep me from being perfect.

One morning last week, I got up on the ugly side of bed and showed little patience with some people during the day. That bad attitude and sharp words needed to be taken away.

Later, I apologized for my improper behavior. I was humbled and embarrassed, because I know those actions keep me from being a good role model.

After all, as an ambassador for Christ, I should be practicing what I profess. Telling the Good News and showing God's love takes patience and kind words. Everyone needs that.

This anonymous poem from a friend reminded me of the importance of each individual.

"The U in JesUs"

Before U were thought of or time had begun,
God even stuck U in the name of His Son,
And each time U pray, you'll see that it's true.
You can't spell out JesUs and not include U.

You're a really big part of His wonderful name.
For U, He was born; that's why He came
And His great love for U is the reason He died.
It even takes U to spell crUcified.

Isn't it thrilling and splendidly grand that
He rose from the dead with U in His plan?
The stones split away, the gold trUmpet blew,
And the word resUrrection is spelled with a U.

When JesUs left earth at His upward ascension,
He felt there was one thing He just had to mention.
"Go into the world and tell them it's true:
That I love them all --- just like I love U."

So many great people are spelled with a U.
Don't they have a right to know JesUs too?
It all depends now on what U will do.
He'd like them to know, but it all starts with U!

In the coming weeks, I hope I recall this poem as I meet "U" every day. Perhaps that will keep me from saying things that do not send a good message. Taking away all of the wrong elements in my personality will take time, but it will help me toward the goal of perfection. Along the way, it should also improve my personal expressions.

"A Modern-day Job"

10s of 1000s of Americans have recently lost their jobs due to the downturn in the economy. Greg Asimakoupoulos, who himself was recently laid off, wrote this for Soundbytes.

*When you lose your job, you feel like Job.
It seems you've lost it all.
The world looks gray and colorless
And tastes like bitter gall.
You seek the Lord, but he won't speak.
You lose your will to pray.
And when your "good" friends try to help,
You wish they'd go away.
Quite insecure, you doubt your worth.
You try, in vain, to hope.
You feel alone, you feel afraid,
Without the means to cope.
It's so unfair to be let go.
You gave your heart and soul.
While others loafed, you sacrificed
To reach your boss's goal.
Your sleep declines, your bills add up.
Resentment stays the same.
You don't know what or who to call.
You don't know where to aim.
No business card, no payroll check.
You have no place to go.
Without a job, in our culture
you're just a big "zero."
And still I know, deep in my heart,
that God thinks I'm a "10."
My worth to him does not consist
in what I do (or when).
He's gifted me
and knows my skills,
but loves me as I am.
And so, from Job,
I'll take my cues
and trust God's unseen plan.*

What This Church Is Striving To Be

By Gary Pearson

We have gathered here this afternoon to give thanks to our God who has richly blessed us and to dedicate this church building to the glory of God. Almost all of you know how long our congregation has waited for his day. While we rejoice over this great blessing, we must not let our focus stop with this building because, biblically, Christ's church can never be built with human hands. Christ's church is the people who have found peace with God through trusting in the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for us on that cross almost 2,000 years ago.

In the few minutes that we have together I want to tell you what kind of church that Westminster Church of Christ is striving to be. I could try to tell you what kind of church we are but I'd rather tell you what kind of a church we are striving to be because, really, that's more important. The direction of a church is far more important than the status of a church so I want to share with you what the direction is of this congregation known as Westminster Church of Christ.

First, we are striving to be a church whose very existence is centered around the gospel or the good news of Jesus Christ. We want to be a gospel church. Along with Paul in Romans 3:23 we see that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Yes, we have a sin problem. We fall terribly short of what God created us to be. This whole world is groaning under the weight of sin and the sinful things that people do to hurt each other. We need good news and, praise God, we have abundant good news in Jesus. Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith..."

We live in a world that is ravaged by sin and that's why Christ's church is needed so badly. We may offer many things to the world but the greatest thing we have to offer is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news that the Son of God came to this earth and lived a sinless life, that He freely laid down His own life on a cross, and that on the third day He was raised from the dead. Because Jesus lives, we offer life through this gospel, to this old world of death. Our only reason for existence is the gospel of Jesus Christ! It is at the heart of all that we stand for.

Second, we are striving to be an apostolic church. The only authority in Christ's church today is the authority that Christ gave His apostles that is expressed for us in Scripture. We can learn a lot from tradition. We can learn a lot from experience but tradition and experi-

ence are not authoritative for Christ's church. We can still today be governed by Christ's apostles when we accept Scripture as the only authority for Christ's church.

That explains some things about this church. That explains why we meet here each first day of the week to together eat the Lord's Supper. That explains why we are led by elders. That also explains why we are still telling those who want to come to Christ exactly what Peter told them on the day of Pentecost when Christ's church began, Acts 2:38: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." If it was right for Peter 2,000 years ago, then it is still right today for Christ's church to tell lost sinners to repent and to be baptized to receive forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In striving to be an apostolic church, we do not claim perfection. We have not arrived. We have our own struggles in trying to take seriously the instruction of the apostles but that is our direction.

Third, we are striving to be a church that practices Christian unity. On the night that He was betrayed by Judas, our Lord prayed that his disciples would be one even as He and the Father are one. We are trying to honor the prayer of our Lord for the unity of His people. We gladly stand together with all disciples of Jesus in this community to together exalt the name of Christ in every way that we can.

We are also striving to practice unity in our own congregation. This is not a selective or an exclusive church. Membership in this congregation is open to any baptized believer in Christ. For too long Christians have been known by what divides us. It's time for the world to know us by what, or rather by Who, unites us: Jesus Christ. We may be divided by a thousand divergent opinions but, if we are united in Christ, nothing else will ultimately matter.

Last, we are striving to be a church that is longing for the return of Christ. Paul describes Christ's church in II Timothy 4:8 as those "who have longed for his appearing." As bad as this world is, we have become too comfortable in it. We too easily forget that our allegiance as Christ's church is not to this dying world but rather to the coming world that Jesus will establish when He returns. Creeds and confessions have no authority for us; nevertheless I have always found inspiring the last sentence of the Nicene Creed: "And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the Life of the world to come."

When Jesus came 2,000 years ago, He came as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. When He returns, He will come this time as the con-

quering King of Revelation. Paul writes in I Corinthians 15 that Christ will destroy every ruler and every authority and power even down to the last enemy which is death. We are waiting for that day. Like Peter in 2 Peter 3:13, we are waiting "for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home." That's the life we were created for and that's the life that awaits us as Christ's church. We have to keep reminding each other about what awaits us so that we too will be among those who have longed for Jesus' appearing.

I could tell you a lot more about this church but those four directions are enough to keep us fully occupied until Jesus comes back.

(This message was delivered by Gary Pearson at the dedication of the new building of the Westminster (Maryland) Church of Christ. Brother Pearson is the opening night preacher at the Ky.-Ind. Fellowship, on Aug. 5.)

God's Secret Plan

Victor Knowles

J. Vernon McGee, of "Thru the Bible Radio" fame, wrote in his introduction to the Prison Epistles, "A quartet of men left Rome in the year 62 A.D., bound for the province of Asia...These men had on their persons four of the most sublime compositions of the Christian faith. These precious documents would be invaluable if they were in existence today. Rome did not comprehend the significance of the writings of an unknown prisoner. If she had, these men would have been apprehended and the documents seized."

The courier who carried the encyclical epistle to the Ephesians was Tychicus (Eph. 6:21). Contained in his leather pouch was "God's Secret Plan" for the ages. The information he was carrying was more valuable than diamonds and more explosive than dynamite! I'm sure Tychicus, whose name means "fortunate," had no idea how fortunate it was that he was not stopped at Roman checkpoints and the document confiscated.

The dynamic news that bounced on the hip of Tychicus is as fresh and exciting as the day Paul penned the words. "God's secret plan has now been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to his good pleasure" Eph. 1:9 (New Living Translation). I love a mystery, don't you? One of the first I ever read was *The Secret of the Old Clock*, a Nancy Drew mystery written by Carolyn Keene. But "The Mystery of God's Will" is far superior. Read on.

"And this is his plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ -everything in heaven and on earth" (Eph. 1:10 NLT). W. Carl Ketcherside called this "The Divine Purpose." "What was the greatest secret, the mystery which was to fulfill the divine purpose, plan and pleasure? It was that the universe might be brought into a unity. The creation of God is a universe. It is not a multiverse. There is not a single unrelated atom. The chain of relationship extends in an unfathomable and incomprehensible network which links all creation together. ...Sin distorted the glorious artistry of creation (but) ...in Christ will be realized the purpose which gathers up every thread of history and weaves it into a pattern where there will be no crude design or frayed edges. The divine pleasure is to promote unity--universal unity--unity in Christ!"

Paul, who was called to be "The Apostle to the Gentiles;" expands on this thought. "As you already know, God has given me this special ministry of announcing his favor to you Gentiles. As I briefly mentioned earlier in this letter (a reference to 1:9,10), God himself revealed his secret plan to me. As you read what I have written, you will understand what I know about this plan regarding Christ. God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now he has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets" (Eph. 3:2-5 NLT). The plot thickens! I can hardly wait to read what's next! Can you?

Here it is! "And this is the secret plan: The Gentiles have an equal share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's children. Both groups have believed the Good News, and both are part of the same body and enjoy together the promise of blessings through Jesus Christ. ...God's purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church. This was his plan from all eternity, and it has now been carried out through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Eph. 3:6,7,10,11 NLT).

Recently I had dinner with a man who was born in Israel. David was a paratrooper in the Israeli army and fought in the 1967 "Six-Day War." Today he is an immersed believer in Christ. What a joy it was to sit at the same table with David and enjoy a rich fellowship -one that God had planned all along! Our friends in Poland recently reported the baptism of a 100-year-old Jewish woman. Today, by the grace of God, we are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28). What a thrill to know that "God's Secret Plan" is still at work, bearing fruit to His glory!

William Barclay said, "It is the Christian conviction that history is a plan, that history has a purpose, that history is the working out of the will of God. ...It so happens that we are living in an age in which men

have lost their faith in any purpose for this world. But it is the faith of the Christian that in this world God's purpose is being worked out; and it is the conviction of Paul that that purpose is that one day all things, and all men, should be one family in Christ. To that, as Paul sees it, all history has been moving ...that secret, that mystery was not even grasped until Jesus came. ..it is the great task of the Church to work out that purpose of unity, which is the purpose of God, revealed in Jesus Christ."

Why are we here? There should be no doubt. Do not go through another single day doubting your significance or purpose in life. We are here to understand, rejoice in, participate in, and fulfill God's Secret Plan!

Victor Knowles edits a fine magazine, ONE BODY. Write for a sample copy: P.O. Box 275, Joplin MO 64802-0275

VOICES From The FIELDS

Dennis & Betty Allen

Manila

July 16 & 20, 2002

The Allens are ministering in the Philippines for 2 months or so. Dennis is teaching a class on Church Leadership and Relationships, and another one on Biblical Prophecy. Pray that there will be more showers of spiritual blessing, but fewer showers of literal rain. An earlier email mentioned there had been 10 straight days of rainy weather! "There was some flooding last Sunday, but most people were able to get out. TV said 60 were drowned in the floods in the Philippines and 87 were killed in the recent election for community leaders. There was a lot of vote buying also."

Then a more recent email says, "We had four days this week without rain, in fact, sunny, but yesterday and today are rainy again. We're just praying Quiricada street won't be flooded for the third Sunday in a row."

Pray for the many congregations in the Philippines, and for their leaders. Also Central Bible College as it seeks to train believers as servants, witnesses and leaders.

Serving the Lord (and Dying for Him) with Gladness--right Here and Now!

They Faithfully Faced Suffering & Death for Jesus' Sake.

Less than a week before Martin Burnham's abduction by Muslim rebels on the Philippine island of Palawan in May 2001, the New Tribes missionary gave a devotional at Rose Hill Bible Church in his small hometown outside Wichita, Kansas.

Some of his last words in the U.S. were also the last words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John: "Follow thou me." Martin not only spoke of following Him, but he took on that responsibility. He kept that attitude throughout the 376 days he and his wife, Gracia, were held captive by the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

The Burnhams, 42 and 43 years old respectively, realized it was possible they would not make it out alive. Just before a Philippine military raid on the kidnapers that led to Martin's death and Gracia's freedom, the two huddled together in a hammock under a makeshift tent. He told her, "We might not leave this jungle alive, but at least we can leave this world serving the Lord with gladness. We can serve Him right here where we are, and with gladness."

Then they prayed in their hammock, recited Scripture verses to each other, and sang. Within a few hours the rescue assault began and bullets began to fly, puncturing Gracia's leg and Martin's chest. She is now back home in the U.S. with her 3 children and other family members. He is now at Home in Heaven with his Savior.

Other hostages, released earlier, also testified to Martin's patient endurance of captivity. Chained each night to a tree by a guard, he made a point to thank the guard and wish him a good night. He offered to carry belongings not only for other hostages but for his captors. And he initiated many discussions about Christian faith with the rebels, including their leader.

[Taken from an online report plus *World* magazine, 6-22.]

HOW DO THOSE AROUND YOU EXPERIENCE THE LIVING CHRIST?

By Don Finto

Dr. Richard Halverson (former chaplain of the U.S. Senate), spoke in Nashville at a prayer breakfast some years ago. He began his message with a penetrating question: "How are those near you (at work, in your home, even in your church) going to experience the living Christ today?"

Paul told the Corinthian Christians, "You are living letters, known and read by all men." God has put the treasure of heaven (the Christ, the very fullness of the breath and Spirit of God) in earth's vessels – men and women who have received Him. You are the only Christ which people see!

Jesus said that we are the light of the world – the light to shine into darkness – the extension of Christ, the light – diffusing darkness – overcoming it – exposing it – by our presence.

And "you are salt" – salt to preserve – salt to season. Salt is useless for its intended purpose when it is heaped upon itself. Only when it is spread around does it begin its work. (Christians are useless for their intended purpose if they stay heaped up together continually – they are to spread out – maintain their saltiness – affect their surroundings – season – permeate – persevere – thaw.)

Can you not see more clearly why?

1. Jesus urged us to love our enemies. (It is a "salt-action". It is returning evil for good. It shows forth impossible human response. We become a picture of Christ who loves his enemies from the cross of abuse.)

2. Jesus said, "Forgive as your Father forgives." (It can only be done as Christ lives in us and is therefore an image of Christ. People stand in awe. They see Christ in action in us!)

3. Paul and Silas could and should sing from a prison cell! (Their peace and joy and praise came from the Christ within. And the jailer experienced it! That night! With His whole house! He saw Christ! In them. And received Christ into himself!)

Do you work with unbelievers? Do you live with unbelievers? Do you even perchance attend church with unbelievers? Let them see Christ!

Do not live before them as the world lives! Return good for evil! Do you experience abuse, gossip, hate, or injustice? Return (by Christ's strength alone, His strength in you) good, love, kindness, gentleness!

Christ was God incarnate (that means God in the flesh). We are Christ incarnate (He lives, must live, in us)! Let Him be seen! Others will bow before Him as you have done.

(from a 1982 Belmont Church bulletin, Nashville, Tennessee -- via Linton Bulletin 2002)

A PRAYER for REPENTANCE and RIGHTEOUSNESS

A few years ago minister Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas senate with a prayer. Everyone expected the usual politically correct generalities, but what they heard instead was a stirring prayer, a passionate call for repentance & righteousness.

The response was immediate. A number of legislators walked out during the prayer in protest. In six short weeks, the Central Christian Church had logged more than 5,000 phone calls with only 47 of those calls responding negatively. The church began receiving requests for copies of the prayer from as far away as India, Africa and Korea. Commentator Paul Harvey aired the prayer on The Rest of the Story on the radio & received a larger response to this program than any other he has ever aired !!

Joe Wright's PRAYER at the Kansas Senate:

"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness, & to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, 'Woe to those who call evil good,' but that's exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values.

We confess that:

We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism.

We have worshiped other gods and called it multi-culturalism.

Christ DIED, Christians FALL ASLEEP

Extracts from a Funeral Message by R.H. Boll

Never did death do its work in the Lord Jesus' presence, but thrice did He rob death of its prey....In connection with the little daughter of Jairus, and regarding the brother of Mary and Martha, the Lord Jesus used a meaningful word. Of the former He said, "The child is not dead, but sleepeth"; and of the latter He said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep."

In the New Testament we find the word repeatedly used instead of death. It is never used in a bad sense, and never of the wicked. It is the peculiar privilege -- when the word is used distinctively -- for God's people to fall asleep. It is so used in 1 Thes. 4:14 and set in contrast with the word "die": "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Christ's own never taste the reality of death (John 8:51). Because He died, those who are His fall asleep.

[The above remarks were made at the funeral of my older brother, Bruce B. Wilson, in Feb., 1943. The comments, in Brother Boll's hand, were found by the editor while going through some of my father's old papers. Bruce, my older brother, died in his sleep very unexpectedly at the age of almost twelve.]

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

"Ridiculous" is what President George W. Bush called the recent 9th District U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling on our nation being "under God." The ruling, if allowed to stand, would mean schoolchildren could no longer recite the pledge, at least in the nine Western states covered by the court. It was a 2-1 decision and the 9th District Court of Ap-

peals said the phrase "one nation under God" amounts to a government endorsement of religion is violation of the separation of church and state.

"And the hits just keep on coming" Remember:

1962- Supreme Court of the US prohibited the saying of a simple

non-denomination prayer in public schools.

1963 - Supreme Court banned Bible teachings in public schools.

1980 - Supreme Court ordered public schools to remove the Ten Commandments from student view.

"The Rising Son" (Dwight A. Albright) The current Japanese ministers are aging. There is a great need for younger men to enter full time ministry. The Japan School of Evangelism, begun about 12 years ago, seeks to train ministers. Several have trained in denominational schools and have joined those groups or been heavily influenced by them. There is still a place for missionaries and vocational missionaries. J.M. McCaleb (1892-1941), Missionary to Japan said: "Thousands have heard the Gospel; hundreds have been baptized; some have been saved."

Woodland Bible Camp (Junior Week Report) from Sellersburg newsletter: What a wonderful, excellent, model week at camp! Those who sponsored children for this week can rest assured it was well worth it! It was a peaceful week in which God blessed with children who were quiet and attentive in both class and chapel. A special thanks to Bro. Dennis Royse and Sis. Libbie for all their efforts in working with the youth of

Sellersburg. They are excellent examples for the young people and their work is very much appreciated.

Cartoon reflects attitude of many: "I'm in church, but I'm not into church."

Portland Christian School says "thank-you" to outgoing Administrator **J.R.Satterfield** and his wife Pie. The administration and school board are preparing a formal appreciation dinner on August 3rd. Only the Lord knows their dedication, long hours, sacrifice and wisdom as he led and she taught at P.C.S. these past years.

We thank God for raising up **Tim Morrow** as the new P.C.S. administrator as of July 1. Tim, Linda and the boys moved up from Louisiana. **Eddie Olberding** now preaches at Pine Prairie, where Tim ministered before.

Gallatin Church of Christ and community leaders of Gallatin Tennessee gathered for a reception to honor "retiring" minister **Julius Hovan** and lovely wife **Claudia**. The community reception was attended by about 300 people. Each presentation from the Governor, the Mayor, and Volunteer State President were humbly received. Kind words from area people and pastors were appreciated.

Church of Christ Worldwide (Lexington) plans another "Missions Around the World Thanks-

We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle.

We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery.

We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation.

We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare.

We have killed our unborn children and called it a choice.

We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable.

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem.

We have abused power and called it political savvy.

We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition.

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression.

We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free.

Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here to direct us to the center of Your will.

I ask it in the name of Your Son, the living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."

WONDERFUL LOVE

If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it.

If He had a wallet, your photo would be in it.

He sends you flowers every spring, and a sunrise every morning.

Whenever you want to talk, He'll listen.

He could live anywhere in the universe, and He chose your heart.

What about the Christmas gift He sent you in Bethlehem;

not to mention that Friday at Calvary.

Face it, He's crazy about you. --Max Lucado

giving & Prayer Request" booklet to be distributed by Thanksgiving. Those included in last year's booklet will be notified soon to start making plans to submit information again this year. If you know of others you would like to see participate in this booklet, please send us their name, address, phone number and, if available, e-mail. They will be contacted.

From "The Restoration Herald" (Bob Stacy writer) "God is still pleased with the peacemakers! And His promise to them: 'they will be called sons of God!' Oh, that the church in her leadership had more persons

who could be called 'sons of God.'"

Too bad he's Not the Only One: Little boy to Bible School teacher: "I know we're not supposed to hate anyone. But if God ever gives us permission, I've already got the person picked out."

Please send information of upcoming revivals, meetings, or other items for "News & Notes" to:

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Warning Against Economic Slavery

There are at least 5 very widespread forms of *bondage today -- to video games, porn, gambling, drugs/drinking and to easy credit.* Regarding the latter, Joel Belz writes in *World* magazine: "The big banking corporations are fully aware of our weakness, and altogether ready to exploit it. That's why your mailbox is cluttered every month with a dozen or more invitations to apply for still one more credit card with a compelling 2.9% interest rate, or even no interest at all. I heard this week of a young man, just 18 years old and a senior in high school, who over the last few weeks got enough such offers so that, if he had responded, he could already be \$100,000 in debt.

"But it's all a come-on, of course--as sin so often is. For the interest rate will soon be hiked, and not to something reasonable like 10 or 12% but to something usurious like 20 or 22%. That's when economic slavery sets in." (--*World*, a newsmagazine which gives a Christian viewpoint)

School of BIBLICAL STUDIES

Class Schedule for FALL 2002 Semester, [2nd REVISED EDITION]

Classes begin Aug. 19, and end Dec. 19

Doctrines-I,	Mon. 1:00 – 4:00	Jerry Carmichael
Pastoral Counseling,	Mon. 6:00 – 9:00	Bud Ridgeway
Christian Education in the Local Church,	Tues 9:00 – 12:00	Joyce Zimpleman
Role of Women,	Tues. 6:30-8:30	Ruth Wilson
Church History-I,	Thurs. 6:30-9:30	Alex Wilson

STUDY to deepen your knowledge of the Lord and His Word. **TRAIN** so you can serve Him better -- as disciple, witness, spouse, parent, Bible teacher, deacon, elder, preacher, or missionary. Each credit hour costs only \$25.00. Audit @ only \$12.50 per hour. No tuition charged senior-citizens so long as space is available.

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