

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

February 2006

**He Seemed TRAPPED
in TIMBUKTU!**

[You **MUST** Read "To the Ends of the Earth,"
by Steve Saint. You won't forget it.]

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"Blessed, Blessed, Blessed, Blessed"
--And that's not the Half of It!

Some folks would be miserable in heaven!

Fellowship Centered Evangelism

SOVEREIGNTY and RESPONSIBILITY

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber wonders why, if God controls everything, people are responsible if they go against God.

* * *

The Bible presents the sovereignty of God as a message of comfort to those who trust in him. It is not an abstract truth intended to be analyzed apart from that personal context. It is probably inevitable that believers will formulate theological systems as they try to understand various scriptural teachings and to relate those teachings to each other. The problem with theological systems is that God's thoughts are higher than ours and that no system can fully account for all that God has revealed. In almost every case, those who develop theological systems end up bending, trimming or ignoring some biblical passages in an effort to make them fit some particular line of logic. Better that we should leave room for mystery and paradox when our minds seemingly cannot sort out all that God has revealed. If we knew all that God knows, we would see the harmony that presently escapes our limited mortal understanding.

For example, Scripture says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he refused to release the Israelites from Egyptian slavery (Ex. 7:3; Rom. 9:17-18). But Scripture also says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:32; 9:34). We do not have to choose one statement and reject the other. In some way that we cannot fully comprehend, both statements are true. God was sovereign and Pharaoh was also responsible. It is human pride which selects either statement as true, then insists on measuring the other by the standard of personal logic. Our present inability to harmonize these two statements merely reflects that we are mortals, not gods, and that there are things we cannot now fully grasp.

When it comes to biblical paradoxes, most Christian groups have thought in terms of either/or. For example, Christians who follow the logic of John Calvin tend to affirm that God hardened Pharaoh's heart but to ignore those Scriptures that say Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Their desire is to reserve to God all credit and glory for anyone's salvation. Those Christians who follow the logic of John Wesley tend to affirm that Pharaoh hardened his own heart but to ignore those Scriptures that say that God hardened it. Their desire is to spare God any blame for those who are lost. I am determined to affirm both sets of Scriptures, to agree with Calvinists that God deserves all the glory for the salvation of the saved, but also to agree with Wesleyans that God deserves no blame for the damnation of the lost. Creaturely humility sometimes means simply believing God and leaving to him things that are too difficult for us to understand (Psalm 131:1-3).

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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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Birth, Death, and In Between

Alex V. Wilson

A wise man wrote, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die...." (Eccles. 3:1-2.) Birth and death—especially the latter—play major roles in this issue of *Word and Work*.

Recently I perused an ancient *W&W*, dated June 1964. One article, probably by editor Gordon Linscott, included this quotation from the famous preacher, Henry Ward Beecher:

When the sun goes below the horizon he is not set; the heavens glow for a full hour after his departure. And when a great and good man sets, the sky of this world is luminous long after he is out of sight. Such a man cannot die out of this world. When he goes he leaves behind much of himself. Being dead, he speaks."

Those words are very relevant to this issue. For they were quoted in an article which announced the sudden, unexpected Homegoing of Frank M. Mullins, Sr., an outstanding leader among us for decades. He went to Glory via a heart attack at the age of only 63. He was the father of Earl, Sr. and his brothers. In many ways a legacy of daring faith and leadership passed from father to son. Now Earl Sr. at age 73 has gone to be with the Lord, which is "better by far" for him (Phil. 1:23), but leaves a huge gap among us. May the Lord raise up more workers and servant-leaders to fill his shoes (welllll, probably not that!), and assist the too-few teachers, evangelists and missionaries who remain.

As happened 42 years ago, in this issue we have several testimonies of God's working through our departed brother. Others will appear next month.

Birthdays are important. We wouldn't be here without them! (And birth anniversaries--especially those which end with zeroes, as Dr. Dale Jorgenson reminds us--leave their impact too.) At death-days we who are left behind turn corners, and things will never be fully the same again. But in between the two, we are called to be salt and light. It is fitting that our ongoing study of the Sermon on the Mount has brought us to that point this month.

BIRTHDAYS

Dale Jorgenson

“Teach us to number our days,
that we may get a heart of wisdom” (Psalms 90:12)

From the time when we are quite small into grand old age those birthdays which end in zeroes seem to have special significance for us. Exceptions in the United States would be the ages of sixteen, when teen-agers enter into the world of independent mobility by getting their drivers' licenses, or eighteen, when citizens can cast their election ballots (and for some, walk into a bar and order an alcoholic drink legally), and twenty-one when each person faces the full load of responsibility as a “legal adult.”

But the psychology of age usually revolves around those zeroes--ten, thirty, forty, sixty, and (what we can hardly anticipate when we were teen-agers) even seventy or when we become one of those octogenarians! Those people who still are able to be active and productive at age ninety or one hundred amaze us with their durability. For me, turning forty was a disheartening birthday. Mary Lee has said that it was not until age seventy that she suddenly realized that she was actually a “senior citizen!”

In American culture, the prayer of David, “Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength is spent” (Psalms 71:9) seems particularly relevant. This is a time when one's “relevance” to the vital things going on around us seems to be greatly diminished, and it would be a surprising experience to see the image of two senior citizens on a billboard or the television screen advertising the commercial products of the age!

Uncle E. L. Jorgenson used to quote the adage, “Old men for counsel, young men for warfare.” But as highly as his own counsel may have been sought during his later years, he too found the birthday zeroes sometimes depressing. In 1946 he retired a second time from the pulpit of the Highland Church of Christ, and was named “Minister Emeritus.” Turning sixty years of age, he apparently became quite depressed about his own life expectancy (most of the men in his family had died quite young), and characteristically he turned to his wise (and twelve years senior) friend, R. H. Boll. The discouraged letter he wrote is no longer extant, but the loving answer is:

My very dear, beloved friend and brother--it must have been a mournful day and you must have been away down in the dumps when you wrote that note. But anyway, I'm glad you wrote it, for it gives me a good chance to express again my love and esteem and perfect confidence in you.

1946 was the year before E. L. Jorgenson came to Searcy, Arkansas to marry Mary Lee and me. We thought he was in remarkably good spirits and physical condition. (He did forget to ask Mary Lee to "love, honor, and *obey*" but we thought it was on purpose!) Brother Boll's reassurance seemed to be effective, for Uncle Elmer was entering a phase of his life in new areas of usefulness and energy, especially with the development of the "Precious Reprints" in the *Word and Work* which resulted in the collected volume, *Faith of our Fathers* in 1962.

After suffering a severe coronary attack from which he would never completely recover in 1958, Uncle Jorgie was able to continue his writing, negotiating for the uses of his *Great Songs of the Church*, and occasionally to speak (although usually sitting in a chair). In any event, by his eightieth birthday, he was able to write, much more optimistically:

On the date that this is written (December 9, 1966) I have reached the mark that Moses mentioned as the measure of a long, strong life: three score and ten, or even by reason of strength, four score years (Ps. 90:10). Yet in my case it was not by reason of strength, but by reason of the measureless mercy of God to His unworthy servant. Though a few live fourscore years and ten, and even longer, it still remains true that a man of eighty is an old man.

E. L. Jorgenson marveled at his longevity compared with the relatively brief life spans of many in his own family, and that he was "still on Time's side of the 'great divide.'" How glad he was that younger writers ("young men for warfare") were taking up the work as editors (for the *Word and Work*) and in the great harvest fields of the Kingdom of Christ.

So as his nephew approaches his eightieth birthday on March 20, the zeroes give pause again. How thankful we are for the love of Christian family, for former students and colleagues, and for those whom we have served and by whom we have been served in various congregations of Christians. I guess, as he says, I am about to be truly "an old man," like Simeon who greeted the Christ child at the temple in Jerusalem, or the blessed Anna, who had exceeded the zeroes and lived to age eighty-four (Luke 2). As the road behind gives

reason for thanksgiving and praise to the Giver of Life, the road ahead looks even brighter as we wait for the One Who has sustained us thus far ("Ebenezer!") and Who will awaken us into the glorious future with Him and each other.

Remembering the joys and the sorrows we have experienced as many of our younger friends and colleagues in the Faith have gone ahead of us to be with Christ, the words of hymn-writer Thomas Grinfield confirm our own thoughts:

O how kindly hast Thou led me, Heav'nly Father, day by day, Found my dwelling, clothed and fed me, Furnished friends to cheer my way. Didst Thou bless me, didst Thou chasten, With Thy smile or with Thy rod, 'Twas that still my step might hasten Homeward, heav'nward, to my God.

Uncle Jorgie wrote, at his eightieth:

We part--to meet again.

But how, or where or when:

Will it be here or there,

On earth, or "in the air?"

Who knows?

Yet yonder at the throne,

Still caring for His own,

Stands One who is our Friend

Lo, always to the end:

He knows.

Tributes to Earl Mullins, Sr.

His funeral was a celebration; in fact, that's what the family called it. Much singing, many prayers, many testimonies to God's working through His servant. The testimonies were arranged around four main aspects of his ministry—preacher, teacher, school administrator, and missionary. Regarding each ministry three people were asked to speak—"for 2-3 minutes, shorter is better" we were told. (Almost impossible!) At the end of each tribute, Earl C. Jr. led the congregation in saying in unison, "*Blessed be the name of the LORD*"—to remind us that his dad would have been nothing apart from his Savior.

When I suggested that we run excerpts from those tributes in *W&W*, Earl C. wrote: "It will not take you by surprise to know that many of us in the family thought *Dad would have been concerned about the celebration service. If it did not give glory to God or if it 'glorified' Dad, he would not have been in favor of it. I hope the message of what God does, can do and did, in the case of Dad and through all of His servants came through loud and clear in the service. I know that in anything you print the same will be true.*"

Yes, that's so important. Apart from Him we can do nothing. (John 15:5.) Yet we remember the balancing truth from Heb. 13:7-8, "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Perhaps that could be paraphrased: Remember, consider and imitate the faithful leaders and teachers among you, that you may benefit from their teaching and example. But always remember – especially when they pass from the scene -- the One upon whom they took their stand, and who will never pass away, the Eternal One. Blessed be *His* name.

The following testimonies are condensed and sometimes adapted, for the sake of space and to avoid repetition. –a.v.w.

Influence for Many Generations

Duane Smith

When Earl C. Jr. asked if I would share about how his Dad had impacted my life as my teacher and principal, I was a little apprehensive because I don't know how to limit it to just 2-3 minutes. You see, his influence on my life and the life of my family will for many generations be felt.

In 1971, I attended the seniors' graduation assembly at Portland Christian School. I did not attend PCS, but my parents were talking about sending me here. I came that day to see my Aunt Sharon graduate. When the program was over and I saw those kids standing in the hall crying, I couldn't figure it out. I asked Sharon why everyone was crying, and she said, "We don't want to leave." Don't want to leave school! -- what is *that* all about? I figured if people cried because they had to leave, this is where I wanted to go.

I met Bro. Earl right away; I was in the same class as his daughter Beth. All I remember being told about back then was if you see him and his nose is real red, get out of there! Over the next 6 years I had several opportunities to not only see the red nose but to be the cause of it. When I was a senior I had a very difficult year because of my own stupidity. I spent a lot of time with Bro. Earl, more than either he or I wanted.

Bro. Earl kept me in Portland Christian School when he could have sent me on my way. He kept me on the basketball team, when he would have been justified to do otherwise. He loved me and cared for me in spite of me. Instead of letting me feel the full pain of my own sin he tried to protect me. It was several years later before I fully understood what he had done for me. There are things that he told me in those daily briefings in his office that I remember to this day; very wise things.

A couple of weeks ago while visiting with Earl and Ragna I thanked him again for his care for me. I had done this many times, but I just felt like I wanted to do it again. Ragna said, "You know, we only remember the good stuff." Then Earl piped in and said, "I knew you would be alright; Miss Lois McReynolds was working with you." What a reunion *they* must have had last week!

Bro. Earl Mullins is a hero to me. He spent his life here sold out to the God who paid such a high price to give us life that means something. His witness and his testimony lives on in the lives of hundreds of students he taught and cared for. He taught us that the Word of God is true, living and active. He taught us that God's Word was relevant to every area of our life. He is a marvelous example of what it means to be a strong Christian man. He reflects Jesus. I miss him very, very much.

A Life Well Lived

Don Rucker

I have had the privilege of knowing Earl Mullins in a variety of contexts. He was our larger-than-life principal when I came to PCS in the 7th grade. I soon learned, vicariously I might add, that he could swing a pretty mean paddle.

The fact is that Earl was a strong authority figure – exactly what I and a lot of other students needed in our growing up years. You never had to wonder about Brother Earl; he was a known quantity that you could count on. He was a role model that young men could and did aspire to be like.

When I became a teacher at PCS in 1982, I soon discovered that all those things about Earl that had filled me with concern – yea, maybe even fear -- as a student, brought peace and comfort to me as a teacher. I began to truly appreciate the value of a strong authority figure, especially in a school setting. Earl was also a kind, compassionate and caring man who often worked behind the scenes to provide opportunities for students and faculty alike. Not until we all get to heaven will we know how many people were the beneficiaries of an opportunity Earl worked to make happen.

I do not feel that I am overstating the case when I say that every student in a private or home school in the state of Kentucky in the last 30 years owes a debt of gratitude to Earl Mullins. There was a time in the 1970's when state government sought to mandate the curriculum of all schools, not just public schools. A lawsuit ensued – now known as the Rudicill case. Earl spent innumerable hours doing research and testifying on behalf of private schools and their right to choose their own curriculum. In the end, the private schools prevailed, based largely on the work and testimony of one man – Earl Mullins.

When Earl asked me to succeed him as administrator of PCS, the words “That’s a tough act to follow” took on a whole new meaning for me. When I visited Earl a couple of months ago, I made it a point to say thanks for the confidence he had placed in me. I said, “It must not be easy to pass the reins of what has been your life’s work to another person.” His reply was typically Earl – gracious in every way. He said “Welllll, I don’t remember that I ever even worried about it!”

Earl also was the key figure in a very important event in my life – a trip to Russia in 1998. The school had been sending teams of teachers and students on exchange programs for 4 years. Earl called

and asked if I had any interest in participating and I said no. I should have known better – Earl was a hard man to say “no” to if he believed in something. After several conversations on the subject, he either convinced me or wore me out, I’m not sure which -- and I agreed to go. I thought it funny at the time that he was so insistent that I go. Only in retrospect can I see the blessing that God had in store for me in that trip. Except for Earl’s insistence, I would have missed that blessing.

The year that I spent as an assistant principal under Earl, I count as one of the most special of my life. Not because everything went well – those of you who were at PCS remember they didn’t. It was special because I was able to spend time everyday with one of the men I respected most in my life. I count that year spent with Earl as an honor and a privilege.

They say behind every great man is a great woman. Never was that any more true than in the case of Earl and Ragen. Wherever he was and whatever he was working on, Ragen was there being the help-meet God had designed her to be. I do not think Earl’s 31-year career at PCS would have been nearly as successful if she had not been at his side. Their example of a great marriage is an inspiration to me.

It is difficult to pay proper respect to a man like Earl Mullins. But of all the words that I might say in his honor, the ones that hold the most significance to me personally are these: I was blessed to be able to call Earl Mullins my friend. May God send us more men like him.

God! Missions! Love!

Bennie Hill

Two weeks ago I was asked to supply our Cramer Church ladies with some information about Bro. Mullins -- so they could remember his life and have a special time for prayer for him and his supportive family. My information began with these words: “Great man of God! Heart for missions! Love for people!”

Many of you knew the professional side of Bro. Earl -- the serious side -- the Biblical scholar -- the disciplinarian! I too saw that side of him when he was my Bible teacher at PCS during the early 60’s. Classes were extremely thorough and interesting, even to a high school student who had his mind on other things.

Little did I know that in 5 years (1968), after I acquired a wife, we would begin our first ministry together at the 5th & M Streets

congregation with Bro. Mullins as senior minister and Sis. Ragena as 1st lady. I realized then that God was the God of second chances! Several things I remember about those days:

He truly was a faithful servant, dedicated husband and father. I can see him in his 13 passenger station wagon with kids everywhere. I suppose that's what motivated me to begin a bus ministry when we moved to Lexington in 1975.

He was highly-esteemed not only for his love for the Word of God, but his special ability in communicating it to others. When he spoke, we listened. He took us into deep waters. We saw his love and great passion for the Word. He relied not so much on popular commentaries but on the Spirit of God who Jesus promised to be "our teacher." When Bro. Mullins spoke, we were privileged to be in the presence of God.

I had the privilege of visiting with him in homes of shut-ins, those who were hospitalized, or maybe desired to have the Lord's Supper brought to them Sunday afternoons. There was a warmth and love that radiated from him. He had the heart of a minister. What a lasting impression this has had on me for almost 40 years now!

I remember in those early days at 5th & M that he was a sports enthusiast. On the basketball court we shared elbows, high fives, and frequent water breaks! Throughout the years we would reminisce "the good old days" with many laughs. Yes, there was a human side to Bro. Mullins.

Since my Portland days two Scriptures took on new meaning because of him: One was 1 Peter 3:15. That may have been the only verse I memorized while his Bible student, but since those days it has become very special to me. Another was Titus 2:11-14, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

That was the message that challenged us as this humble servant allowed God's Holy Spirit to speak through him. And because of that, since Feb. 15 Heaven has had its own version of the Olympics--and Bro. Mullins has won the "Gold!"

Trail Blazer, Visionary, Hugger!

Jodell Seay

Currently I am humbled and privileged to serve as the Executive Director of Portland Christian School. Bro. Earl Mullins' vision, confidence, sense of humor and willingness many times to be the trail blazer—all those are great parts of the reason I have been allowed to serve here.

I came to know Bro. Earl the summer before I was in seventh grade. He was Beth's Dad. I had just had my life-changing introduction to Jesus Christ. It was during VBS, where an open Bible was placed before me, and I was guided by the friendship and love of Sister Evelyn Clark. The reality that I learned that day became the call I felt the Lord had given me: Equip others, especially children, to know that there is Truth. Teach the good news of God's Word and the Truth that it is. It seemed too great a challenge to me.

Bro. Earl faced that same challenge, and got it done. He was an administrator of God's compelling call that was placed on his heart—teach others. As an educator he had vision, feet of faith that could move, a willingness to consider others first, confidence in those around him, respect for all. And always his Bible – in hand and/or in heart. That's why he was so well respected among other Christian schools, Catholic schools, home-schools, mission schools, and educators called to every form of teaching.

This man's ministry had a great impact in Kentucky. He was part of the original group that has now become the Kentucky Non-Public Schools Commission. He fought for the opportunity of Christian education to continue.

Bro. Earl was a visionary. He was always ready to move forward, I often got the sense that he was just waiting on the rest of us. He wasn't afraid of what God's next challenge would be, he just looked forward to giving the testimony of God's hand working.

Good administrators know what needs to get done. Great administrators *get* things done. Bro. Earl did this by enabling others to do what God had called them to do. And to do it with the accountability God requires from a leader. He challenged me, encouraged me, equipped me and set me to the task. And then he acted like I could do it! He expected me to do it!

I will forever be grateful for the incredible impact Bro. Earl had on me. Both my parents are buried in Tompkinsville, Kentucky.

Bro. Earl took part in both of their funerals. He had influenced my mom, a girl from Turkey Neck Bend, Kentucky. He comforted her as she battled liver cancer, he encouraged her and blessed her family – me. He boldly spoke to her about her salvation. He and Ragena personally sacrificed so much for others.

How do you give testimony to someone's humble greatness? How do you express gratefulness for the generations who know and will know Jesus – who will know God's Word, through Earl's desire to completely follow our Lord and Savior?

Bro. Earl had the confidence and conviction of a man who knew things. He knew God, he knew his love for his family, he knew he loved others more than he loved himself, he knew fun.

I know this – Bro. Earl hugged warm and well! He laughed with his whole body. He loved Jesus with his whole heart. I will be one who will gladly stand in line in Heaven to get my next hug.

Humble Faith

Alex Wilson

Among my own memories of Brother Earl, the following stands supreme. One time he shared this testimony in a chapel message at Portland Christian School. (He was a young teacher there at the time. So was I.) This is how I remember the story he told:

As a young preacher (he didn't say where) he was drafted to assist another church leader (he didn't say who) in some Christian ministry (he didn't say what). It turned out that man was quite difficult to work with. (He didn't say why.) Maybe he was bossy and never asked Earl's opinions on anything related to the work. Maybe his methods were far behind the times. Maybe he asked Earl to do all the work while he took all the credit. Maybe he had a short fuse....

Whatever, before many months passed by, Earl began praying daily something like this: "O Lord, let me be relieved of this difficult responsibility. You know how hard it is to work under Brother X, so please get me out of this fix."

But a few days later, as Earl was reading God's Word, it seemed the Lord reached up from the page and slapped him! The verse, Romans 5:5, says, "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." Earl was convicted of his lack of love, and also of a lack of trust that God could do something about it.

So he changed his prayer, and made this his daily request: "Lord, please fill my heart with *Your love for Brother X*. You love him, so please love him through me."

Brother Earl concluded, "Within a week or so, I noticed a definite change in my attitude toward that brother. *He* hadn't changed, but the Holy Spirit gave me His love for him despite his somewhat difficult ways. God lived up to His Word and poured out His love into my heart by the Holy Spirit."

YES! That's victory! The Lord can do that for all of us, so all of us can do that. Thanks, Earl, for your reaction to God's word, and for the humility to tell us about it.

A Grandson Remembers

Excerpts from Philip Mullins' Memories

He was a loving and attentive grandfather, one who always had time to spend with us, who had helped to build for us a happy childhood.

As a member of the church where he ministered, I was often completely enraptured by his sermons. His patience and steadfastness in study and prayer translated to a style of teaching that was at once extremely enlightening and often overwhelming both in its content and implication. Simply stated, when he taught, the finite nature of this earth was never more clear to me, the infinite nature of God never more certain.

I have seen and personally experienced through Goin' Fishing what two people could help accomplish when they prayed for the Lord to open doors, and prayed for wisdom to know when and how to enter those doors.

How do you honor a man whose exposition of scripture exclaimed to you time and again the absolute truth that there is a God, that He loves you, and to that end He sent his Son to live a perfect life, die a painful and unjust death, and defeat that death by rising from it to live forever?

How do you honor a man who you would have your own life to emulate? There will not be a day that passes, from now until I see him again, that memories of Earl C. Mullins Sr. as a grandfather won't permeate at least some portion of my life. But it is having him as a brother in Jesus Christ for which I am eternally grateful.

Sermon on the Mount, continued--

Be SALT! Be LIGHT!

Alex V. Wilson

During World War II my Dad was stationed in Hawaii for a while. Someone there once gave him some apples. But *yuck!* – they had no taste at all. Yet he didn't want to throw them away, lest the giver ask how he liked them. Finally he solved the problem. He bought a bottle of apple butter to spread on them. That's the only way he could stand them.

Apples without flavor are like salt without saltiness. Do we ever seem like *yuck!* to God and to people around us? Jesus had something to say about this. In the Sermon on the Mount He gave His disciples nine *Blesseds*. Then He gave them two *You Are's*: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

What is He Telling Us?

Salt adds flavor. And we Christians by our love, joy and purpose in life should add flavor -- tang and zest -- to a community.

But in Jesus' day of no refrigeration, salt's *main* use was to prevent meat from decaying. Like beef that sits around too long, human society will naturally deteriorate and become rotten morally. By our lives we can help prevent that process. And our society is not like ham—already salty. Our land and community need all the salt they can get. We Jesus-people should provide that saltiness.

Light illuminates, makes things brighter and clearer. Jesus implies that this world is naturally dark —very dark with evil, meanness, dishonesty, exploitation, gloom and despair. Jesus is the light of the world, like the Sun. But we, like the Moon, are to reflect His light and blessings into the very deep darkness.

How can we Do it?

By living the beatitudes we studied the past two months: Compassionate mourning, mercy and meekness, peace-making, willing-

ness to suffer, etc. In other words, by our Jesus-like character and action. That's how we bring God into our life and community.

Salt never stops decay while still in the salt-shaker. Till salt is applied to the meat, it has no effect at all. Christians who want to stay in a holy huddle with fellow-Christians and never mix with unsaved folks are like salt which wants to mingle only with other salt – or at most with ham or bacon! We need to penetrate society, not withdraw into caves like hermits, or into monasteries like monks. (I'm preaching to myself here.)

On the other hand, if we go into society but also *think and act just like our society*—conforming to its selfish lifestyles--we won't make any impact either. (See the quotation from John Stott inside our front cover.)

Let's Apply All This:

Let's apply this to our children in school: Be friendly, not aloof or stand-offish from others. But also "dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone," to be different in values, standards, and conduct.

For example, *Do not* cheat and give other students answers during tests. *But do* offer to help them with their studies at other times—and take time to do it. *Do not* cuss and tell dirty jokes, *but do* have some good, clean ones to tell! *Do not* adopt immodest dress, or indulge in alcoholic drinks or do drugs. *But do*--as much as possible--be positive and avoid a holier-than-thou attitude. Don't *put down* other people, but do *turn down* the harmful effects of sin.

As an example, here's a letter I sent to Louisville's liberal newspaper, the *Courier-Journal*, during a several week's period of intense debate about "gay marriage rights." The paper ran numerous articles and letters on this.

Several recent letters claim that gay unions are "no threat to marriage." Yet facts indicate that gay unions are indeed a *clear* threat -- to *gays themselves*. Homosexual persons – though just a small per cent of our population, have about 50% of the Syphilis cases and 60% of AIDS cases in the U.S. Gay men get Hepatitis-B 20 times more than straight men. The average gay's life expectancy is about 42 years, contrasted with 74 for straight men. The average lesbian lives 45 years, while the average straight woman lives to 79. So on average those who practice homosexuality die over 30 years sooner than straights! These facts are not publicized as they ought to be. *They are not just cold statistics,*

but people. I heard a speaker say, "We hate homosexual practice because we love homosexual people"....

By sending that letter we tried to oppose sin yet love sinners. But sadly, though I emailed it to the *CJ* three times, and snail-mailed it once, they never published it.

Some Positive Examples of Salt and Light

This article was originally a sermon to the Portland Avenue congregation. Faithful shepherds of God's flock should rebuke the sheep's faults when necessary, but also commend and encourage their virtues when possible. We don't want to just toot our own horn, but there are many praiseworthy attitudes and activities. The same is true in any church which seeks to please our Shepherd. So here are some samples of God-inspired ways to be salt and light to others.

A few years ago, Jill Warner spear-headed a Saturday-morning "Portland Pride" community cleanup group. Some of our other members plus additional folks participated. This was a good effort and example, though its impact was not so great as desired because people who were helped were too irresponsible to get involved and help themselves (much less help others).

Linda Gregson ran for the Louisville city council. Though she was not elected (that's often the case), she called attention to needed changes in the neighborhood, and made helpful proposals for improvement. Jackie Hert, by volunteering to be our main van-driver, almost single-handedly resurrected our children's classes in Sunday School and also mid-week Bible Club.

For 20 years Ruth Wilson led a Girl Scout troop sponsored by our church. Many of the Scouts were not members here, but she taught them the Gospel as well as practical and social skills—and tried to reach parents (mostly moms) too. Several of our sisters participate in a home Bible class for neighborhood women. Others regularly meet to pray at length, and also are part of a telephone prayer-chain for emergencies.

Ernie Balsley goes weekly to the Portland Health Clinic to assist elderly patients in filling out forms, making phone-calls, etc. He also investigates and assists people who ask the church for financial help in emergencies. Tim Crabtree is an active volunteer in several community agencies and activities. Some of them are "secular" (helping in the annual Portland Festival), and some are Christian (a ministry that gives food, clothes, and the Gospel to homeless people on a weekly basis). Gary Butts heads up the Kentucky branch of the

Christian Coalition, which promotes righteous laws and godly practices in our state and community.

For over 80 years Portland Christian School has provided education from a Bible-based perspective. This was provided tuition-free for decades, and even now its tuition is adapted to the financial needs and abilities of the families. This has been a godsend to many.

Von Allmen's Grocery and also Heid Printing are just two of several family businesses that have ministered to people of this community by honesty in business, plus very generous caring for customers and others, and providing jobs, etc.

Several other examples could be given as well. But the point is already clear: All Christians can and should be salt and light in some way or other. Christ's Spirit enables us as salt to retard evil, and as light to spread loving care and joy. But remember that to do any good, salt must remain salty—and we Christians must remain *Christiany!* Satan not only tries to stop us from influencing unbelievers for the Lord. He also tries to lure us into evil, harmful ways. Don't let him. Stay salty. Stay close to the Lord. Stay in the Light, and reflect Him!

A Contradiction?

Verse 16 says, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." But contrast the opening verse of the very next chapter: "Be careful **not** to do your acts of righteousness [or of devotion] before men, **to be seen by them.**" If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." How do we resolve that seeming contradiction?

By realizing that our Lord is warning us about opposite types of failure. 1) Fear or cowardliness tempts us to deny we are Christians, to keep our faith secret because of shame. In 5:16 Jesus is telling us, Don't be ashamed of Me, don't deny your faith in Me but be willing to do good things in My name so I and My Father will get the glory. Don't hide your light under a bowl.

2) On the other hand, pride and self-righteousness tempt us to show off our religion so that we will get glory. So Jesus tells us, Examine your motives. If you pray, fast, give donations, etc. in order to build your reputation—then it means nothing to God. Some teacher put the bottom line this way: When tempted to *hide* your faith, *show* it. When tempted to *show off* your faith, *hide* it.

Motivation

Speaking of motives, note three of them in verses 1-16. Live according to these teachings, Jesus says, and 1) You will be Blessed: "O the bliss," the fulfillment you will receive! In John 10:10 He called it "abundant life." 2) Society will be Helped--enlightened--and its corruption decreased or at least slowed down. And 3) God will be Glorified for these virtues and their results.

Vision and Faith

Last, note Christ's vision for His followers, and strong faith in His Father. At this time He was popular with the crowds. Yet his closest followers (then and later) were mostly a rag-tag bunch of men - fishermen, maybe some farmers, carpenters and other everyday guys plus a despised tax-collector or two. Later he chose twelve from them to be his most intimate trainees, and at times sent them out on preaching-and-healing missions. Sometime after that he had about seventy other Bible School students (we might call them) to whom he gave special instructions and then sent out on an evangelistic trip two by two.

Here's the point: To such folks (plus others including women) -- most of them very ordinary -- Jesus here says, "You are the salt of *the EARTH*, the light of *the WORLD!*" The Greek word here translated "world" is the word from which we get "*cosmos*." He is granting these "common folks," though they could not have understood it then, a cosmic significance!

He knew that by His divine power these humble people had gigantic potential! He had a world-wide perspective for them. And indeed, by God's grace and enabling - they, His "little flock," changed world history.

What about *us, here and now?* Christ's power has not diminished. Neither have His vision and goal for His people in every generation. May we trust Him more and more, and by His enabling be salt and light to the *world!*

Speaker Challenges Believers to Raise Biblically-Grounded Youth

Allie Martin and Jenni Parker, Agape Press

A well-known evangelist says Christian parents and churches must do a better job of teaching and modeling biblical truth to young people.

Author and speaker Josh McDowell is about to embark on a year-long schedule of conferences with the purpose of equipping youth and adults to share, defend, and model their Christian beliefs effectively. McDowell says young people who call themselves Christian often have distorted beliefs about God, truth, and the Bible.

McDowell says contemporary research shows that accepting Christ and making a profession of faith today makes little or no difference in young people's beliefs, attitudes, or behavior. Studies indicate that 63 percent of Christian youth do not believe Jesus is the Son of the one true God, 58 percent believe all faiths teach equally valuable truths, and 51 percent do not believe Jesus rose from the dead.

Meanwhile, 74 percent of Christian kids say they cheat on tests, and 93 percent say they lie to their parents. And although these trends are alarming, McDowell contends they are not surprising or difficult to understand.

"If you do not understand not only what you believe but why you believe it," McDowell explains, "then, in our multicultural society where Islam used to be in the next continent -- now it's the next 7-11 [Store] -- then you start to back off of your convictions and beliefs about the scriptures."

McDowell believes pluralistic postmodern culture makes it more important than ever that today's youth be equipped with a thorough grounding in the biblical truth. This is imperative, he says, "because the world has come to us. We need to train our young people, more than ever, not only in what they believe but why they believe it and to see them experience it in their lives."

And to do this, the evangelist says parents, church youth leaders, and other adult mentors need to focus on building and maintaining positive relationships with young people. "Most of our beliefs are not formed," he explains, "but they're engendered by our relationship with authoritative adults in our lives."

Most kids today "are deeply hurting in relationships, and it's affected the very things that they believe," McDowell contends. He says when important relationships with adult authority figures are missing and/or failing to connect, young people tend to walk away from the very beliefs and behavior of those who have authority over them.

In an effort to help adults connect with kids and help them stand strong in the face of today's culture, McDowell has launched a campaign called "Beyond Belief to Convictions." Through this campaign his ministry provides resources to help adults raise and train up "a generation of transformed followers of Christ" who know what they believe and why.

Josh McDowell (<http://www.joshmcdowell.com>)

Beyond Belief to Convictions (<http://www.beyondbelief.com>)

HEALING IN PERSPECTIVE

Edward Fudge, GracEmail
Feb 12, 2006

Someone has said that error is truth out of proportion. Balanced truth takes into account the great biblical doctrines of Creation, the Fall, Redemption, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the End. In such perspective, biblical revelation resembles a polished diamond which sparkles in all directions. To that end, and after four decades of adult reflection on the topic and praying for the sick, I offer seven biblical perspectives on divine healing -- charting a scriptural course, I believe, between some extremes often heard today.

* * *

1. We may affirm that God's will for his creation is health and wholeness. We may deny that God is the author of sin, disease or death. (Gen. 1:27, 31.)

2. We may affirm that sickness, like all the world's brokenness, is an ultimate result of human sin. We may deny that specific weakness or trouble is necessarily related to any specific sin, or to the sin of any particular individual. (Rom. 5:12; 8:20-22; John 9:1-3; Book of Job.)

3. We may affirm that God, by Christ's redemptive work, will finally restore to its intended wholeness the creation he has made. This includes our bodies and whole selves. We may deny that God is

interested only in our "soul" or "spirit," or that redemption excludes from its final benefits complete wholeness for the entire person. (Isa. 53:4-5; Phil. 3:20-21.)

4. We may affirm that this full redemption will not come until the resurrection at the End. Until then, even God's believing people continue to share in elements of the Fall. We may deny that even mature believers can always expect perfect health and wholeness now, or that their sicknesses necessarily reflect any personal fault or lack of faith. (1 Cor 15:42-49; 2 Cor. 4:16-5:4.)

5. We may affirm that, because of Christ's atonement and resurrection and the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost, we may begin even now to share in God's victory over sin and its consequences. This victory at times includes the healing of the body, mind and relationships, in ways that exceed human prediction, understanding or ability to produce. We may deny that God has stopped working in the world and in our lives, or that we must wait until the End to see any signs of our redemption. (Eph. 1:18-21; 3:16; 3:20; Heb. 6:4-5.)

6. We may affirm that all health and healing is God's gift, regardless of the means by which it comes or the speed with which it occurs. For all health and healing we should give God thanks and praise. We may deny that health or healing ever occur apart from God's sovereign grace, or that so-called "natural" processes are any less the supernatural work of God. (Ps. 103:1-3.)

7. We may affirm that God gives us many means of wellness. These include, but are not limited to, the body's "natural" processes, healthy physical, mental and emotional habits and lifestyles, the special ministry of those who practice the healing arts, the loving attention of family and friends, and also effective, believing prayer. In times of illness, we should gratefully apply all appropriate means, asking for God's healing according to our needs and his glory. We may deny that Christians ought to spurn or neglect any appropriate means of good health or healing, since to do so violates both Scripture-revelation and common sense. (Phil. 4:3-7; 1 Tim. 5:23; Col. 4:14; see also Sirach 38.)

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Strength made Perfect in *WEAKNESS*

Dr. Greg Dykstra

I read recently the story of a 10 year old boy who decided to study judo despite the fact that he had lost his left arm in a devastating car accident.

The boy began lessons with an old Japanese judo master. The boy was doing well, so he couldn't understand why after three months of training, the master only taught him one move.

"Sensei," the boy finally said, "shouldn't I be learning more moves?"

"This is the only move you know, but this is the only move you'll ever need to know," the sensei replied. Not quite understanding, but believing his teacher, the boy kept training.

Several months later, the sensei took the boy to his first tournament. Surprising himself, the boy easily won his first two matches. The third match proved to be more difficult, but after some time, his opponent became impatient and charged; the boy deftly used his one move to win the match.

Still amazed by his success, the boy was now in the finals. This time, his opponent was bigger, stronger, and more experienced. For awhile, the boy appeared to be overmatched. Concerned that the boy might get hurt, the referee called a time-out. He was about to stop the match when the sensei intervened. "No," the sensei insisted, "let him continue."

Soon after the match resumed, his opponent made a critical mistake: he dropped his guard. Instantly, the boy used his move to pin him. The boy had won the match and the tournament. He was the champion.

On the way home, the boy and the sensei reviewed every move in each and every match. Then the boy summoned the courage to ask what was really on his mind: "Sensei, how did I win the tournament with only one move?"

"You won for two reasons," the sensei answered. "First, you've mastered one of the most difficult throws in all of judo. And second,

the only known defense for that move is for your opponent to grab your left arm."

The boy's biggest weakness had become his biggest strength.

We don't often view our weaknesses in the same way, but we should. I am reminded of the time that Paul prayed fervently for God to remove some affliction unknown to us, what he called a "thorn in the flesh." Refusing to remove it, God said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12: 9).

That seems to make no sense, and yet we see throughout the Bible, how God is able to work in spite of the weaknesses of men and women, showing forth His power - - David with his small stature against Goliath the giant, Gideon a man of no significant background leading a greatly outnumbered band, Jesus in the form of a helpless baby taking on humanity. In fact, the greatest demonstrations of God's power have come when men and women have felt the weakest. Remember that the next time you feel inadequate.

[I thought the writer of the above is an educator at peoria, IL Christian School--which has worked with Earl Mullins and Dan Wilson for 10 years in the exchange-students program. But Dan informs me that there are two Greg Dykstras, and this is the other one! The article is very good anyway. -- avw]

Fellowship Centered Evangelism

Jack Spender

Waterbury, Connecticut is an old, industrial city of about 100,000 people located on the Naugatuck River in the west central part of the state. The big brass mills that once made it the "Brass City of the World" are largely gone.

Unemployment is high, and there is no shortage of crime and corruption. The diverse cultural makeup and inner city mentality all provide an ideal setting for the entrance of light and good news--really Good News. The Lord has worked in hearts, and Waterbury Christian Fellowship is one shining result.

Begun in 1997 following several years of informal fellowship and Bible study in the home of a newly converted couple, this young assembly of about one hundred people has just completed its fifth

move to a new (rented) location in a down-town city school. We do have a building fund, but up to this point the Lord has led so clearly--sometimes miraculously--in opening and closing doors, that we are reluctant to part with this "moving of the cloud" in favor of a more settled location. Admittedly, moving has its trials and joys.

The age range of our assembly leans toward young families, although we do have some "grandparents" to help with the growing number of small children. An annual VBS week and a Christian day school help us in reaching out to neighborhood kids and in discipling our own.

The Book of Acts -- More than History

Our church's philosophy of evangelism is based on our understanding of the book of Acts rather than on any particular proof *text*. The early church was blessed with strong leaders and great fellowship; and those factors are important to us. The church met regularly for the four activities listed in Acts 1:44: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers--all family activities that pertain to the relationship between the Lord and His people. We therefore center the life of our church around relationships as expressed by these four. This influences our outreach. The church gathers for worship and training and then returns to the world with the gospel. Witness in the world is, therefore, strongly influenced by the quality of life in the fellowship.

Our understanding of "fellowship" is much more than having a good time together. It means serious discipleship and ultimately a vision for reaching the lost. Good teaching is crucial since the Word of God builds the church. Music, announcements, prayers, etc. have their place, but when we gather to hear the Word of God we keep introductory matters to a minimum and give little place to entertainment in order that prime time can be devoted to the message of the day--consecutive, expository ministry, for the most part. Even Sunday School is limited, so that a maximum number of adults can be present for the teaching. In fact, once a child finishes sixth grade, no classes are offered. As young adults, these young people are moved into the main auditorium to study with their parents.

Having been equipped (Eph. 4:11-12), believers are sent back into their world with a life-changing message of which they are living examples. Certainly there is freedom to use evangelistic methods and tools, but the personal witness of every believer is emphasized. We have several believers who seem to be evangelists by gift--and we encourage them--but the expansion of the work depends on the

joy and enthusiasm of every believer to speak about the Lord, regardless of gift.

The ideal is for believers to win people to Christ and then bring them into the church family for discipleship. Very often, however, we see people bringing their unsaved friends with them to meetings just to check us out. Visitors are welcome to the assembly (and it is a rare Sunday without any), but they do not become the focus of the meetings. Rather, they are spectators of the love of Christ in action in God's family. We try to make this whole matter of welcoming visitors as practical as possible. Every visitor is given a warm greeting by many of the "regulars." In addition, it is our goal that every visitor should receive an invitation home to dinner or out to eat. This is no problem for those who have limited budgets or for college students who live on a campus, because anyone can take visitors out for lunch and present the receipt to the treasurer for a full reimbursement the following week.

The Important Place of Informality

Growth of the assembly is expected as part of the nature of living things, and baptisms are held as needed. Integral to our mission of reaching people is our strong commitment to a small group ministry. We believe that God has blessed this effort over the years because the groups embody some basic biblical principles: the importance of hospitality and being in one another's homes; the importance of the older training the younger; and the recognition that people need an informal setting in which they can be open about their lives and seek practical help and counsel.

Two guidelines have been keys to this effort. First, the small groups are primarily intended for fellowship and care. They are not Bible studies (although the Word is always opened), so they are not called "Bible studies" but "care groups" or "fellowship groups." Second, from the start we were given the advice (which we proved to be sound) that small groups must never be included in the church's schedule of activities as *optional* programs since most Christians are already saturated with programs and cannot absorb any more. Rather, small groups form an integral part of the life of the church for every believer. This is an important point, because new believers are taught that to be in fellowship in this assembly means being faithful to attend the teaching hour and the Lord's Supper on Sunday mornings and fellowship and prayer in homes during the week. Our midweek attendance through the years has exceeded eighty percent.

Another Kind of Increase

Not only is growth of the assembly anticipated, but there is a strong desire to see new works planted as a corollary of growth. Once again, the small groups have played a part in this. As homes in the city or surrounding communities open for families to gather, reaching out to friends and neighbors not only makes for increase in the assembly but also presents the possibility of new assemblies being formed. Should a crowded small group be divided into two groups (as happened recently)? Or should a new assembly begin (as seems likely to happen in the coming year)? With eleven different groups meeting during the past season it was an exciting question to face, and we will likely face it again this fall.

In all of this, the only advertisements to unbelievers is satisfied Christians sharing their faith with others.

There are no evangelistic programs or committees sponsored by the church, although individuals would be free to participate in any of these.

This cycle of equipping for out-reach must be ongoing. Discipleship of new believers is crucial. The elders hold classes for new people. They teach them basic Bible doctrines, including simple assembly truths. Sisters meet weekly to build relationships, support the decisions of the men, and disciple the younger women. The men of the church (including elders and deacons) meet to pray, to make decisions, and to share concerns in both temporal and spiritual matters. This is a primary discipling tool; it frees the elders to spend quality time in the Word and prayer when they meet separately. It also communicates the value that the elders are shepherds and lead from among the flock (1 Pet. 5:1).

Perhaps the above sounds unrealistic, as if there are no problems. Of course, that's not true. But being part of a growing work that is filled with people who love the Lord, love one another, and love the lost, makes whatever trials we face worthwhile. One student from the west coast who has joined our fellowship put it this way: "I may continue in school, or I may get a job and work, but I'm not leaving Waterbury!" Somehow, telling people about the Lord is a little easier when you can't wait to involve them in the family you love and that loves you in return--God's family.

--From The Emmaus *Journey* magazine, Fall 2004. Used by permission.

Witness with Questions

Waldron Scott

Do you instinctively reject the grab-'em-by-the-necktie approach to personal evangelism for a "more natural" technique?

If so, you may find yourself desperately wanting to witness to a friend, but uncertain how to introduce the claims of Christ into the conversation. Or having managed that, perhaps you have found yourself struggling mentally to control the conversation long enough to present the gospel adequately.

No doubt about it, our first awkward efforts at friendship evangelism can be frustrating experiences. Some of us have even reluctantly decided that starting evangelistic conversations is the prerogative of gifted conversationalists – or insensitive zealots.

To solve this problem, many effective personal evangelists rely on certain habitual patterns to initiate and guide conversations along fruitful lines. Properly employed, such patterns are immensely valuable. They avoid the offensiveness of high pressure salesmanship, yet they overcome the hesitancy which too often neutralizes our sincere efforts to witness.

A number of such patterned sequences are in use today. A sequence that I regularly utilize consists of a short series of questions and statements that are easy to memorize and employ. Let me illustrate it by two examples. I have changed names but the incidents themselves are authentic. (The key questions of the sequence are italicized.) In this first sketch Jan and Fred are leaving the university chapel together, although about the same dialogue would occur if any religious person were asked Fred's questions.

Fred: That was a stimulating sermon wasn't it? *Are you interested in spiritual things, Jan?*

Jan (soberly): Yes, I am. Actually, I think about God a lot.

Fred (with a slight inflection emphasizing the word "real"): *Have you ever thought about becoming a real Christian?*

Jan (laughing): Why, do I look like a heathen? Seriously though, I'm not sure I could live up to being a real Christian. There are so many things in the Bible I don't understand. Do you believe everything in the Bible?

Fred (not answering her query directly): *Jan, if someone were to ask you, "What is a real Christian?" how would you answer?*

So far, so good. The conversation goes on from there. But Jan, it must be admitted, is very responsive. What about students who are indifferent or even antagonistic to religion? Let's see how Fred would handle such a situation.

In this instance he and Don are lounging in the student union. For some time their conversation ranges animatedly over a variety of topics. Then there is a lull.

Fred: *Don, are you interested in spiritual things?*

Don (surprised): Huh? Oh, I don't know. No, I'm afraid not.

Fred (with slight inflection emphasizing the word "thought"): *Well, have you ever thought about becoming a real Christian?*

Don: No, not really. It's been years since I darkened a church door. My folks forced me to go to Sunday school when I was a kid, and I got so I hated it. I just don't have time for that stuff any more.

Fred: *Don, if someone were to ask you, "What is a real Christian?" what would you say?*

You noticed, of course, that Fred's approach to Jan and Don was identical. Does this surprise you? Yet this is the whole point of a patterned sequence. If well thought out, it can be used almost anytime with anybody.

"Are you interested...?" The question is personal, as it should be, but it is not an invasion of privacy.

"... in spiritual things?" You could say "in religion" or "in Christianity" just as easily if you feel more comfortable with either of those phrases. In any event the question in its entirety is broad enough and vague enough to be perfectly innocuous, while still getting the dialogue underway.

But having begun you may be plagued by the prospect of a negative response from your listener. Your mind is likely to be a turmoil of "What will I say if ...?" "But what if she says ...?" or "How can I continue if ...?" The potential embarrassment of such an impasse is enough to keep most of us from launching out.

Two observations should be made here. First, the negative response we fear is practically non-existent. Perhaps it's the age we live in, perhaps it's just human nature. But the fact remains that most people today are interested, even eager, to discuss spiritual matters. Second, with respect to those few who may respond negatively or

(more likely) indifferently, why not relax and be ready with a question that is appropriate regardless of response.

"Have you ever thought about becoming a real Christian?" is designed for this purpose. Like the opening question, this one is direct, personal but non-offensive. Of course, whether it is unoffensive depends a great deal on the manner in which we ask it. Philip's query to the Ethiopian, "Do you understand what you are reading?" is conceivably insulting, but not necessarily so. Doubtless Philip's sincere interest and friendly manner made the difference.

Further, ever-so-slight inflections of the voice are sufficient to adjust to the various possible responses. In Jan's case, Fred wanted to rouse her curiosity by implying that there was more to being a Christian than she had thus far experienced. In the second illustration Don's less-than-enthusiastic response led Fred to present him with a friendly, implied challenge.

Observe that up to this point, Fred has been questioning, not preaching. Jan and Don had every opportunity to express themselves. But in so doing they were altogether likely to get off on some tangent irrelevant to Fred's objective (e.g., Jan's question about the Bible, Don's diatribe against Sunday school). So Fred is faced with the challenge of unobtrusively controlling the conversation long enough to present the gospel adequately. This is critical, and it is important that he does not flounder.

Fred meets this challenge with his third question, "What is a *real* Christian?" But since this question is not in direct reply to what either Jan or Don just said, you may ask why Fred ignores their particular responses. He does this because he knows that it is imperative for him to lead the conversation directly toward the gospel. He is able to do it because experience shows that the new question is so inherently interesting that students are quick to respond to it.

Moreover, by framing his question with "If someone were to ask you. . . how would you answer?" Fred introduces an imaginary third party. This keeps the pressure off Jan and Don, who continue to express themselves freely.

However, this third question is not a gimmick to keep the conversation moving. Far from it. In answering Fred, both Jan and Don will reveal their understanding-or lack of understanding-of the gospel. For the fact is this: Jan's and Don's answers to this question are predictable. The replies of the majority of students will center on the principle of good works. They will define or describe a Christian in terms of what he *does* rather than what he *is* (a new creation in Christ).

To illustrate this, let's continue to follow Fred's talks with Jan and Don. Since Fred's approach to both is essentially the same, for sake of brevity we will arbitrarily concentrate on Don.

Fred: If someone were to ask you, "What is a real Christian?" what would you say?

Don: Well, I'm not sure. I guess a real Christian is someone who goes to church regularly and follows the Golden Rule and turns the other cheek and all that sort of thing.

Fred: You know that's what most people think. *I used to think that myself.*

Don (after a short pause): Do you mean you've changed your ideas! What do you think a real Christian is now?

Fred: *Can you spare ten minutes, Don? If you have time I'd like to show you what the Bible says a Christian is and how to become one.*

The first three times Fred spoke, it was to ask questions. The fourth time, however, he makes a statement. What is the significance of this? Well, Fred's objective is to present the gospel. If possible he would like to be invited to do so. By saying "I used to think that myself," but offering no explanation, he takes advantage of human curiosity. It is almost certain that Don, who up until now has been answering questions, will reverse the order and begin to question Fred.

However, now that Fred has his opportunity to witness he refrains from plunging immediately into a lengthy discourse. He proposes a time limit and indicates that the Scriptures will be the basis of his presentation. Finally, he asks permission to proceed. In doing this Fred maintains the spirit of courtesy that has characterized him throughout. And he assures himself of Don's uncoerced attention. Moreover, if Don should indicate that he doesn't have ten minutes to spare right then, Fred is still free to suggest another time and place.

It is essential to note that Fred's conversations with Jan and Don are not extraordinary examples of good luck. Rather they demonstrate an effective patterned sequence that can be used repeatedly. The cardinal feature is a series of questions and statements to which responses are predictable and which inevitably lead to a presentation of the gospel.

This technique has been likened to freeway traffic. The entrance may be crowded, but once you squeeze into the freeway (i.e., once you ask the initial question) you move quickly and directly to your

destination. If for some reason you are interrupted or get off on a tangent, it is relatively easy to get back on the freeway, since you know what the next question logically should be. Under some circumstances you may even want to initiate the conversation with the second or third question.

Some people may object that reliance upon a technique limits the Holy Spirit. It may. Mechanicalness is a constant danger to the Christian, not only in witnessing but in every area of life. On the other hand, such a technique may enhance the liberty of the Spirit. It enables you to concentrate prayerfully on the person you're with, rather than agonize over what to say next.

But is it really possible to treat everyone the same? Is witnessing a routine, like grinding out sausages?

Of course not. The thing to remember is that this pattern is a method for opening conversations and presenting an initial witness. More often than not, at the end of the ten-minute presentation your companion will want to continue. Then you will have ample opportunity to tailor your witness to his particular needs.

Will this approach guarantee results? No, not in itself. If you are shy you will still have to trust God for courage. Skill in handling the Scriptures, prayer to the Lord of the harvest, perseverance and practice: no substitutes exist for these.

Finally, let me point out that by analyzing the principle of this sequence you may be able to develop a pattern of your own. Because it is your own it may prove even more effective for you in introducing the claims of Jesus Christ. But until you have done so, why not use the three questions in this article?

(1) Are you interested in spiritual things?

(2) Have you ever *thought* about becoming a *real* Christian?

(3) If someone were to ask you "What is a real Christian?" how would you answer?

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Thank God For Innovations

Denny Boultinghouse

To innovate or not to innovate, that is the question. In the mind of some brethren, there is no question--we must not innovate. We must not question or change. "Innovation" has become a dirty word.

To some dear brethren, innovation is tantamount to apostasy. Entire speeches bemoan all the innovations in the church. Some want everything back like it was before we started "drifting."

In reality, most of our current practices were originally innovations. If Christians from the first century were to visit our assemblies, they would recognize very few of the things we are so accustomed to. Things like song books, printed Bibles, song leaders, pulpits, invitation songs, passing the plate, Sunday school, Wednesday night service, and four-part harmony would be totally foreign to them. All of these are changes since the first century--they are innovations.

Nor would first-century Christians be familiar with such things as: Christian colleges, Christian camps, religious magazines, church buildings, Christians voting in political elections, child-care ministries, ladies Bible classes, two services on Sunday, lectureships, gospel tracts written by uninspired writers, insurance on the building, tiny cups filled with grape juice, air-conditioning, visitor's cards, and so on. Each of these is an innovation.

Does that mean that everything should change? Of course not. Nobody believes that. There are certain fundamentals of the faith that cannot change. These fundamentals relate to redemption, to the gospel, or to God and his nature. They are foundational, and they cannot change. And Scripture is pretty clear about what kinds of things fall into this category. Such fundamentals are generally in a salvation context in Scripture. Truths about sin, the Cross, the response God wants from mankind, Jesus and His nature do not change. And such things will remain the same throughout the ages, regardless of the time or culture.

Simple Christianity is actually rather streamlined and baggage free. It has very few of the trappings we often attach to it. This is why Christianity is so adaptable to every time and culture, further demonstrating the foresight of God. Most railings against innovations in the church are not concerned with any of the foundational matters

Concluded on Back Cover

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, BHill40482@aol.com

"Psalms, Hymns and Spirituals" by Graham McKay is now available for \$10.00 per copy. Those of you who have his first book "A Hymn A Day" will enjoy his research on more songs that are used in our worship services. For your copy, you may contact: Graham McKay, 2255 Clara Mathis Road, Spring Hill, TN 37174
mckay4fish@aol.com

A special tribute is made to Moto & Yoriko Normura's Bethany Home in Yamanashi, Japan.

SCHOOL OF BIBLICAL STUDIES (SBS) The Homiletics ("study & practice of preparing and presenting sermons") class is being taught this semester by Bennie Hill at the LaGrange Church of Christ on Friday nights from 7-9 p.m. There are 5 students (4 credit & 1 Sr. Audit) Churches may want to consider having SBS come to you, in providing continuing opportunities for training. If interested, please contact Bud Ridgeway at (502) 499-0724 for the Executive Committee.

Linton Church of Christ (Indiana) "had its beginning on May 28, 1906, when a tent was set up in an area known as "Glenburn Commons." W.J. Brown and Stanford Chambers preached for five weeks. A congregation of seventy members resulted, which met temporarily in the West Linton School, and later in College Hill School." To commemorate 100 years of service to the Lord, the congregation is planning a Homecoming and Centennial Celebration on May 27-28, 2006. All members, past and present, are invited to join for this special weekend. Bro. Jerry Carmichael informs us that the new building

continues to take shape as they look forward to the possibility of the first service by Easter Sunday. The dedication will take place during the centennial celebration.

WOODLAND BIBLE CAMP announces its 2006 summer camp schedule:

May 19, 20 Clean-Up Weekend
June 2,3 Clean-Up Weekend
June 4-10 Senior Week:
Sonny Childs Matt Abbott
June 11-17 Junior Week:
Jerry Carmichael & Jeff Adams
June 25-July 1 Intermediate Week:
Mike Abbott & Dennis Royse
July 15 Young Juniors Day Camp:
Renee Wiggington
July 30-August 7 Music Week:
Paul Denny & James Embree
September 9, Homecoming &
Annual Meeting
September 10-14, Senior Citizen
Wk: David Pound, Bud Ridgeway,
Buford Smith

PROMOTIONAL DIRECTOR - Matt Abbott has been appointed by Woodland to visit interested congregations and share about the work at Woodland. Contact him at: Matt Abbott, 2345 South James St., Salem, IN 47167 (812) 883-7245

Letter from David Moldez, Manila In Metro Manila, there was a stampede of people struggling to get into a TV game-show. More than 70 people died and one of them was the mother of our Christian friend. Also during this month of February, six members of families close to us passed away. It's the first time in my ministry that I have to give memorial messages one after another. However I do not lose hope, for in Christ we have victory over death.

**SISTERS—Don't miss the LID:
Ladies Inspiration Day**

**Its Theme: G-R-A-C-E:
God's Riches At Christ's Expense**

**Grace in Daily Living,
...in Family Relationships,
...within the Body of Christ,
...in Sickness and Suffering.**

**April 1, from 9:00 (registration) to 3:00
Held this year at Portland Church
2500 Portland Ave., Louisville**