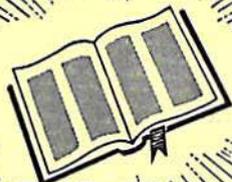
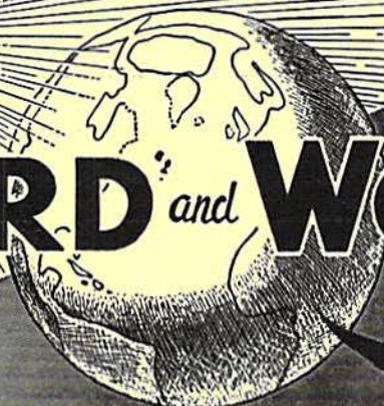


"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."



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



"Holding forth the Word of life."

SEPTEMBER, 1990

SMALL GROUPS, and FELLOWSHIP

If this is not a place where tears are understood,
Where do I go to cry?
If this is not a place where my spirit can take wing,
Where do I go to fly?
If this is not a place where my questions can be asked,
Where do I go to seek?
If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard,
Where do I go to speak?
If this is not a place where you'll accept me as I am,
Where do I go to be?
If this is not a place where I can learn and grow,
Where can I be just me?

—Author unknown

"As many as four in ten Americans admit to frequent or occasional feelings of intense loneliness. Churches sensitive to people's need for community and belonging are in a good position to address this need. Three out of ten Americans feel God has intervened in their lives, that God has a plan for their lives, that they have had miraculous answers to prayer. I think it is extremely important that churches give people opportunities to talk about these experiences in a church setting characterized by respect. . . . People need to have a place where they can discuss their experiences—and doubts. People want a place where they can express doubts in the church setting and not be considered outcasts.

—George Gallup Jr.

MISSIONS CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 19 AND 20, 1990

BELMONT CHURCH OF CHRIST
WINCHESTER, KENTUCKY

Emphasis: HOME MISSIONS

SPEAKERS:

TOM TELFORD, APMC Mission, Philadelphia, PA
JULIUS HOVAN, Gallatin Church of Christ, Tennessee

REGISTRATION FEE:

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MISSIONS MUSICAL SPECIAL SINGING
PORTLAND HIGH SCHOOL CHORUS
BELMONT PUPPET MINISTRY WORKSHOPS TBA
YOUTH RECREATION

NEWS AND NOTES

Responses to Louisville Fellowship Week:

Here are some of the comments made on the evaluation questionnaires: "Topics were relevant and practical." "Workshops should continue because they offer an environment conducive to individual growth. Open discussion is healthy and should continue." "The printed outlines were very helpful again this year." "The special singing again this year was among the best and most spiritually uplifting that I've ever heard. By all means let's continue to develop great a cappella singing."

A visitor from far away wrote: "I'm glad there are some Churches of Christ that can go a whole day without resorting to such phrases as 'the Lord's church,' meaning only themselves, and 'member of the church' which again means only themselves. I was struck by this difference when I attended a church the following Sunday in Cookeville, Tenn., where those expressions punctuated the oratory at several points." Another visitor from even farther away wrote, "My visit to Louisville was a refreshing experience. I

was encouraged to see brethren standing for truth in spite of not being appreciated by those with 'more enlightened' theological views. It was very good to be among brethren who seem to be undaunted by ridicule."

News from Louisiana:

Yesterday the Forcades and I drove to Jennings to see Val (Antoine Valdetero). We rejoiced to see him walking out to the car to greet us! It had been one month to the day since his lung was removed. He says he feels some discomfort but his doctor says that in a year he will not know he has only one lung. But here is the most wonderful news: Val says that they are now absolutely sure that there was no trace of cancer in the lung that was removed [though its removal still was necessary]. He will not have to take any treatment and he should be able to preach some in two weeks!

A. J. Istre stepped on a nail some days ago and has had a terrible time. He said he had stepped on nails before and never suffered any serious prob-

Continued inside back cover

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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THEME:

Small Groups, and Fellowship

Alex V. Wilson

Julius Hovan said it in a sermon at the Louisville Fellowship Week over a year ago. "Any church that does not have some kind of small-groups format or ministries almost guarantees that it will be a 2nd-class church rather than vibrant and growing..." (or words to that effect). That might sound extreme, but I agreed with him then—and still do. (See the article in this issue, "Small Groups are Helping Our Church").

Last month's *Word and Work* mentioned that every congregation needs instruction, worship, service and fellowship. We ran articles on worship, and teaching, and an important 5-page symposium on "sharing meetings" for "mutual edification." The meetings envisioned there were gatherings of the whole church—and they are important, of course. But small groups may be just as vital, so this month we concentrate on such groups and also on fellowship.

MANY TYPES, MANY PURPOSES

In his helpful booklet *Journey into Small Groups*, William Bingham divides them into three types. There are "*personal growth groups* formed to know others (and yourself) in depth; *action groups* ministering to youth, drug addicts, alcoholics, prisoners, the mentally ill, the shut-ins—practical and evangelistic; and *study groups* reading Christian books and the Bible for the here-and-now finding and developing of personal ministries." He then gives examples:

Personal Growth Groups—

Four couples meet twice a month to nurture one another in their growth as Christian parents. . . . Six Christian physicians meet for breakfast every Wednesday morning to make real their vocation as a call from Christ. . . . A group of childless, career-oriented couples are exploring the uniqueness of their position in a family-oriented society.

Across the country, sharing groups are coming alive in hundreds of churches. The participants meet to share their lives with one another, to pray for and with each other, and to find what it is God wants of their lives. . . .

Study Groups—

Many meet for Bible study, others to discuss books on Christianity. Many study groups have an evangelistic focus—one or two Christians leading a group of nonbelievers in Bible study.

There are new-member groups to nurture recent converts along the first crucial steps of the journey. The deacons of several churches set aside a specific time during each of their meetings for study of their particular ministry. A group of high school and college teachers began meeting because they were often placed in the role of counselors, an area in which they had no training.

A group of laymen, concerned that their church was not ministering to its racially changing neighborhood, began a group to study black history, culture, and sociology.

Action Groups—

A group in a large urban center buys inner-city slum dwellings, renovates them, and sells them to local families at cost.

Another group walks the streets of a large coastal resort looking for runaways. They offer housing, food, a telephone to call home, and Christ. In the same area a third group works with dropouts, helping them find work, training in a skill, and a personal God.

In one church a group of men tries to minister to fatherless children, while a group of women work in a mental institution. A couple's group leads worship services in several retirement homes.

There are a number of intercessory prayer groups. They maintain prayer lists, have an emergency "hot-line" network set-up, and record answers to prayer.

In other words, some groups are *relations-oriented* (growth through fellowship); some are *content-oriented* (study); some are *task-oriented* (action). Still others are *interest-oriented* (e.g. empty-nesters; women in business); and there are also *need-oriented* groups (divorce recovery; families of alcoholics; cancer support; unwed mothers).

WHY BOTHER?

At our Louisville Fellowship Week workshop this August, at least thirteen different *values* of small groups were mentioned, but I won't dump all of them on you. Think them out for yourself; many of them are obvious.

A strong basis for a group format is found in various *BIBLICAL EXAMPLES* like our Lord's band of twelve disciples, and its inner cell-group of three; also Paul's group of co-workers (note Acts 20:4). Then there were the Jerusalem house-meetings mentioned in Acts, plus other churches that met in homes. Church history too furnishes many examples of the tremendous importance of small groups.

Another reason for them is that numerous "*ONE-ANOTHER COMMANDS*" in the New Testament are much more easily carried out in such groups than in any other way. "Bear one another's burdens," wrote Paul, and many passages spell out in detail what that means. We are to *instruct* and *admonish* one another; *comfort*, *encourage* and *exhort* one another. We should *spur* one another on to love and good deeds. We are to *confess* our sins to one another, and *pray* for one another. Note those verbs; they are not addressed to preachers alone, nor are they confined to sermons. All Christians should be engaged in such practices, and the best way is via small, face-to-face groups. (References for the preceding one-another verses are Gal. 6:2, Rom. 15:14, Col. 3:16, 1 Thes. 4:18 & 5:11, Heb. 3:13 & 10:24, James 5:16, etc. There is great sermon material there.)

WHAT A FELLOWSHIP!

However, without a deep spiritual fellowship undergirding them, small groups won't accomplish much of value. After all, the profit of any method depends mainly on the hearts of the people participating in it, on their relationship with the Lord and His people. Scripture says much about *fellowship*; it is an essential component of spiritual strength. It is both a privilege bestowed on us as a gift, and a duty for us to fulfill (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Jn. 1:3; Acts 2:42; Phil. 2:1 & 3:10; 1 Jn. 1:7; 2 Cor. 6:14).

We live in an era and a society needing fellowship more than

ever before, perhaps. Big-city life is crowded but impersonal. A Harvard professor wrote a book entitled *The Lonely Crowd*. Another sociologist commented on the population explosion: "We have come so much closer physically to our neighbors, but we have at the same time drawn further away emotionally." Often we hardly know even our neighbors. We meet many people, but not so much as persons of worth and value in themselves. We know them more as "functionaries"—the secretary, the salesgirl, the delivery boy, the boss, the teacher, the classmate.

Many people today "are technological nomads—seldom living anywhere more than three years. Where once their fathers could point to a town where they had spent their youth, the newest of our nomads do not have that base of security. One young man attended 17 different schools before completing the twelfth grade!" Thus writes William Bangham, who continues,

While we were discussing this topic at a conference, a man spoke up. "What you say holds true for more than those constantly on the move. I've lived in the same small town all my life. I've gone to the same church all my life. Yet, I really don't know the people in my church. I don't know why they are Christians. I don't know where they are in their spiritual life. I don't know anything really important about them!"

A sad experience, and a common one. Its cure can be found in the *spirit* of fellowship, and the *method* of small-group meetings.

2 BAD EXAMPLES, 2 GOOD ONES

A minister, Howard Keeley, discovered how hard it is to get people to "walk in the light," which is a prerequisite to fellowship. "For weeks I tried to cultivate an atmosphere of openness in an adult Sunday school class which I taught as an interim pastor. A member finally had the courage to express honestly some doubts she had, whereupon several members of the class gasped audibly and others sought to reassure her that she didn't really feel that way. Her honesty was rejected by the rest of the class, who communicated to her that it would be better for her to keep her doubts to herself. I, in turn, rebuked the class and praised the woman for her honesty, pointing out that we could not meet her need if we did not really know what it was. Her openness, however, enabled us to pinpoint her heretofore well-concealed doubts and to minister to her."

Here is an even worse example that should make us weep, that believers could be so unfeeling and insensitive. One Sunday morning, in a small class, a man who had just lately been converted said, "Listen, I'd like to be more committed to Christ but I've got some serious problems that are about to drive me up the wall." Everyone was dead silent as he continued, "I'm afraid I may be a borderline alcoholic. Our marriage is in serious trouble, and I need some help. Are any of you going through stuff like this?"

No one said anything. Everyone was looking at the floor. Finally the teacher said in a formal tone, "Maybe we ought to pray for George." Then he led a prayer and the class broke up, leaving George feeling stripped and rejected. Alas! Was there nobody honest enough to say, "Yes, George, we all have struggles and hangups of one kind or another, and some of us are wrestling or have wrestled with problems like your present ones. That's why we need Christ, and also each

other. We'll pray for you now, and 2-3 of us will be glad to meet with you privately and share how Christ is helping us get a growing victory over such problems."

Thank the Lord for good examples of healthy, helpful fellowship groups. I am privileged to belong to a ministers' support group started several years ago by Dennis Kaufman. From four to six of us meet monthly to listen and learn, laugh and cry, advise and console each other. One month I was feeling v-e-r-y low, and their ears and prayers lifted me. The next month another brother faced major problems, and we ministered empathy, advice and prayer to him. The following month a third member faced a crucial decision, and we shared his concerns. Between meetings we sometimes phone each other to say, "S-O-S, brother—my world seems to be caving in! Call to the Lord for me." This support group has been invaluable to me.

In *The Taste of New Wine*, Keith Miller (who told the sad case of George mentioned above) describes how the Lord repeatedly renewed him by means of his fellowship group. "We began to learn through each other's experiences. One of us would tell the group: 'I have a neighbor who has been mean to our children for years, and I have despised her. Now I find that we have been elected president and vice-president of the PTA. What can I do to let her know that my attitude has been changed by God and I now love her?' Then someone else in the group who had recently faced resentment in his own life would witness to his struggle. Out of this dialogue often concrete suggestions came to us which we might not have discovered for years on our own.

"As time went on I found that I desperately needed the balance, correction and love of such a group. The group's openness and acceptance helped me more and more to be honest—not only with the group but in my business life and at home. Also the fresh witness of lives being changed before your eyes brings a perpetual newness and wonder when your own experience gets flabby and gray."

Like many others, he found in the intimacy of a cell-group the advice, loving correction, challenge, encouragement, stimulation and inspiration he needed.

Maybe you feel, "I don't go to people with such problems, I just go directly to the Lord." That sounds spiritual but usually it's a cop-out, for it is our Lord Himself who said we all need the fellowship of the church and who gave us those many one-another verses. As He works in our lives, it is very often through His people. Fellowship with one another should never be an end in itself but a means to fellowship with God. But it is an *important* means, and ought not be neglected.

* * * * *

The essential SPIRIT of fellowship:

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

"Is there present in our congregations a sense of openness and freedom to share doubts, difficulties, perplexities, and transgressions, without fear of rejection and condemnation? One woman recently

wrote her pastor, "When I am at church I am among polite strangers." We meet persons in our church services and touch them lightly and superficially, but fail to be concerned with or even discover the burdens they bear or the struggles in which they are engaged."

—Howard Keeley

"Our churches are filled with people who outwardly look contented and at peace but inwardly are crying out for someone to love them . . . just as they are—confused, frustrated, often frightened, guilty, and often unable to communicate even within their own families. But the other people in the church look so happy and contented that one seldom has the courage to admit his own deep needs before such a self-sufficient group as the average church meeting *appears* to be."

—Keith Miller

"The neighborhood bar is possibly the best counterfeit there is to the fellowship Christ wants to give His Church. It's an imitation, but it is like what the Church ought to be, only with liquor at the center instead of grace—escape instead of reality. . . . God has put into the human heart the desire to know and be known, to love and be loved. The Church rarely offers this, so many seek a counterfeit at the price of a few beers. Christ wants His Church to be a fellowship where people can come in and say, 'I'm sunk!' 'I'm beat!' 'I've had it!' Alcoholics Anonymous has this quality. Our churches too often miss it."

—Bruce Larson

"The church should be a fellowship of consciously inadequate persons who gather because they are weak, and scatter to serve because their unity with one another and with Christ has made them bold."

—Elton Trueblood

"'Confess your faults one to another' (James 5:16). He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone. It may be that Christians, notwithstanding corporate worship, common prayer, and all their fellowship in service, may still be left to their loneliness. The final breakthrough to fellowship does not occur because, though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout and sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and the fellowship."

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"At our church we had fallen into the hypocrisy of pretending that we had no problems. We developed a Christian syndrome that spiritual believers had no struggles.

"First we leaders tried to explode the myth by showing that even the Apostle Paul struggled—and admitted it. We encouraged our people to share their problems, their struggles, the difficulties in their homes.

At first a few shared from the periphery of their lives. But one night a new depth of fellowship broke open when a woman stood in

a sharing service and said, "My husband and I are here and we need prayer because we haven't spoken to each other all week."

A deathly silence passed over the congregation.

"Thank you for sharing that," I said. "How many couples here have had this problem in your married life?"

About a hundred hands went up. The woman looked around the room and gasped. She had no idea that other married Christians had problems.

"I'll tell you what the problem is," she blurted out. "He won't pick up his socks!"

"How many other wives have husbands who will not pick up their socks?" I asked.

About a dozen hands went up. We stopped right there in our service and asked someone to pray for this woman and her husband, and for the other homes in the congregation where the husbands and wives were not getting along.

This began creating a whole new atmosphere of loving acceptance and of understanding. People began to believe they could let down their pious fronts and that other believers would still accept and love them.

Before long, and without any invitation, young people began attending our services. First our own church young people began coming. Then the longhairs and street people came. At first our middle-class saints gulped, not knowing what to do. But they decided to obey the Apostle James. When someone enters our assembly in unacceptable dress, we are to welcome and love them. So we did.

That was years ago. Today people jam into the sanctuary, willing to stand the entire time just to be in a place where love is evident.

—Ray Stedman

* * * * *

The important MECHANICS of fellowship:

SMALL GROUPS

DISCIPLE-MAKING GROUPS

Lorne Sanny

An effective method is the disciple-maker's gathering a few potential disciples into a fellowship group. Samuel Shoemaker said, "*Every congregation needs two things—the formal service for worship, the informal gatherings for fellowship.*"

Such small groups of two or three, or at most ten or twelve, are at the heart of disciple-making. Unless the groups center around testimony, Scripture, and prayer, however, they become mere social gatherings, without disciple-making dynamic. Giving *testimony* in the group, the disciple identifies himself with Christ and commits himself further. In order to obey the *Scriptures*, the disciple must know them (John 14:21). No one bears fruit without *prayer* (John 15:7).

The disciple-maker acts as leader, not lecturer, helping members

individually and in the group. The group member learns to give testimony among sympathetic Christians before testifying outside. He shares with others his own study and meditation in the Scriptures. He learns to pray, claiming the promise of Matt. 18:19.

Thus prepared by the fellowship groups, he now comes to the critical matter of learning to do evangelism. He should be trained on the job or in the battle. The twelve apostles watched Jesus as He did evangelism—then He sent them out, training them through guided experience.

"MUTUAL EDIFICATION" IN GROUPS

Norman Grubb

The early church was first and foremost a fellowship. They "continued in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship." They broke bread from house to house. When they met in worship, it was the very opposite of our present church services, divided into the two categories of preacher and preached-to. It was a living fellowship-in-action. All took part, and there was such a flow of the Spirit through the believers that Paul had to write words of restraint. "How is it, brethren? When you come together, *every one of you* hath a psalm, hath a doctrine . . ." Then he urged them to orderliness, and said that if while one was giving his word, another arose with a desire to say something, let the first sit down and give place to him, for "the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets." But today we have to persuade people to say something, if occasionally we do have a time of open fellowship! Paul had to persuade them to keep silent and give the other fellow a chance! We have now replaced fellowshiping by preaching in our modern church life, and the reason is not hard to find. Fellowshiping necessitates a real flow of life in the fellowship, for each has to be ready to contribute his share of what the Lord is really saying to him; preaching is an easy way out of a not-too-living fellowship. Appoint the preacher and let him find the messages; we can sit still and take or leave what we hear, as we please! Probably the best balance was found in early Methodism, where John Wesley laid down that besides the preaching and teaching meetings, there must be a weekly class-meeting which was on a strictly fellowship basis, and all who attended were required to tell of the Lord's personal dealings that week, whether concerning sins, or answers to prayer, or opportunities of witness.

—From *Continuous Revival*

AN EXAMPLE FROM HISTORY

Fellowship-Groups in the Evangelical Revival
(England, 1700's, under the Wesleys)

J. W. Bready

Converts were divided into classes of no more than twelve persons. The classes assembled weekly, and in these class-meetings—the sexes convening separately under their respective leaders—the members discussed the most intimate problems of life, and encouraged one another to fight a good fight. Here all men were brothers; all

women were sisters; and all members were pledged to secrecy regarding personal confessions.

Had not these class meetings been conducted in an atmosphere where vanity, animosity and revenge were unthinkable, where faith, hope and love reigned, they might easily have degenerated into centers of gossip and scandal. Confessions of failure, defeat and sin were heard in their respective classes by men and women who not long before would have gloated over the opportunities for "tongue-wagging." But now, with changed hearts, in a spirit of fellowship, they listened to such confessions with downcast and sympathetic hearts, thinking of all that God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven them. All now were their brother's keepers; all helped to heal the wounds of sin; all strove together to keep open the springs of grace; and however painful were temporary defeats, the note of triumph prevailed.

The spirit of the class meetings is perfectly portrayed in a verse all members loved to sing:

And if our fellowship below
In Jesus be so sweet,
What heights of rapture shall we know
When round His throne we meet!

In these class meetings countless Christians found their spiritual school where, under trusted leaders, they grouped together to work out their salvation (Phil. 2:12), and to discuss reverently their attitude to the social, ethical and religious problems of daily life.

—From *This Freedom—Whence?*

PRACTICAL POINTS

The purpose of the meeting is to explore the resources of Christian fellowship by reporting those areas of life where we find the Christian faith to be either most difficult or most helpful—such as relationships, habits, attitudes, finances, health, or decisions. If you, as the leader, begin by relating an experience of God's power in the midst of personal need, you will set the tone for what is to follow.

Encourage people to share problems and answers from their own experience. This is not the time to discuss intellectual or theological concepts. When someone generalizes, ask him to tell of a specific instance in his own life to illustrate his point. If he "theologizes," ask him how his belief works in every day situations. "Get behind" criticism and negative attitudes (especially those aimed at the Church) by asking, "Why do you think this hurt or bothered you so much?"

If there are periods of silence, welcome them and use them for self-evaluation and listening to God. Informality, freedom, and spontaneous laughter give the Holy Spirit much to work with. Enjoy each other and enjoy God.

When the meeting breaks up, or during the time between meetings, be sensitive to those who have expressed a need and look for the chance to talk personally.

—From *Faith at Work* magazine

Let's Take Off our Masks

Maryanna Johnson

There is a sense of strain and frustration among many active church members, an underlying unrest.

Gradually it seems to be dawning on hard-working Christian that activity is not necessarily a sign of progress. And that their real goal is not to run the busiest beehive possible, but to bring healing to a sick world and wholeness to a broken community. But why isn't more of this kind of thing happening?

I am convinced that the difficulty lies in a sickness, a sickness which has reached epidemic proportions within our churches—even our best evangelical churches.

The problem, I believe, is that our congregations are composed of people who are not whole themselves. No matter how active they are, an assortment of estranged individuals cannot bring healing to others. Though we are with other people the majority of our waking hours, most of us are going it alone. This aloneness is what constitutes our sickness.

An elevator of people is not a group, it is a collection. And this is the fate of too many of our services, classes and committee meetings: we collect around a given purpose for a given amount of time, and when we disperse again, we are virtually unchanged.

In our collected condition we may have accomplished some task or been exposed to some truth, but somehow, too much of the activity took place outside of us, leaving us untouched at our depths. And because Christianity is a matter of being related to Christ and to one another in the depths of our being we didn't achieve what we needed to.

When I open my New Testament, I am startled by the contrast; here I find evidence of a depth and intensity of sharing which issues in a new dimension which shows through everything that is done, whether it is praying, corresponding, making decisions or meeting difficulties. When these early Christians got together, things began happening to them and to those around them. When we Christians today get together, why is it that so little seems to happen, either to us or to those around us?

For one thing, we don't realize that this kind of closeness is what we are hungering for; we know something is missing but we don't know what. And, for another, we are not prepared to pay the price involved in relating to God and others in this way.

Most of us live our Christian lives alone. We sit at the feet of one preacher or teacher and receive large doses of spiritual nourishment designed to meet the needs of the entire group; the rest we try to get in small doses at home. *The missing element is something in between the large, general dose and the small, individual dose.* We might call it "community"—the informal sharing of loving Christians who build up one another in the faith.

This may take place in various ways, but it is unlikely to take place in either of the previous contexts: seated beside other people in

a meeting, or meditating alone in one's room. It can even fail to occur in a small group, if the group is operating according to sub-Christian motivations.

A group of housewives had been meeting regularly for Bible study. However, certain factors in the situation had reduced it to a less-than-Christian group. There was an invisible dividing line between the "spiritual" and the "unspiritual" members—or was it invisible? (The former met early to pray for the latter!) Some of the women knew their Bibles well and made this fact very obvious; this intimidated and even drove away others who had little or no Bible knowledge. There was a strong emphasis on correct terminology and a standardized "Christian experience." And there was little freedom to disagree with the leader of the dominant element.

Then came the day when the woman chosen to lead the group was experiencing so much personal turmoil that she felt she could not lead the study. How could she teach about maturity and stability as described in Ephesians 4, when she herself was immature and unstable? In her distress she turned to her pastor, but he advised her to be honest with the other women about her condition. "Tell them you're 'all shook up,'" he urged. The woman was horrified at the prospect of "losing face" in this way; after all, she was one of the "spiritual" members of the group!

However, after she had led the Bible study, she found herself confessing to the other women that she had not been living up to the marvelous truths which she had been talking about. Her embarrassment was only exceeded by her surprise when the woman at the left began unburdening herself also, sharing her failures and needs with the group. The next woman did the same, and the next, as freedom to drop their masks became contagious and spread from person to person. An interesting feature of this spontaneous sharing was that while they would begin by acknowledging their own struggles, they would often end up by pointing out another member of the group who was strong in the area where they were weak. And so by the time this kind of sharing had come full circle, each one had been built up by the loving appreciation of someone else in the group.

What had happened to break down the walls between these Christians? To change mere congeniality into genuine fellowship, intellectual discussion into personal sharing, talking about the Christian life into experiencing it together? In this particular group, the vicious circle was broken when one person became honest about herself.

More of us should be breaking out of our aloneness into this kind of experience with each other, but we won't until we realize that the prerequisite is honesty about ourselves, and that this first step will cost us something. After all, we have put a lot of effort into keeping up a "spiritual front", and tearing off our mask involves pain and humiliation. In fact, we may have worn our mask so long that we have fooled even ourselves into thinking this mask is our real face!

The rewards are great, however. For one thing, putting on a front is a great deal of work, and being genuine can often turn out to be a profound relief. Counterfeit Christian fellowship is exchanged for the real thing.

A young Christian fed on this kind of spiritual nourishment will grow with astonishing speed; an older Christian will become refreshed and vibrant; and a congregation which encourages the formation of intimate groups will find new vitality permeating the old forms into which its life had settled.

To many people, the pastor is either an idol to worship or a convenience to use in time of need and then ignore the rest of the time. Some of these same people have a way of complaining that their pastor is not warm and human, but it is difficult to be warm and human when one is treated like a function instead of a person.

We must learn to become partners with our pastors; to realize that the ministry is not the pastor's but the church's and the responsibility of each member; to realize that the pastor, as a member of the Body of Christ, needs the same kind of tender loving care that he is expected to dispense so freely, and that if he were receiving more, he would have more to give. Instead of enumerating the ways in which our pastor fails us, we should ask ourselves, "Where am I failing my pastor?"

Some pastors are under severe financial or emotional strain; all of them respond to evidences of interest and confidence. One pastor came to a service all aglow because a member had given him a magazine article which had been of great interest to him; this had "made" his day. And there are even people who call the pastor or come to his office, not to ask for help, but to share a new experience of insight which might give him a lift.

Because of his "pedestal posture," a pastor is not free to express his needs; it is up to the congregation to size up his situation with imagination and concern, and then do something about what they see. When "pastoral care" begins to include the pastor as well as the people, his whole ministry—and theirs—will take on new life. Even a pastor (most of all, a pastor) cannot go it alone.

Christian leaders are often tempted to fake a maturity which they do not possess, so that their followers will not be disappointed. The result is that sometimes the most needy persons are those in the most responsible positions. Their admirers project on them a perfection which no human could possess, and then proceed to leave them alone; perfect people obviously do not need the help of mere mortals!

A pastor of my acquaintance has found it effective to have a "pool" of Christian people of various backgrounds on whom he can call for assistance. If he is in contact with an unbeliever who has recently lost a mate, he likes to put that person in contact with a believer who has recently had this experience. If he is dealing with an alcoholic, he is on the look-out for a Christian who has fought this battle. The best way to convince an unbeliever that Christ can meet his need is to expose him to a Christian who has found his Lord a very present help in the same trouble.

Christ did not leave us here on earth to work out our salvation and service as individuals; nor can we do it en masse. It is true that He worked both with individuals and with crowds, but most of His time was spent with a team of 12; these He taught and trained, and then sent out to teach the world.

This same strategy is essential in our day. We cannot walk alone; when we try it, we shrivel up spiritually and our step falters. We cannot work alone; when we try it, we become overburdened and frustrated, and our service suffers.

There is a legend about a man who went down to hell to look the place over and saw everyone starving and wretched and dirty and after watching them for a while he discovered the trouble was that all the people in hell had stiff arms and couldn't feed themselves or take care of themselves. The sight depressed him and he was delighted when he was then given a chance to look at heaven. In heaven everyone was sleek and healthy and laughing and happy. It looked just the way heaven should. But as he watched them he observed a curious thing: The people in heaven had arms just as stiff and unbendable as the people down in hell. But the difference was that the people in heaven were feeding each other.

* * * * *

Small Groups Are Helping Our Church

By the Editor

Regarding small groups and fellowship we can write from some experience, not just theory. Through the years both the teaching of Scripture and the testimony of church history impressed me. So whenever possible we sought to get together from time to time with a few likeminded believers, to share common concerns, exhort one another, and lift our hearts to the Lord.

But during 1989-90 for the first time we were able to implement a *churchwide program* of small groups. The Lord blessed us through it, and we urge other churches to seek God's will about starting small groups to supplement your larger meetings.

There are many different kinds and purposes of cell groups (see the editorial), but we felt that *fellowship*-groups was the place to start. For if a group lacks strong ties of mutual love, knowledge and patience, it will not function well as an action group. But once firm bonds of fellowship are forged, the members *may* be led to move beyond fellowship to focus on study of some relevant subject or on a needed ministry. They would not leave fellowship behind (as though not needed now), but would build on it as a foundation.

Laying the Groundwork

At Portland Ave. Church we began with prayer that the Lord would guide, and would provide leaders. Then I sought to share the vision with all the members by means of a sermon-series. Next we had a 24-hour retreat for men whom I had asked to consider being leaders or assistants. We discussed questions such as the time and frequency of our introductory series of meetings, to what extent all groups should be alike, the format of the meetings, and the leaders' responsibilities. We also grappled with such thorny issues as what specific homes would be used, the best thing to do about babies and children, which

people should be in which groups—and on what basis that would be decided, and by whom? Earlier I had already emphasized the importance of fellowship, and other motivational facts (such as how some of our members who always enter and exit by the front door hardly know the folks who always use the rear door!). Most of the brothers who were asked agreed to lead or assist as needed.

Working the Plan

After planning the work we had to work the plan. So we put out the following bulletin, which ended with a response-form on which each member indicated his/her decision to participate in the groups or not.

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

WHO: All of us at this church, we hope.

WHAT: Home fellowship-groups, meeting with 6-11 other members for perhaps 1½ hours, just twice a month from Jan.-May 1990.

WHY: Because we need to know each other better & help each other more . . . and because fellowship groups can be a major method of promoting Christian growth.

WHEN: On the 2nd and 4th Sunday nights of each month for 5 months . . . a total of 10 times. *Then* we'll see if we want to continue the groups (all of them? some of them? have more of them, or fewer? make some changes in them? etc.).

WHERE: In homes of our members in various areas: maybe 4 homes around Portland, 2 in south Louisville, 2 in east Louisville, and 1 in Indiana (Georgetown). (And 1 group will meet in the rear room here at the church building, for those who strongly prefer to be here instead of in a home.)

HOW:

Meeting informally in small groups will allow anyone in the group who wishes to do so to share. *NO* one *MUST* speak up; *ANY* one *MAY* speak up. What sorts of things may be shared? Any of the following: Your 1) *joys* as a Christian; 2) *problems & struggles*; 3) *questions* about practical Christian living; 4) what *the Bible* says about the problems or questions raised; 5) insights from your *personal experiences* about the problems or questions raised.

We shall not only *SHARE*, but also have *PRAYER* . . . all because we *CARE!*

- *SHARE*: so we know what our needs & questions are.

- *PRAYER*: asking God to meet our needs & answer our questions about practical, everyday living.

- *CARE*: doing our part to be God's answers to prayer!

A typical meeting might be something like this:

6:50 - 7:10, Members gather, converse, and get settled.

7:10 - 7:20, The coordinator explains the topic for the evening, reads a short Scripture as a background, and has someone lead in prayer for a profitable meeting.

7:20 - 8:10, All members who wish to share on the topic do so, briefly.

Hopefully no one (except in very rare cases—emergencies!) takes more than 10 minutes, *at least* until everyone else who wishes to speak

has had a chance to take their turn! The idea is for all to be able to participate, not just two or three.

8:10 - 8:20, Members pray for one another.

8:25 - 8:40 or 45, Members converse and perhaps even have some very light refreshments (coffee? soft drinks? juice?), and leave.

At the *first home meeting* (or even at church, before the first home meeting is held) the group can decide the best time to start the meetings; the preferred length of meeting; what provisions to make for babies and/or children; whether to have refreshments and who should bring them (for they should not have to be the responsibility of the folks whose home is the meeting-place, preferably); and other practical questions.

Also at the first meeting the group can decide upon the *topics for sharing*. Here are some suggestions to consider:

- Getting better *acquainted*: My present work, hobbies, and family situation.
- A *brief history* of my life, in 3 short chapters: 1) my family background/childhood; 2) my life before my conversion; 3) my life since conversion to Christ.
- Story of my *conversion*: why and how I decided to become a follower of Christ.
- 1-2 of my biggest *joys* in following Jesus.
- 1-2 of my biggest *struggles* in following Jesus.
- 1-2 of my favorite *Bible verses*—and why.
- 1-2 memorable *answers to my prayers*.
- My hopes, plans and fears for *the future* (5 years from now).
- How I am presently *serving Christ*, and/or, how can I or should I best serve Him?
- 1-2 *current joys* and 1-2 *current needs* in my life.
- What I appreciate about each of you co-group-members.
- Living for Christ with my *family* and/or my friends.
- Living for Christ in my *daily work*.
- When it's hard to *forgive* others, what can I do?
- Getting along with *difficult people*.
- What does it mean to be led and empowered by *God's Spirit*?

And other important topics like habit-forming, budgeting our money, overcoming gossip, deepening worship, witnessing for Christ, etc. God can help us in these areas by means of our share-prayer-care groups! [End of bulletin]

Response

About sixty signed up. This is slightly less than half our morning attendance, but over twice our Sunday evening "crowd," I blush to admit. Several asked to be in the group that met in a classroom at the church-house; the rest we leaders assigned to seven groups that met in homes. (This next time we will let folks sign up for whichever group they desire, and maybe some groups will meet on another night besides Sunday.) About 25 people attended every time or all but once, and about 20 attended from four through eight of the ten times the groups were held.

Naturally each group was distinct. Ours at the church-house had the Lord's Supper for morning absentees. One group had a number of children and spent about half an hour singing and discussing with them before dismissing them to another room. One group consisted of only six but they all attended regularly, while another fluctuated without warning from twelve to three who came. One group had small attendance usually, but some good personal counseling opportunities arose. Some groups rotated from home to home; others stayed put. Some groups chose discussion topics ahead of time; others were completely spontaneous. One group met on a different night.

Members' Evaluation

At the end we used anonymous evaluation forms. Here were some of the BLESSINGS recorded:

"We've grown more at ease with each other and shared prayer-requests that we may not have been willing to share earlier—and we've seen answers." "We were open with our lives—joys and sorrows. We shared voices and ears and hearts." "The Lord was central. It has been good to share about everyday-life sorts of things (a dimension lacking with some of us.)" "I've grown in understanding others; to be less critical, and less self-conscious." "I have more joy in reading the Bible, prayer, and personal study than before." "Blessings: hearing the hearts of others, examining my own; someone praying for me." "We've really felt the Spirit of the Lord." "I feel more urgency to pray, & now know more how to pray for specific needs." "Been blessed by hearing younger people's views about different things." "Closeness to others. I have more concern for what others go through. Also grown in faith as God has answered prayers."

Of course there were PROBLEMS too: "Some spoke up hardly at all" (we didn't push them, and perhaps next time they will open up to a greater extent). "We need more interaction of all members. Our group centered on a few individuals too much." "We needed more focus: conversation wandered and it seemed vague where we were heading." "The groups should be more nicely mixed: families, singles, widows, etc, can generally minister better to needs."

RATINGS were as follows among those who responded to multiple-choice questions: 11 felt their group was *very* successful, 24 said successful, 2 said O-K, and nobody said "a waste of time." To the question, "Are you close enough to any other member(s) that there exists a vital burden-bearing relationship?" seven answered No—and that tears my heart; 18 said yes but it already existed beforehand; 6 said yes—due mainly to the groups; 8 said yes—it already existed but the groups deepened the relationship.

Desires for the FUTURE OF THE GROUPS: "Stop the groups and go back to traditional Sun. night meetings weekly": 2. "Stop the groups now but resume next Jan.-May": 3. "Keep on without a break, but only once a month": 7. "Keep on without a break as we have been, twice monthly": 11. "Stop for the summer; resume in the fall": 14. We decided on the last plan, and hope to begin this October.

Our church still has weaknesses and problems along with our strengths and joys. But are we stronger due to the groups than we would have been without them? Definitely Yes, I believe. The living Christ has ministered to us and through us by this means.

Organizing and Leading a Small Group

Michael Hall

First of all you need at least *eight people*. Without making a big deal about it, ask some friends if they will meet with you for the purpose of *sharing an adventure of growth*. Tell them you need them! Share with them your vision about *koinonia* (fellowship). Help them catch a big vision about what it means to be God's "family" and Christ's "body." Dedicate yourself to each other for 7 or 12 weeks.

There are many ways to organize a growth group and many different things the group can do. A study in *Acts* or one of the *Letters*, the *Psalms* or *Proverbs* using open-ended questions would get things off to a great start. *Open-ended questions* are questions that do not seek objective information but subjective information—information about us. For instance, upon reading *Acts Two* ask, What is your impression of Peter's message? Is it "Wow that's neat"; "What's the meaning of the miracles"; "What's the big deal"; "Wish I had been there"; or "I don't understand it all"?

1) *Keep things positive*. The scriptures urge that everything be done for the upbuilding of the body. Edification is not optional for Christian groups but part and parcel of a positive Christian lifestyle. A small group needs to begin with positive affirmation of its purpose and intention, and end with a positive summation that puts things in perspective. This does not mean that negative thoughts or feelings can not be admitted to the group. Of course they can, but when they are they need to be brought in for healing and renewal. The group should not be a mere dumping ground or sounding off place. In fact, the small group is one place where negative feelings, memories, and relationships can be dealt with, confronted and healed. But the framework needs to be positive—full of faith and hope and love. It is to be a support group, not a place to get beat up. *It is a place for the contagion of Christian optimism; a place where resurrection can occur mentally and emotionally.*

2) *Make the Group a place for Grace*. Along with a positive attitude, grace enriches the group and provides us the resource for learning *how to accept each other when we are yet imperfect*. For we learn to accept one another as God has accepted us in Christ Jesus (Romans 15:7). There should be no judgments allowed in the group. Rather an atmosphere should be established of acceptance, love, and grace so that we can pour out our rottenness, receive forgiveness and be healed (James 5:16). When there is fear of judgment and condemnation, there is inhibition and distance. The small group is the ideal place for confession and makes meaningful the scriptures that speak of bearing one another's burdens.

Today psychologists have filled the gap left by our general abandonment of confession. For \$60 per hour they provide a confessional. Yet O. Hobart Mowrer contends that telling our stories to a professional is a kind of *pseudo-confession*. Why? It allows us to confess

to a stranger and saves us from becoming truly *known to the significant people with whom we live*. Thus even though we confess, we confess to the wrong person and continue to hide ourselves from the social influence of those who know us. Professor Mowrer also warns that *complaining* is not confession, nor is *blaming*. Confession is telling the truth about ourselves to significant others who will support us in getting over our problems and who will hold us accountable.

3) *Let the Group be an Experience, not a sermon*. The leader must be careful that he or she does not begin lecturing. Nothing kills a group quicker than turning it into a preaching session. The leader must be the facilitator of a stimulating, meaningful, and growth-producing discussion. This is accomplished by good questions, asking for explanations, welcoming pauses and silences, giving praise and encouragement, keeping the group moving and on target, not letting people get cut off or made to feel foolish, and by drawing them into the group. *Facilitating* is an art and is developed best through the group experience itself.

Interaction is the objective for a group. And it is precisely this that the "worship service" and the sermon do not and cannot offer. The intimate dialogue between persons trying to understand themselves, their group, their world, their relationship, and their God is what makes a group so magical. Consequently, the group should be structured in a circle, semi-circle, or around a table so that every person is visible. Then even the quiet ones get to participate if they do nothing more than look at the others and are constantly looked at. Never arrange a group in rows—unless you want to kill it. (Sunday school teachers take note!) Backs of heads do not make for good personal interaction.

There should be no "back row" people in a group. Psychologically that makes for isolation and distance. It makes for non-commitment and non-participation. To "get something out of the meeting" squeeze everybody together so that there is an informal feeling to the meeting and so that everybody is a part of it.

4) *Model Warmth and Vulnerability*. What makes a group really click is personal openness, frank discussion, honest feedback, thoughtful communication, loving concern for each other, and a feeling of warmth. But these things cannot be commanded. The leader cannot demand them. Instead he must *model* them and provide the opportunity for them to occur. The leader needs to be sensitive to the feelings of the people present and willing to demonstrate love, hope, trust, confidentiality and good will. He facilitates the group by demonstrating the character he wants others to imitate (e.g. Phil. 4:19, 2 Cor. 3:3-18).

Open-ended questions are especially valuable for this purpose: "If you had been in Jerusalem when Peter healed the lame man at the Gate Beautiful—how would you have responded?" There is no "right" answers as there is no "wrong" answer. Some will say that they would have felt like dancing in the Temple along with the lame man; others will say that they would react with skepticism. Some might say it would have made them feel uncomfortable.

It is up to the leader and the group whether a meeting begins with a prayer, and a time for sharing needs, uses music, etc. Each group should feel free to custom design its activities. But there should be a definite direction and guidance of the group—effective groups are going somewhere and that sense of direction should be felt by the group.

5) *Keep the Group on Target.* Whatever the purpose of a specific group—it should be clear to all the members. Each should be able to answer quickly and clearly the questions: Why are we here? What are we hoping to get from this group? Knowing the purpose, the time frame of the group, etc., enables the leader to keep it on target. In most groups the purpose will be to study the scriptures, grow in love, adventure in prayer, and become better equipped believers.

One of my early mistakes in leading groups was to put too much stress on the intellectual part. I inflicted the groups with information overload. Consequently while there was a lot of mental development, there was very little growth in emotional and interpersonal areas. I treated the groups as if they were seminary classes! There was little significant sharing expect in prayer. Consequently the groups missed out on one of the most powerful dynamics that is uniquely available to groups—the *experiencing* of the truths.

Sometimes it is not only helpful but highly significant when the hour is almost up for the leader to say, "How would you all describe our relating during the past 50 minutes? Have we been on a head trip? Have we been playing it safe?" Or, "Why does this subject tend to make us defensive and argumentative?" Learning to bring a group back to its subject and to make it deal with itself is part of the fine art of facilitating a group.

6) *Miscellaneous items:* A group leader should be improving his skills by studying group dynamics, procedures, and techniques. Learning to use questions, brainstorming, role playing, games, Bible marking, scripture paraphrasing, conversational prayer, spiritual adventure notebooks and other procedures can provide freshness and creativity for the group.

A group should have a set time for beginning and ending, and it should be adhered to. A 60 or 90 minute session is best. Dismiss the group while the interest is still high; leave people wanting more! End with a brief summary, then pray. If you opt for food—make it finger foods to snack on—keep the food to a minimum. Many groups contribute to fatness as each hostess tries to outdo the last. End your seven or twelve week series with a potluck or banquet!

Keep changing styles, approaches, and subjects to keep things fresh. Make some plan for what you will do with babies and children. Hire a teenager or two to sit with the kids in another room or the house next door. But don't let them run wild. Then pass the basket to pay for the babysitting. If there are older children, give them the group experience. Have someone guide them in a discussion of their life concerns: self-esteem, peer pressure, school demands.

Emphasize the importance of *commitment* and *regularity*. If sessions are too infrequent, if a lot of time is wasted in the sessions, if things don't move toward a significant goal, or if there is a poor leader—then the dynamics of the group will be weak. *Group is a happening—an encounter.*

Declare that the adventure is experimental. Don't make hard and fast rules like the Medes and Persians. Keep flexible. Make sure everybody experiences *friendliness*; this is the key emotional ingredient. Research shows that the degree of liking of people toward each other increases with frequency of interaction—if the group experience leaves people feeling valued, important, and welcomed.

Keith Miller in his film *Outposts of the Kingdom* says that the task of people in a small group is to “unwrap each other's grave clothes.” Using the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead, Miller asks what was the first thing Lazarus said upon coming out of his grave. Miller answers by cupping his hand over his mouth and dramatizes what a “muffled hallelujah!” would sound like. That explains why Jesus commanded those nearby to take off his grave wrappings. Though he was alive and full of excitement, he was bound up and needed others to help him fully experience his new life. This is the value of group—to free each other. The church is supposed to be a *Human Wholeness Center*; a place where potentials are called forth and people become creative agents of the Kingdom. Miller further pictured the small groups as a “pool of love” into which we can dip people who need refreshment and healing.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Howard Snyder says that “small groups can become a basic structure of the local church if there is a vision for it and the will to innovate.” He says, “The very silence of the Bible concerning specific structures should alert us that constant re-evaluation in the light of the Word of God is necessary if the mind of Christ is going to become a reality” (*The Problem with Wineskins*, page 125).

Group is one method for bringing new life into our lives and into the life of our churches. It is a way of recapturing the basic fabric of fellowship so that we become the new human we've been designed to be.

Leaders of groups should be conscientious stimulators and equipers. They should be democratic leaders who trust people, believe in others' potential, have confidence in their ability, and are relatively free from ego-problems. Authoritarian leaders ruin groups and do more emotional damage than good. They are the ones who feel they own the group and oftentimes split the group off from the rest of the church. But caring leaders use their energies to enhance the group's functioning. They guide the growing process and are concerned about people discovering their gifts and developing them.

[Michael Hall has written several books on Christian relationships and personal growth. He also edits a monthly magazine, “Metamorphosis.” Write for a sample: P.O. Box 40222, Grand Junction, CO 81504.]

Fellowship Is . . .

Jo Ann Gibbs

Fellowship is having a cup of coffee with a friend. This is good. Or . . . together with that friend, sharing a cup of cold water with a thirsty disciple. This is better.

Fellowship is feasting and playing with brothers and sisters in wholesome recreation. This is good. Or . . . fasting and praying with brothers and sisters over personal and collective needs. This is better.

Fellowship is having a ladies' luncheon and exchanging recipes. This is good. Or . . . it is ladies working together to prepare food and clothing for the poor and homeless. This is better.

Fellowship is enjoying a costume party and seeing the lighter side of one another. This is good. Or . . . removing the masks of self-righteousness and false piety and confessing our sins one to another. This is better.

Fellowship is going out to a nice restaurant, enjoying good food, a pleasant atmosphere, and not having to wash dishes. Or . . . taking food to a sick friend, cleaning house, and washing dishes. This is better.

Fellowship is banqueting together with our friends in the church. This is good. Or . . . inviting into our homes the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, who cannot return the favor. This is better.

Fellowship is exchanging meals with our friends and getting better acquainted with one another. This is very good. Or . . . breaking to others the Bread of Life—sharing Jesus, so that they will become acquainted with the Savior. This is very much better.

—From *IMAGE*

VOICES from the FIELDS

Winston (and Irene) Allen

Eagle River, Alaska

August 6, 1990

On June 17 we had the dedication service for the new part of the church building—not only dedicating the building to the Lord and to His worship and work, but more importantly rededicating ourselves. One of the elders from our sponsoring congregation, the Gallatin Church of Christ, Bro. Ken Stockdell, was here for the occasion with his wife JoAnn and daughter, Nancy. Brother Stockdell preached three times to the group here. Our padded benches have been installed, also a communion table and equipment for the nursery.

Our son Norman was here June 23 through July 9 and preached for us three times. Our son David and his family from Georgia were here during the first week of July. Other visitors from the South-48 this month have been Ken & Betty Istre and Orell & Frances Overman.

We have been told that in the foreseeable future there is little prospect of finding a couple to take our place in the work here. However, we do continue to pray for the Lord to raise up those of His choosing.

Soon we are to begin working on the list of things to do to prepare for our 27th winter in the Northland. Also, I face an eye operation. This has been postponed because of complications from the previous eye surgery, probably caused by diabetes.

Nathan Bruce, our grandson (almost 9), was severely injured by glass recently. The femoral vein was irreparably damaged and the femoral artery damaged. Several surgeries were required, but he is presently making satisfactory progress.

Joy Garrett

Ruwa, Zimbabwe

August 18, 1990

We are in Gweru at Mkoba township. The men from Harare, Kadoma and Mkoba are pouring the concrete foundation of the church building. About five years ago the churches decided to start a special fund to build a church building here. Since then building costs have risen sharply. Cement is scarce. Last week brethren here were able to buy some; so today 30 men are pouring concrete while the women prepare food for them. In the afternoons I taught the women on the Second Coming of Jesus.

Last weekend from Friday through Monday we held our school-leavers camp, at Rockwood Park. There were 52 young people there. Teachers and cooks brought the number we had to cater for to 70 for most meals. The main theme of the lessons was marriage. Classes were held among the trees and rocks. Concrete headers make good benches there. Bob made enough wood and steel benches for their use in the auditorium. Wall brick is now above the top of the doors.

Three congregations have applied for church building sites. Pray that God will help them in their plans.

A DIVINE HEALING

[Ralph Reed is a missionary with Wycliffe Translators. He has been translating God's Word into the language of the Southeastern Puebla Nahuatl people in Mexico. He and his wife and five children live most of their time in Tucson, since Mexico will not grant long-range visas to many missionaries.

His aunt, Sister Lois McReynolds, furnished us with the following information—taken from a newsletter written by the minister of the church where the Reeds are members.—AVW]

At 7:00 a.m. on May 22, Ralph Reed was bitten by a conenose beetle or "kissing bug." His breathing stopped and vital signs were gone. After working for over an hour, paramedics were finally able to airlift him to the hospital emergency room.

When I saw Ralph lying swollen and unconscious I began planning the Bible verses for his funeral. The brain scans confirmed oxygen deprivation to the brain. As Ralph remained longer and longer in a coma, the prognosis was worse and worse. The doctors said things like, "The longer he remains unconscious the more likely it is that there is brain damage. . . . If he ever does recover it looks like there will be paralysis on his right side. . . . He may very well be in a vegetative state for the rest of his life." Finally one doctor said, "If he recovers *at all* it will be a miracle."

It was hard to believe that it was God's will for Ralph to die. First, he still has three little children at home. Just as significantly, his work translating the Bible into the language of an Indian tribe in Mexico was unfinished.

Many were the prayers offered up for Ralph's deliverance from the bondage of death. Many were the prayers for his full recovery. Five days after the bite, his wife Judy called for our elders on the basis of James 5 to pray and anoint Ralph so that the prayer of faith could raise the sick. Friends from Texas came to pray over him. Many prayers were lifted to the heavens by his friends and family.

Eight days after the bite—in fact, the morning after the doctor commented that only a miracle could save Ralph—God opened his eyes. By that evening he was speaking and eating. By the next night he was singing songs in bed and was out of ICU. We will trust for a full recovery and a finished translation.

[The above was written by their minister. Miss McReynolds adds this note: "Ralph and Judy and 3 youngest children were here (De-Ridder, La.) at camp for family week. He seemed almost 100%—entering into Bible discussions, etc. Help us PRAISE GOD."]

WORDS OF LIFE

Mindanao, Philippines Mission Project

The Lord opened a door of opportunity for the gospel to be spread through the island of Mindanao in the Philippines by those associated with the Words of Life Radio Program several years ago through Brother Robert B. Boyd.

Since that door was first entered many have been brought to the Lord, Christians have been helped in their growth in the Lord, new congregations have been formed and a training school established.

In fact the work has grown to such a degree that there are fourteen stations broadcasting the Words of Life program on Mindanao alone. Scattered throughout many parts of this large island are over 70 congregations and their leaders who are being blessed by the messages in song and the spoken word through the Words of Life ministry.

Just as the apostle Paul desired to revisit congregations he had been used to establish to see how they fared, so the Words of Life Radio Committee in order to buy up opportunities and encourage the church in Mindanao has been praying and working toward sending someone to the island for a year, more or less, with the following goals in mind.

1991 Mission Project Goals

- 1) Encourage the church and strengthen its leaders through teaching opportunities and working with the leaders.
- 2) Offer such instruction and encouragement that would promote indigenous and self-supporting churches.
- 3) Review the opportunities for summer missions for American teenagers, as well as adults.

4) Review the opportunities for radio broadcast growth in the Philippines—both English and dialect programs.

5) Review the communications which exist among the Filipino preachers, Filipino churches and Words of Life.

6) Review the opportunities to better disseminate information about the Philippine work to supporting individuals and churches in America.

Over a year ago the Lord began answering the radio committee's prayer in that the burden of this field was laid on the heart of Earl Mullins, Sr.

The Lord continued to manifest His working in this project by raising personnel up to make it possible for Earl and Ragna to leave Portland Christian School. Therefore, it is anticipated that they will leave for Mindanao during the Fall of 1990.

Cagayan de Oro will be the city from which they will begin their work. This is where Brother Cyrus Gesulga and his family live and the Words of Life Training School is located.

Additional information on this project and a monthly newsletter on the Words of Life Radio Program may be obtained by writing:

Words of Life
P.O. Box 18092
Louisville, KY 40218

We urge you to pray for the Mullinses; the national Christians in the Philippines—leaders, babes in Christ, those preparing to be leaders, those in the isolated areas of that nation; and the empowering of each by the Holy Spirit.

Words of Life Radio Committee

Joseph Blansett T. Y. Clark Robert Gill Paul Kitzmiller
Earl C. Mullins, Jr. Dale Offutt Cleo Russell

Hosea, The Heart and Holiness of God

"Bearing Fruit—But the Wrong Kind"

(Hosea 10; read the chapter first)

Ernest E. Lyon

As you read chapter 10 do not lose sight of the main message of Hosea—the heart and holiness of God. Because He is love He continues to love even when we go astray. But because He is holy, He cannot overlook sin wherever it is found. Chapter 10 is a part of a section that shows the wrongs in Israel and Judah that God, because of His glorious nature, must deal with.

The main message of chapter 10 is stated in the opening sentence—"Israel was a spreading vine; he brought forth *fruit for himself*." In a real sense the rest of the chapter is a commentary on that.

Notice first, then, that Hosea is not saying that Israel was fruitless. No, indeed—Israel brought forth lots of fruit, but it was the wrong kind. The fruit was for Israel, not for God. And God had

planted that vine; He wanted it to bring forth fruit for Himself, fruit that would glorify Him and be good for Israel and for those with whom they came in contact. Notice, then, the result of Israel's fruit. Don't think they became less religious; no indeed; as their fruit increased, as their prosperity increased, they built more altars and laid out stones that were beautiful; but the altars were not for worshipping God nor their stones for worshipping Him, either. Their heart was deceitful (divided, smooth), so they were guilty and would bear that guilt; the Lord would even destroy what they had built.

Isn't it strange how people think prosperity is a sign of God's approval? And Israel is not by any means alone in this thinking. When the U.S.A. came out of World War II and had great prosperity, many felt that God was rewarding us for overthrowing the pagan Hitler and his allies. But if you will examine our record honestly since then, you can see that as our prosperity went up, our spirituality went down. And this thinking is not simply the result of the "older generation" thinking things are not "as good as they were when we were young." We realize that many things were wrong then, but the morals of our country have sunk much lower than ever before.

Let's not forget that God uses the vine as a figure for Israel several times in the Old Testament. Notice, for example, Psalm 80:8-16. Then turn to Isaiah 5:1-7 and follow that by noting the woes and judgments pronounced upon Israel because of the bad fruit they were bearing. But if you want to know what the genuine or true vine of God is, you must turn to John 15 to find that out. There this figure becomes a personal one for us. How wonderful to find out that Jesus, the true vine, abides in us and we, as the branches, abide in Him—or at least we should and will if we are to bear fruit. And so let us not think that since we have the true vine our fruit is automatically what God wants. John 15 doesn't show that at all. Whenever God's people seek their own interests instead of God's interests, they go astray from the very purpose for which they became God's. God has fruit in mind for His people always when He adds them to the vine, and that fruit is to be for all peoples; too often Christians lead a self-centered life and that means their religion will degenerate; they may multiply altars, but they are erecting ornate idols in God's place.

As you think about the U.S.A. today, look at v. 3 for the reason Israel did not believe they had a king—they did not "revere the Lord." And to have a king would not solve their problems, for what could he do? As I think of these things in relation to the U.S.A. I cannot help thinking of how we blame our government for all our troubles. But where do such troubles start?—not with the government but with us, the governed. If our hearts are not right, then the government will not be right; can you state why we have such a corrupt government in a better way? How could the government throw God out of schools and public life if the people of the country were humbled before God as they ought to be? Making new laws, writing constitutional amendments, etc., will not solve the problem—it originates in the hearts of Americans, and it will not be solved until there is a great

revival, a revival starting in the hearts of Christians, flowing then through the church and out into the rest of the people. Then the government would change! Then we could serve Him of Whom it is said, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12).

But now let us consider again what God wanted from His people that He had planted and given the opportunity to bear fruit. What kind of fruit was He expecting? I think the most obvious answer besides His wanting them to be faithful in worshipping Him instead of those things they had created is that He wanted them to receive His blessings and pass them on to others. He wanted a missionary-minded people. I hope that makes you realize how permanent His desire for His people was. What does He want of us today? First comes our true worship of Him, of course, but let us not forget the Great Commission that Jesus gave us in Matthew 28:18-20. God wants us to bring the Word to those who have not received it. He wants a mission-minded people, mission-minded not only in supporting those who go out into far lands or even those who do "home mission" work, but mission-minded in taking the Word we have been blessed with to those who have not received it as well as feeding the spiritual needs of those who have already received the gospel. I am very much afraid that God is displeased with a great portion of His Church today on this very point—and I wonder what we could say to Him if He called us to account for our stewardship. Have we rejoiced in His Word and kept it and its blessings for ourselves or have we in every way we could passed it on to others?

But let us get back to considering our government again for a moment. Many today are complaining much about many things that have changed in our government—prayer falsely legislated out of schools by the Supreme Court along with a lot of foolishness about something the constitution never mentions, something they call "separation of church and state." To forbid the government establishing a church as the state church, as the first amendment does, is vastly different from leaving God out of consideration in all state matters, as people so glibly use that term today. Most if not all courts no longer allow people to take an oath on the Bible, but may I mention something that bothers me more, people swearing on a Bible to tell the truth and then lying from the beginning of their testimony. Please note verse 4 of Hosea 10 on this. Another place where we are like them is in having men, like the priests of Israel, be idolatrous. But ours are often worse—they pretend to be Christians when they are not. But, like the golden calf of Bethel, all they stand for will be lost, not taken by the king of Assyria (v. 6) but in some sure way.

I see lots of religious gatherings of all kinds going on over the world in the name of Christ, but I pray concerning them because I see so little in the way of practical results in the life of the countries.

God gives us another warning in verse 11—Too many in the religious world (Christian, that is) want the easy job of threshing—without being muzzled, so they can eat—but we must learn to do the hard work of plowing, of breaking up the ground. We must "sow for (our)-selves righteousness" (v. 12).

Looking at the whole chapter we need to remind ourselves that God wants us to "mean business" with Him. He does not want half-hearted dedication; He wants us to give ourselves wholly to Him as Lord of our lives and to use His resources for His purpose. And remember that He sent His Son into the world to save sinners. The Son completed His task. Now let us complete ours and be able to face Him soon and hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

Which is more important—Works or Worship?

This question deals with some issues which may have been intended in the preceding question. By "works" I understand the querist to mean those activities which are motivated by one's Christianity but which are not normally considered to be primarily religious in nature. Examples might be helping the poor, nursing the sick, or caring for an orphan. Modern activists would include active participation in trying to solve several major issues and might distinguish between works and worship as the practical and the impractical. Since worship *in a sense* is also very much a work (this is one reason why many do not really do much of it), we should realize that we are dealing with general classifications that may vary a bit from person to person.

Let us clearly understand that no Christian life is balanced which sets works against worship, or worship against works, or that stresses one to the exclusion of the other. The fruit of good works (Eph. 2:10) and the fruit of reverent worship (Heb. 13:15) should be found in every Christian life. We are not dealing with an either/or situation. Both are quite important in their place.

There is a considerable trend in our day toward de-emphasizing the church meeting and corporate worship in favor of getting out into the world to do something about the problems. Some college-age youth seem especially prone to regard the church meetings as an impractical waste of time. They want to *do* something! There can be no doubt that considerable influence in this direction has come from the atheistic and humanistic "Christians" who have no real personal God to worship and for whom religion can only consist of activity toward mankind. Add the fact that young people are by nature "doers"—energetic, idealistic, confident—and the fact that professing Christians of the fundamental sort have sometimes failed to be "doers of the Word and not hearers only" (Jas. 1:22). The result is that even some believing young people lean strongly toward emphasis on doing. Insofar as these are hearers and doers of the Word (please take note of that important qualifying phrase, "of the Word") the emphasis is good. But understanding this to mean less emphasis on the church and her worship is bad. We cannot afford the idea that the worship of God is impractical or irrelevant.

THE EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN TEACHER

The Lesson

Joyce Zimpelmann

Scene One:

It is Saturday evening. The chores are done. The children are in bed, hopefully asleep. The Sunday roast is thawing in the kitchen. As Betty settles down to study her Sunday School lesson, she hears the blare of the television that her husband, Sam, is watching. Betty looks at the clock. There's a good movie coming on soon that she really wants to watch; but first, there's *the lesson*.

With a sigh, Betty begins to read the quarterly. She stops a moment to reflect on the dozen, squirming second and third graders she teaches. She suppresses another sigh as she realizes the printed lesson is taken from 1st Kings.

"Oh dear. How am I ever going to keep the kids interested? Especially Tommy and Joey—All these kings and things."

Sighing again, Betty begins to read the lesson.

Scene Two:

At the same time in a nearby neighborhood, Bob is reviewing his plans for teaching his high school class. They're a group of busy, lively young people with a variety of interests and a myriad of activities. They seem to really enjoy one another's company; but, oh my, they have so many different things pulling them away from the church.

Bob pictures each of his students as he reflects on their interests and needs. He thinks: "They're such a talented group with so much to give. How can I make this lesson in 1st Kings meaningful to their lives today?" Before he begins reviewing his plans, he bows in prayer asking God's help.

What is the lesson? Is it just that portion of scripture printed in the quarterly? Does it include the memory verse? Are there questions to be asked and answered? Are there visual aids to be prepared?

The lesson is the sum of everything taught. The lesson is comprised of several parts all of which are important. Each of these parts must be considered according to the ages, needs and interests of the pupils.

The Word of God Comprises the Heart of the Lesson

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The teacher must always keep in mind that the majority of the class time must be allocated to direct study of the Word. This includes not only those scriptures printed in the text, if a quarterly is used; but also all relevant background and companion texts.

Even toddlers can be taught that in the Bible stories they are hearing and seeing from God's Book, the Bible. Teachers of pre-

schoolers, while using a variety of audio-visual aids, should handle the Bible and keep it centered in the children's minds.

As children learn to read, the Bible should be used each time the class meets. Children should be taught how to find references in the Bible, use the dictionary and Bible helps and compare passages.

Even classes studying specific topics, i.e., contemporary Christian issues should use the Bible as they discuss issues. The Word of God should be at the heart of every lesson.

The Teacher's Objectives Help Focus the Lesson

"We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ." Colossians 1:28

As stated in a previous article, the main goal of our teaching is to help individuals know the Lord and develop into mature Christians.

After the teacher has studied the lesson scriptures and the background references, he/she should determine the teaching objective(s) for each class. Goals and purposes . . .

- determine a direction for the lesson
- give a focus (We can't cover all the material)
- provide a destination (Where are we going?)
- present guideposts along the way to keep us on track
- help us determine when we've arrived
- help us evaluate what has been accomplished

With goals like the above, the teacher can observe whether or not the lesson has been understood.

Young children think literally and have a difficult time separating reality and fantasy. The focus of the lesson, which is dictated by the lesson objectives, must take this into consideration.

New Christians, even adults, may need to spend time on special vocabulary and concepts that mature Christians take for granted, e.g., faith, grace, redemption, etc. Thus the objectives for newcomers may differ from objectives for adults of like age.

Once the objectives have been determined, the teacher must decide how to quickly focus the students' attention on the lesson.

Sound Motivational Activities Grab the Students' Attention

Many times students, both young and old, enter the class time with their minds filled with recent or anticipated events. Often it is necessary to make the transition from "worldly affairs" to the Biblical lesson through a motivational activity that grabs the students' attention and focuses it on the lesson. What the teacher selects as a motivational activity depends upon the ages, stages, interests, and understanding of the students. Object lessons, pictures, songs, and thought-provoking questions can be used effectively.

For example, Betty, whom you met in Scene 1, may introduce her lesson with pictures of modern-day or well-known kings. As her students focus their attention on the pictures, Betty may ask questions, e.g.:

1. What do kings do?
2. How do the people show their respect and obedience to kings?

3. Are all kings good? bad?

4. Why do you think God permitted Israel to have kings?

Within five minutes, Betty can lead her class into the heart of the lesson.

Bob may use a different approach. He may start the class with the question: "Did you ever want something just because someone else had one?" After several comments, Bob may continue. "Perhaps your parents were against your having your wish; but they finally relented because you persevered in your request. What happened?"

Following a brief discussion, Bob may lead into the specific lesson regarding Israel and her kings.

*The Heart of the Lesson is Bible Study and
an Application of Biblical Truth to Life*

The body of the lesson includes the major teaching points. The major portion of the hour should be spent on the lesson.

The teacher, having set his/her goals for the lesson and determined the needs of the class, will emphasize the major points. All effort should be made at every level, to have students actively participate in the learning process. While it is necessary to lecture in order to present information in a short period of time, it is not always the best way for the students to learn. It has been well documented that learners retain:

10 percent of what they *read*

20 percent of what they *hear*

30 percent of what they *see*

50 percent of what they *see and hear*

70 percent of what they *say as they talk*

90 percent of what they *say as they do a thing.*

Therefore, especially with younger students, a number of learner-directed activities should be planned.

Since a certain amount of material needs to be covered during the allotted time, several suggestions might be appropriate:

- Don't read the quarterly verbatim. Teach from the Bible.
- Make application a major thrust. This is important at all levels.
- Watch your time so that the lesson can be concluded appropriately.
- Emphasize each important point by varying your presentation.

*The Culminating Activity Serves to bring Closure to the Lesson
in a Meaningful, Positive Way*

The last five or ten minutes of a class may be used to review, reinforce and/or evaluate. Major points may need to be reemphasized. Clarifications may need to be made. This activity may also be used to set the tone for the next class meeting.

Always close the class on a positive note. Thank the class for their attention and contributions to the lesson. Remind them that God is the center of each of our lives and that he loves each of us.

Always evaluate the lesson and make notes of needs for the next lesson.

Consider points such as: (1) Was the goal of the lesson fulfilled? (2) Were the major points stressed? (3) How did the students respond? (Think about specific pupils about whom you are concerned.) (4) Were the students needs met? (5) Was God uplifted before the students?

Teaching is an *awesome responsibility*; but we are not alone. The Holy Spirit is within us to give us guidance and direction.

"For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair: For giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—let the wise listen and *add to their learning*; and let the discerning get guidance—for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.*" Proverbs 1:2-7

GLUED TO THE BOOB TUBE

Dear Billy Graham,

I have been lying awake thinking. You spoke tonight on television about the gods of the American people. You mentioned "sex" as one and right away I said, "Aha! That's not my god." But afterward it struck me what my god really is.

This god of mine is television. You do not know how faithfully I worship my god. Every morning it is turned on and it stays on all day and all evening. My god is there while I fix the children's breakfast, and while I make their lunches. The dishes usually stay unwashed and the beds unmade because I cannot leave my god to take care of them.

During commercials I throw in some wash. My little boy wants to talk but I have no time. The baby cries and I resent him because I cannot leave my god. I shove a bottle in his mouth and change his diaper and go back to my worship. Through lunch I continue to watch. I send my boy out to play so I can enjoy my favorite program. The dust piles up. I may fold some wash or iron a few pieces of clothing, but I can do this while I worship.

The children come home to watch their afternoon cartoons. I am raising them also to worship my god. Now I do what work must be done, for at 6:30 my worship starts again. Because I don't like to hear about the troubles and problems of others, I switch around from channel to channel.

The supper dishes must wait. My children want to talk but I have no time. My husband is overseas; I write him every other day—what else can I do? At least he's not here to interfere with my worship time.

On Sunday I go to church. My daughter pouts because she wants to worship her favorite cartoons. I don't go to prayer meeting on Wednesday because my favorite show is on. I have no time to write my parents or my husband's mother or my grandmother. Bad schools, pollution, politics? I can't be bothered.

If you had asked me before tonight whether I obeyed the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," I would have said that I did. Now I know better. My children know more TV programs than Bible stories.

Will I be saved when I get to heaven because I went forward at the age of sixteen and said I believe Jesus is the Son of God? Or will God say, "Depart from me, I never knew you. You were too busy with your god to worship me or to live as I commanded. You would not be happy in heaven, there are no TV sets here."

Tallahassee, Florida
Mrs. D. F.

ZAPPING

It seems to be a fairly typical scene within the average household today. The television viewer sits watching the screen with the remote control glued in hand, continually flitting from channel to channel in a fidgety flight away from a stream of TV commercials or otherwise uninteresting programs.

Such "zappers" have caught the eyes of commercial advertisers, and their recent conclusions are rather interesting. First, people are not sitting as they did 25 years ago, eyes transfixed to the TV, watching everything that comes across without moving. Avid zappers can click past a dozen channels in only seconds. One household studied changed to a different channel 1,045 times in a single day.

The Zapper profile breaks down into three categories—Light Zappers (switching channels only once every 20 minutes), Moderate Zappers (switching one to three times every six minutes), and Heavy Zappers (switching more than once every 2 minutes).

Television is having its influence upon us. The attention span of the average adult is being shortened by TV's rapid-fire news updates, sports breaks, rock video clips, and a growing number of 15-second commercials.

With all this going on in our world, picture a typical Sunday morning. *Is it any wonder we can hardly sit for one hour?* When the assembly is longer than 60 minutes we have to leave. When more than three verses of any one song are sung we start fidgeting. The sermon requires great effort to listen to after the first 5 to 10 minutes; if it goes longer than 20 minutes, "our preacher is boring." The communion should be shortened to be more efficient. Meditation is out of the question: "Just sit and think? Not me!"

No, the problem is not new. Jesus in Gethsemane finished his prayer, walked to his disciples to find them sleeping and said, "*Can't you watch with me just one hour?*"

Zapping is here. Many of us are Zappers. But if we recognize how influenced we are by our culture, maybe we can improve our level of discipline. And who knows? It might even put more meaning into our assemblies for each of us.

—Ken Dye, In Gallatin Lamplighter

NEWS AND NOTES, continued from inside front cover

lems, but this time he even had to go to the hospital for surgery. He thinks it is under control now.

—personal letter from Lois McReynolds, August 29, 1990

De Ridder, La.:

This is to thank all of you for your prayers on my behalf, and to let you know that I am feeling much better than I did last year. The Urologist said my last blood test was "perfect." My cancer seems to be arrested at this time. Thank God for all he has done for me and ask him to guide me in the best use of the rest of my earthly life. My wife is legally blind, very deaf but still very helpful to me. We have been married 61 years plus.

—J. Miller Forcade

Manila, Philippines:

Almost every week now since July, Quiricade Street (in front of Central Bible Institute) has become flooded. . . . The earthquake, floods, rumors of another coup attempt, economic troubles and the Middle East crisis brought about the formation of "A Call to Repentance" for our country by the evangelical churches of Metro Manila. A 30-day period of special prayer and fasting is the main agenda of this program.

Arsenio and some of the other church workers are going from door to door surveying the streets of this area, beginning at the chapel. Because of the rainy season the work seems slow.

—Pat Eniego

Buechel Church of Christ, Louisville

The Ladies of Buechel will be meeting to start making Christmas Crafts for the Shut-Ins. All the Ladies are invited to come and be a part of this meeting.

Southeast Church of Christ, Louisville

Thanks to Mike Wright for creating the "Get Well" computer banner that was sent to Bro. Antoine Valdetero. Bro. Val called last week to say that he was deeply touched by the greetings sent to him from Southeast. He displays the banner proudly in his office and says it blesses him as he sees all the greetings sent his way.

Junior Worship begins September 9. All 2nd through 4th graders are invited to attend this worship time designed just for them. We hope you will encourage your children to partici-

pate. Participants are to enter adult worship with their families at 10:30. After communion, an announcement will be made dismissing them to go down to the Fellowship Hall for Junior Worship.

Tell City, Indiana

Smokies Retreat: Pray for our group of 22 to have a safe trip Thursday through Saturday to the Smokies to see two Christian plays, and to relax in the beautiful scenery there. We are really looking forward to this trip.

Revelators Concert: What a good time we had last Sunday evening with a packed house for the Revelators concert! If you would like to order their tapes, please see Brother Jerry Carmichael.

Gallatin, Tennessee

At our Teacher Appreciation Banquet, Tuesday night, we recognized John Cox for his years of service as Sunday School Superintendent. He is stepping down and John Harris is the new man in this important position. Thanks to I John and II John!

Think About This:

Many church members have reached the conclusion that for them one Sunday service is enough. Their conviction is also that the minister should preach on Sunday evening, however. The minister goes into the pulpit and his people remain in their homes.

"We must keep the church open," cry the stay-at-homers, not knowing what they say. When is a church open? When the doors are unlocked and the lights turned on? No! When a church keeps open house, it must be present to welcome the guests. An OPEN CHURCH means a church with Christians in it ready to welcome all comers.

The world cares nothing for empty church buildings.

Without people in them, they are cold as refrigerators and depressing as tombs. A dwindling and deserted church service is one of the deadliest of all enemies of faith.

The Sunday night service is not attractive unless made so by the Lord's people. It's a cold world, and fire draws a crowd. There is no fire so congenial as that kindled by a large worshipping congregation. To suppose that the unconverted are going to rush into buildings left vacant by Christians is a foolish thought.

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16th Annual Central Louisiana Christian Fellowship

NOVEMBER 12 - 15, 1990

GLENMORA, LOUISIANA

Theme: CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE EXHIBITED IN JESUS

All Sessions at Glenmora Church of Christ, Glenmora, Louisiana

MONDAY

7:00 p.m. "Conformed to the Image of His Son" Glenn Baber

TUESDAY

10:00 - 10:50 "Lifestyle Exhibited in Teaching" David Johnson

7:00 p.m. "Lifestyles Exhibited in Love" Mike Abbott

WEDNESDAY

10:00 - 10:50 "Lifestyle Exhibited in Prayer" Danny Broussard

7:00 p.m. "Lifestyles Exhibited in Obedience" Tim Morrow

THURSDAY

10:00 - 10:50 "Lifestyle Exhibited in Faith" Nick Marsh

7:00 p.m. "Lifestyles Exhibited in Compassion" Earl C. Mullins, Jr.

DAILY SESSIONS, Tuesday - Thursday

9:30 - 10:00 Prayer Time

11:10 - 12:00 Exposition of Colossians 3 Paul Kitzmiller

1:15 - 2:30 Workshop Series:

"The Function of Elders and Deacons in the Church"

Joe Blansett and Emory Grimes

"Wives of Church Leaders"

Mrs. Joe (Martha) Blansett and Mrs. Emory (Faith) Grimes

Hospitality Committee:

Dennis and Melva LeDoux

P.O. Box 314

Glenmora, Louisiana 71433

Phone: (318) 748-4243

Tapes of the Fellowship messages are recorded by Donald Stump, Route 3, Taylorsville, KY 40071.