

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



# The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

March 2007

**"The Christian is on his way, not to death  
but to *life*."**

**--William Barclay**

**"Let us *live* as those who are *prepared to die*, and *die* as those who are *prepared to live*."**

**--James S. Stewart**

**"Live your life so your preacher can tell  
the truth at your funeral."**

# Sit Me Down, Lord

Sandra Naugle

Sit me down, Lord, every day.  
Sit me down to read and pray.  
Sit me down to study your word.  
Sit me down to honor you, Lord.

Sit me down to praise your name  
To be in awe that Jesus came  
To save my soul, unworthy me,  
From loss and sin to set me free.

Sit me down to learn each day  
Where to go and what to say.  
Sit me down to bring to your ear  
Those who need to be drawn near.

Sit me down and slow me, too,  
To take the time to be with You.  
Sit me down and fill me, Lord,  
With strength to heed your precious word.

Then stand me up to go my way  
Leaning on You all the way.  
A shining light for all to see  
Your wondrous love revealed in me.

Stand me up, Lord, tried and true,  
With resolve to follow You.  
Stand me up so all may see  
The sovereign God, living in me.

Stand me up to fight for right,  
To do it all through your great might.  
Stand me up to walk today  
Secure in knowing You lead the way.

Then sit me down at each day's end  
To be renewed through your word again.  
To close the day with peaceful prayer,  
Leaving everything in your care.

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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# WHAT GOD DID THROUGH ONE MAN

Dennis L. Allen

On February 23, 1807, the British Parliament passed the Slave Trade Act, ending nearly 400 years of the slave trade in the British Empire. The one man largely responsible for this great reversal in policy was William Wilberforce. Now two hundred years later a film titled *Amazing Grace* has been released which commemorates this historic victory and shows how it came about. This is a film which is not only inspirational but also Christ-honoring. Christians should be encouraged to promote it.

William Wilberforce came in contact with John Newton as a young man (see following article), and after his conversion was profoundly changed. The interaction of the two men through the years is very interesting. For years, Newton, the former slaver, is haunted by his 20,000 ghosts (the slaves he once transported). He eventually exorcises them by making a historical record of what he once did. He says to Wilberforce, "I am a great sinner, and Christ is a great Savior."

We may feel that we have come a long way today from the days of slavery. Americans now have equal rights and most of the past discrimination has been wiped out, but we need to look deeper. The human heart has not changed. The great deceiver is still at work.

Did you know that there are 27,000,000 slaves in the world today? This is more than ever before. Today slaves are not usually transported in ships that keep men in shackles, but the things that are going on today are worse than anything we read about in the past. Some of these things will make us uncomfortable and may be very disturbing, but Christians are to be salt and light in this present evil age. We need to be awake to what is going on. We are not to be asleep, but to watch and be sober.

At the time of the end the deception of Satan comes to a head. John tells us, "There was war in heaven." (Rev. 12:7). Satan is cast down with his angels. Then comes rejoicing in the heaven but not for the earth. "Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." (Rev. 12:12).

This is a time when the Devil is making war with the seed of the woman. So what does God want us to do? He wants us to know what is going on and to know that the outcome is sure. "And they over-

came him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their life even unto death.” (Rev. 12:11). Wilberforce faced incredible opposition but he would not give up even though he suffered defeat after defeat. His life is a challenge to us in this generation.

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## **WHO WAS WILLIAM WILBERFORCE?**

William Wilberforce was born in 1759 into a prosperous merchant family in the North Sea port city of Hull, in England. His father, Robert Wilberforce, died when William was eight years old, and his mother, Elizabeth, sent him to live with an aunt and uncle in London. His aunt, Hannah, had become a devotee of George Whitefield, an Anglican minister who, along with the brothers John and Charles Wesley, is regarded as one of the founders of Methodism.

Large numbers of English Christians, especially among the working classes, had drifted away from religion altogether. The Methodists sought to change that, by advocating a Christianity that emphasized powerful preaching, close study of the Bible, a liturgy centered around communal hymn-singing, the mercy and love of God, and the fostering of an intimate, emotional relationship between individual believers and their Savior. One of the earliest Methodist causes was the abolition of slavery and the slave trade. In 1774 John Wesley, who had spent a stint pastoring a church in Savannah, Georgia, published an influential tract arguing that the brutal conditions to which slaves were subjected were incompatible with Christianity.

### **John Newton and the Birth of ‘Amazing Grace’**

During the two years he spent with his aunt and uncle during the 1760s, William Wilberforce was exposed to much Methodist preaching. One frequent visitor to his relatives’ home was John Newton, a former seaman and captain of a slave-ship who had experienced a conversion from a wild youth to evangelical Christian. Newton’s newfound faith did not immediately lead him to abandon the slave trade. (It was only later in life, under Wilberforce’s influence, that he repented of his involvement with slavery and became an outspoken abolitionist), but he did give up the sea to become an ordained Anglican priest in 1764.

Serving in parish churches in the town of Olney and, later, in London, Newton became famous for his eloquent preaching and his devotion to the poor. Working in collaboration with the poet William Cowper, another fervent evangelical, Newton composed a series of hymns. The most famous was “Amazing Grace”.

## Young Wilberforce's Faith and Politics

Most upper-class Anglicans looked down upon evangelicals as overly emotional "enthusiasts," and Wilberforce's mother was among them. She and his grandfather took the boy back to Hull, where his newfound Christian fervor quickly withered. In 1776 William Wilberforce enrolled in St. John's College at Cambridge University, where he studied as little as possible, immersed himself in the college social scene, and began a lifelong friendship with William Pitt the Younger, the future prime minister.

In 1780, at the age of 21 and while still a student at Cambridge, Wilberforce was elected member of Parliament for Hull. As a Tory, he aligned himself with Pitt, who became prime minister in 1783. Wilberforce quickly gained a reputation for eloquence and integrity, and he was reelected to Parliament in 1784.

In 1785, Wilberforce began reading evangelical treatises, and he experienced his own Christian conversion. He called it "the great change." He reconnected with Newton, who was a prominent London preacher by then, and Newton helped him find his way back to faith. Wilberforce briefly considered abandoning Parliament in order to preach, but Newton, Pitt, and other friends persuaded him that he could serve God more effectively in public life.

## Wilberforce Becomes an Abolitionist

In 1787, he was introduced to Thomas Clarkson, another evangelical Anglican whose religious convictions had made him a lifelong anti-slavery activist. Clarkson introduced Wilberforce to the appalling conditions--the packed, filthy, fetid holds, the heavy chains--under which slaves were transported from Africa to the West Indies.

Clarkson's cause became Wilberforce's. He became the leader of a group called "the saints"—Anglicans, Quakers, dissenters and others devoted to the abolitionist cause. In 1789, Wilberforce made his first speech against the slave trade in Parliament. In 1791, he introduced a bill to abolish the trade altogether.

Wilberforce's battle was not an easy one. Powerful interests in the slave trade itself and in port cities such as Liverpool that had grown prosperous on the income the trade generated ensured the failure of this bill. Wilberforce did not give up. During every successive session of Parliament he introduced his bill and it was defeated every time—although there were minor victories such as limits on the number of slaves who could be crowded into the ships' holds. Finally, in 1807, the tide of public opinion had turned, and both houses of Parliament passed the Slave Trade Act by large margins.

[This material was found on the internet. There was no author mentioned.]

## Wilberforce's Cause of Abolition

For 20 years Wilberforce's one goal was the abolition of the slave trade. Soon after Christmas, 1787, five feet tall Wilberforce gave notice in the House of Commons that early in the new session he would move for the abolition of the slave trade. It would be 20 long years before he could carry the House of Commons in putting abolition into law. To the House in 1789 he said, "I confess to you, so enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did its wickedness appear that my mind was completely made up for Abolition. Let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected its abolition." The same year he said, "I mean not to accuse anyone but to take the shame upon myself, in common indeed with the whole Parliament of Great Britain, for having suffered this horrid trade to be carried on under their authority. We are all guilty and we ought to all plead guilty and not to exculpate ourselves by throwing the blame on others."

The basis of the opposition that raged for 20 years was based on the huge financial benefits the traders reaped from the plantations of the West Indies. His life was often threatened, and many friends deserted him. Besides this, was the huge political pressure put on him to back down. Yet repeated defeats did not weaken his steadfast efforts. Despite external pressure and many false accusations Wilberforce doggedly brought the stark facts of the slave trade before the members of Parliament until gradually the tide began to turn.

On top of this were the heartaches of family life. Wilberforce, in spite of poor health, was always cheerful. His wife was often depressed and pessimistic. His eldest son, William, fell away from the faith and caused great distress to his father. Then came the death of his daughter Barbara who died of tuberculosis. When John Wesley was 87 years old he wrote to Wilberforce and said, "Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of man and devil. But if God be for you, who can be against you."

Wilberforce suffered from ulcerative colitis. For years his doctors prescribed daily opium pills utterly unaware of their destructive effect. Yet in spite of all these obstacles and difficulties, those who knew Wilberforce best were impressed by his self-forgetting joy in Christ. The poet Robert Southey said, "I never saw any other man who seemed to enjoy such a perpetual serenity and sunshine of spirit. In conversing with him you feel assured that there is no guile in him."

Wilberforce's beliefs seemed to line up with what the Whitefield and Newton-like Calvinists preached, but they had a reputation for being joyless. To this Wilberforce responded, "My grand objection to the religious system still held by many who declare themselves orthodox Churchmen...is, that it tends to render Christianity so much a system of prohibitions rather than of privilege and hopes, and thus the injunction to rejoice, so strongly enforced in the New Testament, is practically neglected, and Religion is made to wear a forbidding and gloomy air and not one of peace and hope and joy." This joy sustained him through the long years of seemingly futile efforts.

When victory finally came to Wilberforce in 1807, it is said the House rose almost to a man and turned toward Wilberforce in a burst of Parliamentary cheers. Suddenly above the roars of "Hear, hear", and quite out of order, three hurrahs echoed and echoed while he sat, head bowed, tears streaming down his face. When the vote was counted, Ayes 283, Noes 16, the royal assent was declared. Wilberforce, turned to his best friend and colleague, Henry Thompson, and said, "Well, Henry, what shall we abolish next?"

In fact, the battle was not over, Wilberforce fought on until his death 26 years later. The abolition law abolished the slave trade but not slavery itself. On July 26, 1833, only three days before Wilberforce died, slavery was outlawed in the British colonies.

Wilberforce's friend William Jay, wrote this tribute, "His disinterested, self-denying, laborious, undeclining efforts in this cause of justice and humanity...will call down the blessings of millions, and ages yet to come will glory in his memory."

--Adapted from the internet

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## **Does the Bible Condone Slavery?**

D.L.A.

We have all probably puzzled many times in our Bible study over passages that seem to accept slavery. In God's instructions to His chosen people He seemed to accept the institution of slavery. They were permitted to buy a Hebrew servant to serve for six years if they observed God's restrictions. (Ex. 21:2-6). They were never to forget that they themselves had been slaves in Egypt. (Deut. 15:12-18). The Lord Jesus often referred to masters and slaves in His teaching but never once condemned it. (Luke 17:7-10.) It would seem that He accepted it as a part of the culture of His day. (Luke 12:35-47.)

The apostle Paul said, “20 Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. 21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you--although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22 For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord’s freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ’s slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.” (1 Cor. 7:20-24.)

Slavery was a fundamental part of the social structure of that time. Paul through the Spirit saw that the believers could serve the Lord within that structure whether bond or free. (Eph. 6:5-9). He saw that Christ was Master of both--the master and the slave. In the case of Philemon, Paul faces the touchy situation of the runaway slave, Onesimus. Paul had brought Onesimus to Christ. Onesimus had become a valuable servant to Paul in his ministry, but Paul could not continue to enjoy his service. He sends him back to his master Philemon with a letter from Paul. Paul reminds Philemon that his former slave is now no longer a slave but a “brother beloved”. This shows love’s way to solve the slavery problem so far as a Christian is concerned. Sometimes the Hebrew servant did not want to go free, because he loved his master. (Ex. 21:2-6). Even in the South this was sometimes the case. The slaves were free to go, but chose not to. The apostle Paul often referred to himself as a bond servant or love slave of Jesus Christ. When Christ’s teaching is applied in our dealings with our fellow men slavery disappears.

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## SLAVERY TODAY

In spite of the fact that international law has made making someone your slave illegal, slavery exists all over the world today. Probably what is known is only the tip of the iceberg. People are enslaved because the human heart has not changed and existing laws are not enforced. Slavery today takes many forms.

### **Bonded Labor**

Bonded labor, also known as debt bondage, is the most widely used method of enslaving people. A person becomes a bonded laborer when his labor is demanded as a means of repayment of a loan. The person is then tricked or trapped into working for very little or no pay. Exorbitant interest may be charged and uneducated people find themselves caught in a trap they can never extricate themselves from. Bonded labor has existed for hundreds of years. It is rooted in the caste system and flourishes in agriculture, in cottage

industries and in factories. This is especially true in India, but also exists in many other countries. Even children work in factories making matches, fireworks, or glassware, In brick kilns children are forced to work long hours. Because of poverty, school is not an option, so children grow up as unskilled adults.

### **Child Labor**

Most children work because their parents are poor and their labor is needed for survival. Employers often exploit children, because they are more vulnerable and cheaper for hire. We read primarily about children in factories, but it is estimated 70 per cent work in agriculture, fishing, hunting and forestry with or without their families. Many children are bought and sold across national borders. They are trafficked for prostitution, for begging, and because they are children they are at the mercy of their employers. Resolutions on the rights of children have been passed by the UN but such resolutions are only paper until they are enforced.

### **Trafficking in People**

Trafficking is a modern day slave trade. Traffickers by coercion, deception and even violence, take people away from their homes and families and force them to work against their will. This goes on within their own country and between countries. Some reports estimate 700,000 women and children are trafficked globally each *year*. Children may be abducted or families approached by traffickers with promises of money or a better life. Sometimes people are recruited through agencies that offer well-paid jobs, even make travel arrangements and help them obtain travel documents.

However, once they arrive at the destination they find the promised job does not exist, but they still have to pay the debt. This amount may then be inflated through charges for accommodation, food and interest on the loan they borrowed. They are not paid what they were promised and often are not paid at all.

They are in a most vulnerable position. The traffickers hold their passport or other papers. If they do not submit they are subjected to intimidation, torture or rape. Threats may also be made against friends and family to ensure the victims do not try to escape.

We cannot expect the UN to solve this problem. Nor is it likely that nations that are the worst offenders will. However, individual Christians, the world over, who come in contact with specific cases can be instruments for helping to bring deliverance.

During our time in Hong Kong we came in close contact with several women who had been sold into slavery when children. They are now free.

# Confused About Spirituality?

*by Rubel Shelly*

Most people with whom I talk about spirituality seem to be baffled about the concept. I get that way myself at times.

For example, do you ever have any of these ideas about it? Spirituality is the rare trait of the sensitive few. Spiritual people don't get their hands dirty with the stuff of ordinary life. The occasional saint who achieves spirituality wouldn't fit into my world. I wish I could withdraw from the rough-and-tumble, down-and-dirty life of earning a living, mowing the grass, and paying bills, in order to pursue spirituality.

Wrong-headed. Inaccurate. Illogical. Misguided. Just plain false! Every one of those common ideas about being a spiritual person is not only wrong but effectively undermines that desirable way of life.

Who is the model of a truly spiritual life? I'll presume to speak for you and offer the name Jesus of Nazareth. Did he live in a desert monastery? Build a retreat center in the mountains? Sit silently in the middle of a subdued crowd? Protect himself from ordinary people and routine life? You know better.

Jesus went to dinner parties and weddings. He told stories that prove he was a keen observer of such routine things as sweeping a house, planting seed, tending animals, and fishing. He had conversations with people as he traveled and ate. He cooked breakfast for his friends. He cried at funerals.

Being spiritual or Christian or holy is not – when understood correctly – taking up a new occupation in a new place. It is living your old occupation in the old place but with new purpose now. "Newness of life" for God's people is the reorientation of all the details of working, talking, befriending, and living to Jesus. Seeing them as participation with God in history. Honoring him in the ordinary.

The worst thing for any of us is to think that "being spiritual" is some invisible, unearthly, ethereal quality of life reserved for an elite class. I fear some of us see being spiritual as being less than truly human. Jesus was God among us. And the hardest thing for me to grasp about him is not that he was truly God but that he was truly human. He sweated. Got belly aches and tired feet. Laughed and cried. Got mad. And the awe generated by his occasional miracles was directly related to the ordinariness of their setting.

God seeks to be with us still in the routine of our lives. At work, with family, and in your normalcy today, you are on mission. You are God's priest to offer a living sacrifice. To invest dignity, grace, and love. Be alert to your high calling!

[From *New Wineskins* (Online), March-April, 2005, by author's permission. When Wilberforce was converted to Christ, at first he thought he should leave the messy field of politics and government. Thank God he didn't.]

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## TWO MEN:

# Alike in Life, Ministry and Death

Julius Hovan

We have experienced the death of six ministers in just a few months' time, the latest being Nathan Burks and Antoine Valdetero. The similarities between these two are worth noting.

They were almost the same age at death. Both had served in the military. They received much of their training for ministry in Louisville. In addition to preaching they both had professional careers. They were gifted in working with young people in school, camp and church. Both were blessed with faithful mates who supported them in ministry.

They were active in serving the Lord right up to their death. Interestingly, both suffered from and died because of cancer. Val battled the disease for years while Nathan died just a few days after diagnosis. Thankfully they were prepared, because "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." They walked the same valley as the Psalmist and could say with him, "I shall fear no evil." To their mates and families we extend our sympathy, and with them long for the day when "death shall be no more" and that "Blessed Hope" will become a reality.

## Nathan Burks and His Ministry

James (Jim) Rowe, Nathan's brother-in-love

While working at GE Appliances during the late 50's and early 60's, Nathan was called upon to do some fill-in preaching for a few months at two different Christian Churches. (See last month's W&W.)

Some time after that, Nathan was called to preach at the Jeffersontown Church of Christ following the death of their minister, John

Pound. Nathan was ordained into the ministry during a special service at the 5<sup>th</sup> & M Street church with the special closing song, "So Send I You," being the challenge given him. Nate served at Jeffersontown for some time while still working at GE. The congregation grew during this time, and special emphasis was placed upon choral singing.

The leading of the Lord seemed to be apparent that Nathan should devote his full time efforts to the Lord's work, and he was called to teach at Portland Christian School. He resigned his position at GE and began his joint efforts in teaching at PCS and ministering at Jeffersontown (driving the bus from Jeffersontown to PCS on a daily basis). The Jeffersontown congregation seemed to be a gathering place for many that had attended the old 5<sup>th</sup> & M Street Church that had closed several years earlier. This allowed the renewal of many old friendships that had begun many years before.

During his ministry at Jeffersontown, the congregation continued to grow to the extent that the small building was obviously inadequate. Efforts began to find property and design a building that would better serve the congregation. Specific plans were to have land enough to support a Christian School. The property containing almost 18 acres located on Taylorsville Road south of Jeffersontown became available and was purchased. A new building was designed, financing arranged (with much difficulty), construction completed and the old building was sold. The congregation moved into the new facility in the spring of 1978.

Within two to three years after relocating, the congregation experienced organization and leadership struggles. That resulted in Nathan being dismissed as minister, and a large nucleus leaving the Jeffersontown congregation. This nucleus decided to continue in fellowship, hiring Nathan as the minister, and assumed the name of the Southeast Church of Christ. This congregation met in rented property for a number of years, continuing to grow to near 200 in regular attendance.

In the mid-80's, the leadership of the Southeast congregation was encouraged by Bob Russell to merge with the Gardenvue Christian Church that had acquired the Jeffersontown Church of Christ building. This merger was finalized, placing the Southeast congregation back into the building they had been forced from some years earlier.

After relocating to this facility, the congregation experienced substantial growth and it became apparent that Nathan needed to devote full time to the Southeast congregation. He resigned his teaching position, and became their fulltime minister. The congregation grew

to something over 200 persons, and again, much emphasis was placed on music. The Southeast choir had a membership of about 40 persons, taking two trips into Louisiana and accepting invitations to sing at multiple revival meetings and other special events. They were privileged to sing at the North American Christian Convention at Freedom Hall and also several Baptist Church revival meetings. (The leadership at the Southeast congregation chose to accept every opportunity possible for proclaiming the message of Christ either in spoken word or song.)

Nathan chose to retire from his position at Southeast in July 1996, and devoted much of his time thereafter in supply preaching whenever invited. After his retirement from Southeast Nate served in an un-official position of helping congregations find persons to fill their pulpits. He also served on the Louisville Christian Fellowship Committee and maintained a list of leaders in the Churches of Christ throughout the southeast United States.

## **A Diligent and Loving Leader**

Bob and Mary Ann Williams

Nathan was a shepherd who loved the flock at Southeast Church of Christ. He was truly concerned about each one and was always available whatever the need. One thing in particular comes to mind. If you missed Sunday morning service, you could be sure you would receive a call from Nathan the following week, and he would send a note with a copy of the Sunday bulletin in the mail. Nathan wanted to make sure you didn't miss anything that was going on with the church family. [Bob was an elder at Southeast/ Living Stone]

### **“Loved God’s People . . . A Passion for the Lost”**

Taken from Harry Coultas’ remarks at the funeral

Bro. Nathan Burks, son of N. Wilson and Edna (Smyth) Burks, and husband of Joann (Speckman) Burks was born July 20, 1931 and passed from this life January 10, 2007 to be with his Savior, whom he loved and served.

Bro. Nathan served in the U. S. Navy during the Korean War, and was employed by General Electric in Louisville for 20 years....

Following his retirement [from pastoral ministry] he served as "fill-in" minister to churches in the brotherhood, the last of which was the Bohon Church of Christ. At his death, he was a board

member and treasurer of the School of Biblical Studies that meets at the Buechel Church of Christ.

Bro. Nathan loved God's people and had a passion for the lost. While serving as an evangelist he went to Turkey Creek, La. for several gospel meetings. In the fall of 1998 while he was there 24 people responded to the Lord's invitation. Several came to rededicate their hearts to the Lord and some came to accept and obey Christ in baptism.

In December 2006, Bro. Burks was diagnosed with cancer in the brain. The cancer plus pneumonia with complications caused his passing. As I remembered Nathan's passing I thought of what the Apostle Paul said regarding King David: "For David, after he had in his generation served the council of God, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers..." Bro. Nathan was living for, looking for, and loving the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. In closing, note well **What Cancer Cannot Do:**

Cancer is so limited it cannot:  
Cripple love,  
Shatter hope,  
Corrode faith,  
Eat away peace,  
Destroy confidence,  
Kill friendship,  
Shut out memories,  
Silence courage,  
Reduce eternal life,  
Invade the soul,  
Quench the Spirit or  
Lessen the power of the resurrection!

*Antoine Valdetero –*

**“Consumed with Winning People to Christ”**

A. J. Istre

Val and I go back to the early days of Kentucky Bible College and even earlier. He grew up on a farm near Crowley, in southwestern Louisiana, and I grew up in Jennings, about 18 miles away. The "mother" church was started by Stanford Chambers in Estherwood which is about half way between Crowley and Jennings.

Val's mother, a godly woman in every way, was widowed while he was quite young. His father died of a ruptured appendix. One sister and several brothers were held together by this great woman and raised on a small farm—raised to know the Lord. This was during the depression years of the late twenties and early thirties. Perhaps because of these early experiences Val was a very frugal man when it came to money. He taught book-keeping in Jennings High School for many years and was honored with a Teacher of the Year recognition one year.

I have never known a man who was so consumed with winning people to Christ Jesus. In the middle to late fifties the Jennings church bought a tent for Earl Mullins to use in evangelistic meetings in towns where there was no New Testament church. Earl asked Val, Stan Broussard and me to join him. Meetings were held in the summer months when Val was not teaching in school. Others who sometimes joined us in this preaching effort were Mac and Lowell Ledoux, and Neal Phillips. We would take turns preaching from night to night. God blessed with several people being saved and we were able to plant two churches. There were a number of humorous times. Once, at a little place called Upper Pine Prairie, Val was preaching and a bug flew into his mouth. With all the coughing and spitting and gagging that went on, you would have thought he would surely die. But he recovered and went on preaching. And that night two adults, a husband and wife of the Catholic faith, responded to the invitation to come to Christ Jesus.

At that same place Val would bring a small fan to blow air on himself at night (we slept on the floor of a small building at the rear of the tent) to help keep the mosquitoes off. After Val would fall asleep Stan would get up and direct the fan upon himself. Stan was an early riser so he would get up early and put the fan back on Val. Val would awaken a little later grumbling about that fan not doing a very good job. We had many good laughs together.

In his later years Val became a strong worker in getting the two churches in Jennings together. One is instrumental and one is not. With the coming of Jack Harris to First Church Val found a man of like mindedness and together they have been used of God to bring the two groups together in many ways.

Val was a giant when it came to knowing Scripture and he gladly shared it with all who wanted to know its truths. He loved to study and teach prophecy. He was helping Paul Estes in Jennings on Wednesday night at the last. He taught the Wednesday night before he went home to be with the Lord he loved and served.

I loved Val dearly. We did not always agree on things but we did always love each other. We learned to lean upon each other as we leaned upon Christ Jesus together. Heaven gets richer and richer for me.

## **The Significance of a Godly Life**

Jack D. Harris

A verse of Scripture that described the phenomenal movement among men called "Promise Keepers" reads as follows:

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." (Prov. 27:17.) Quite often, when a person is seen to choose a course to improve the quality of his life, it is the result of another person's example of integrity. In recent days, a person was laid to rest of whom it could rightly be said that his life served to sharpen a large number of lives. His personal dedication to Jesus Christ had so transformed his heart that for more than half a century, he gave himself to the overall improvement of the lives of others.

Bro. Antoine Valdetero has entered the presence of the Lord, whom he so dearly loved and so faithfully served. Prior to his departure, many of his family and friends sat by his bedside, sometimes reading Scripture to him, sometimes singing softly and sometimes praying. On rare occasions, he would rally for a few seconds, but then, he quickly drifted away again.

In 1991, when Bro. Val had his first biopsy at the local hospital in Jennings, I sat with Jean when the doctor informed us that he had found cancer in his lung. This resulted in his having to go to the hospital for surgery. On the day of his operation, the surgeon informed those of us who were there, that if Val had been any weaker, he would not have continued the surgery. His left lung was removed.

All of us who were present that day gathered in the small hospital chapel and Bro. Stan Broussard led in an intercessory prayer. One week later, Bro. Val was released from the hospital. For fifteen more years, God enabled him to serve. During the past three years, he has lived constantly under the pending certainty of his death. Rather than being depressed to the point of grief, he kept pushing himself to live a normal life. Up until the month of January of 2007, he continued to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. He refused to quit even though he had to sit in a chair to preach.

Bro. Val was a faithful minister of God's Word for some 54 years, during which time, he influenced countless individuals in a

positive way. Of the many thousand sermons that he preached, the 89 weddings he conducted and the 310 funerals he officiated, not to speak of the Christian camps and the 210 revivals he held, only God knows how much good was accomplished through the life of this humble servant.

Many times in recent days individuals mentioned that Bro. Val shared with them some word of encouragement, advice or concern that made a big difference in their lives. In most every case, that comment was spoken by men or women who had sat in his classes as students at the Jennings High School. He taught over a period of twenty-four years and all during this time, influenced those who sat in his classes by his consistent example of guidance and concern.

He was deeply affected when he lost his first wife in death and then, his oldest son David, and then later, his son Billy, but in spite of these trials, his faith remained strong. When he faced his first encounter with cancer, he simply committed himself to God more fully, and then, more recently, throughout his three year battle with this last malignancy, he refused to give up. He certainly was not a quitter! Even with his own personal battles, he continued preaching, counseling and encouraging others. Bro. Val was always there to lend support and offer assistance.

It goes without saying that preaching the Gospel of Christ was one of his greatest delights. It would only be second to his joy in seeing a person turn his life over to Christ and enter the family of God. Over the years from 1951, his first baptism, until 2003, his last baptism of someone into Christ, he immersed some 475 individuals in Christian baptism.

I first met him in 1968 in Jennings. Then in August of 1982, my wife and I visited Jennings and spoke for the First Church of Christ. As soon as Bro. Val found out that we were here, he came and visited with us. Later, in November of that year, we moved to Jennings, and he was one of the first to welcome us. Over the years, we have shared many wonderful experiences together. Often, he was the one I confided in when I was facing some tense moments, and on occasion, he would turn to me when he was troubled about something.

Bro. Val officiated at the wedding of our youngest daughter. Then, when he and his wife, Jean, celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, they honored me by asking that I officiate at the renewal of their vows.

A matter that greatly concerned each of us, as well as some others, was the need to have available for those who may be interested, some kind of training program for a deeper spiritual growth. As this was discussed and prayed about, Bro. A. J. Istre, Bro. Kenneth Is-

tre, Bro. Val and I launched the Acadian Christian Workers' Clinic. This was an attempt to present an in-depth study of God's Word to individuals living in the area. For several years we continued this during the months of February and March, meeting weekly for a period of two hours. As the classes were held, several ministers, representatives of both the a-cappella and the instrumental Churches of Christ and Christian Churches, served as instructors.

One of the deep convictions of Bro. Val, was that uppermost in our Christian faith is the amazing Grace of God. Rather than attempting to win people to a legalistic system that was politically correct for those who may hold such a system in high regard, Bro. Val was more interested in winning individuals to the Lord Jesus Christ. He made it clear in his public life as well as his private life, that God's people are bound together by the indwelling Spirit of God rather than agreement on certain opinions or preferences.

The hope of Jesus' return was the unailing anchor that sustained him. He never failed to encourage others to be anchored by this same hope. Another of his primary concerns was to see unity among the scattered congregations of believers. He labored to break down barriers, to build bridges and to bring others to an appreciation of the Grace of God.

To a great number of us, Bro. Val was one of the closest and most encouraging friends we have had in our lives. The times that he was there with just the right word when someone needed to hear it are without number. We will not soon forget the times we spent in prayer together. More than a few ministers considered him "a pastor to the pastors."

Although he is no longer with us in body, the legacy he left will remain vividly in our hearts and minds. As one whose life was constantly "sharpened" by the iron of this dear brother, I am deeply grateful to God for having known such a dear friend. Thank God for a life well lived.

--Condensed from the Jennings newspaper

## Enthusiasm

Alex Wilson

"Eagerness, fervor, gusto, passion, zeal, zest." Those words are listed in my thesaurus as synonyms for enthusiasm. And when I hear the words "Brother Val," I think "enthusiasm." That word may be more appropriate than you know, for it derives from two words, *en* and *theos*, which mean "in God" or "full of God." That fits.

I first met Val when he came to study God's word in Louisville, under R. H. Boll and other teachers at K.B.C. I was in junior high school, I believe, when Val became the youth worker at Portland Church. His excitement as a child of the King was contagious and led to a deeper commitment to Him.

Someone mentioned years ago about being at the Youth Encampment in Louisiana. Val was to speak that night. It was still early and only a few folks had gathered in the chapel when he arrived. But as he entered and walked down the aisle, he said "Oh, I love to preach; I love to preach. I *love* to preach the word of God!" That was typical, and not "put on" at all. And while all his preaching was good, he told me once that he felt expository sermons were the most valuable (I agree). So he loved to unfold and apply at least several verses or a paragraph or even a whole chapter of Scripture. He enjoyed other men's sermons too, and read widely--not just from teachers in our branch of the tree.

He had a zest for spiritual unity too. Years ago in Jennings, upon first meeting Jack Harris, the newly arrived Christian Church minister--Val shook his hand and said, "Glad to meet you; you're my brother in Christ!" Till that time *nobody* from a Church of Christ had *ever* called Jack a brother--or treated him as even a *cousin* in Christ! In the following years those congregations plus some others conducted the joint-effort Christian workers' training clinic mentioned above by Brother Harris.

Thank You, Lord, for our brother Val.

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## Some Powerful Thoughts on UNITY

"Nothing should separate us from each other unless it is something that separates us from God." --G. C. Brewer (an outstanding preacher among Churches of Christ in the early and mid-1900s)

### **Don Carlos Janes, "My Contribution Toward Unity,"**

--*Word & Work*, December 1937

I will accept my personal responsibility and obligation to help answer our Lord's prayer for the unity of all who believe on Him.

I will not accept any extra-scriptural authority of any sort, nor receive any human creeds of any kind, whether oral or written, expressed or implied, but will gladly cooperate with all followers of

Christ so far as they desire and circumstances may permit, seeking always to manifest the spirit of Christ, without whom no one belongs to Him.

I will give up anything except the Word of God, to further Christian unity.

I shall not forget that it is only by the grace of God that even friends can long abide in undisturbed unity.

I will see to it that honest differences on non-vital matters shall be no bar to fellowship.

On disputed matters, I will give very respectful consideration to the other side, and will endeavor to use discretion in case there is an occasion to deal with such matters.

I will endeavor so to conform life, character, and doctrine to the revealed will of God as to make fellowship possible to all who love our Lord Jesus supremely.

I am prepared to forgive all who have trespassed against me, even as I wish to be forgiven, and will no more allow myself to harbor malice in my soul than I will permit myself to carry deadly germs in my pockets.

I am fully persuaded that the unity enjoined in scripture teaching is not an exact intellectual agreement on every item of Christian activity, for Christians do not all have an even start; do not all have equal opportunities; do not all apply themselves with equal diligence; nor do they all approach perfection at the same rate.

I see, therefore, that love and forbearance must be exercised for Jesus' sake and also for the desired end of a practical, working unity.

I am mindful of my own serious imperfections, and while standing steadfastly for my conscientious convictions, I shall not be too eager to bring the whole church to my conception of the ideal state, for that would mean the adoption of some error somewhere--unless I am a perfect exponent of scripture, which no one believes.

God help us all to be more Christlike that we may be one in Him.

(The above article was sent out recently by Don Haymes, who himself has worked long and hard for unity among Christ's people.)

# VOICES from the FIELDS

Tim and Dawn Yates + Lauren, Leah & Anna  
Charlestown, Australia

*[Greatly condensed and adapted from their 2006 End-of-Year Report. Note the unity emphasis here too.]*

2006 was one of our busiest years yet. Our search for a new home began upon our return from Furlough in 2005. But we were never at peace with anything we looked at. Even the very few times we became keenly interested in a house, something would always happen to close the door. But we believe it was God closing the door on the areas we were looking in. He obviously had something else in mind.

That's when we began looking further out of town. We came across a new subdivision being built about 20 minutes from Charlestown. The City Council had approved plans to build 3000 new homes in this area to expand the residential area westward. Even more impressive to us was the glaring lack of churches or church activity in this area. The light bulb was going off in our heads. Then in the weeks to come, the Council announced that instead of 3000 new homes, there were to be more like 5000 new homes.

Early in the year I met with the elders of the Charlestown Church of Christ to discuss our future with the congregation. While I explained that we would be moving on to a new ministry, I also revealed that we were more than willing to make it a gradual transition, giving the church till the end of our current term in Australia to find another minister (about 2 • years from January '06). They accepted this warmly and with gratitude to the many individuals and churches in America that had helped them so much over the years.

Plans began to take shape in that elders meeting that would carry us through 2006 with a sense of urgency in calling a new minister. By March, the church was setting aside the equivalent of two days of pay to get used to the financial impact of employing a new minister. The plan was to gradually move to three days, then four, etc., until by the time we were moving on, the church was more than capable of employing their own minister.

Providing the finances for a new minister is only part of the story, though. As many churches can sympathize, there still needs to be a suitable candidate to hire. It is particularly difficult in a nation that has very few training institutes.

In May I traveled to New Zealand, for we had heard many positive things about the South Pacific Bible College, a non-instrumental college there. From the reports we had from others, and the experience we had at the college, they and the students seemed very open to working with “instrumental” churches. But out of only about a dozen students I could find none suitable to interview for the position at Charlestown. Most were not even near the end of their studies.

So the quest for a new minister continues. We have several men who are capable of preaching so the prospect of waiting a bit longer doesn't seem to be a worry. Many have suggested that we find someone from America, but most of our local leaders feel that this would be a move “sideways” rather than “forward.” There is a keen sense amongst all of us that the Lord might want an Australian minister here. Please pray with us that whoever is found, it would be what the Lord wants.

In August, several of us from Charlestown traveled down to Sydney to partake in a joint meeting between the non-instrumental Churches of Christ, the former International Church of Christ, and the instrumental Church of Christ (Christian). There were two American speakers invited to the event, Marvin Philips from the non-instrumental churches and Kerry Allen from the instrumental churches.

This was a ground-breaking meeting in Australia. There have been joint-meetings in the past, but never to this extent and with such reference to real, working relationships among the churches. Much of the momentum of what has happened in the U.S. has carried over to Australia and other countries around the world. Already there has been cooperation between our groups for the purpose of education and church planting. Please pray for us and the others as we continue to look for positive ways to work together for the Lord's Church.

Progress at the church during 2006 steadily increased in almost all areas. Our church service attendance and offerings were both the highest average of any year since we've been in Australia, which supports the vision of calling a minister to the church.

The youth programs of the church have continued to be the catalyst for church-wide growth. In January, a new Sunday school program called “Kidzone” was introduced on Sunday afternoons, rather than mornings, and the increase in attendance surpassed the previous year. Sunday mornings are increasingly viewed as “family-time” in Australia. Most non-Christian families had felt that the timing of our

Sunday school encroached on their family time. Kidzone on Sunday afternoon seems to have been the solution.

High School Youth Group continued as our single most successful program in 2006. Average attendance grew once again to just below 30. The impact of this growth has been phenomenal. Many high school kids are now coming along to the Young Believers discipleship program on Sunday mornings, which is held in our home, and attending church services as well. At least half of them have no other family members attending church.

Through our work with the Youth Group, we learned of a unique opportunity in one of the local high schools in our area. Special Religious Education (SRE) has been a part of the public school curriculum since its institution in Australia. While we have been involved in teaching in the primary schools, we learned that the high school hasn't had SRE for almost 30 years!

Our church spearheaded a combined church effort to re-establish SRE in Whitebridge High School. The Department of Education guidelines make it necessary for the establishment of SRE to be with as many local churches as possible, which was no easy task. Even after we gained the support of local churches, the resistance from non-Christians was dramatic. A few teachers and parents who were known atheists or humanists really created quite an uproar for such a vocal minority. The Lord and the law were on our side, though, and SRE classes were given to a small number of 7th grade students whose parents supported the move.

We're happy to say that by the end of 2006, the administration agreed to allow SRE classes for all 7th grade students indicating a Christian religion, over 60% of the entire grade! In a school with over 1200 students, there are over two-hundred students in 7th grade alone. Imagine how many lives can be touched by the Gospel once we have established an SRE program for each year! Keep praying!

# Lessons from the Farm (8)

Bob Yarbrough

I live on a farm. When you live in the country, it is mighty important to have the friendship and help of good neighbors. Sadly, in the suburbs, many folks don't even know their next door neighbor; but I guess that can be true in the country also. I have had some great neighbors.

When we first moved to the country we were as "green" as they come. Spending our entire lives in the suburbs and in the city, we hadn't a clue to the intricacies of country life. Were it not for the Colliers, an elderly couple who lived on the property adjacent ours, we would never have survived. They literally "took us under their wing" and showed us "the ropes" of country living. They, and other neighbors, lent us a hand when we attempted to buy and sell cows, plow the field, put in a garden, raise goats, build a good fence, etc. Neighbors have shown up at our door with bags of tomatoes, canned peaches, bags of special fertilizer for our pecan trees, diesel fuel for the tractor, and a host of other things. I could never have built our fences or run the outside water lines without the help of others. I, in turn, have tried to be a good neighbor and do what I could to be a friend and neighbor to those around me.

A "greenhorn" can get himself into trouble rather quickly. Once I was mowing with my brush-hog behind my tractor and I got too close to our pond. I bogged down in mud rather quickly. That is a helpless feeling – unable to go forward or backward – with tractor wheels spinning. Fortunately, my neighbor, Mr. Collier, had a larger tractor and a long chain, so my day and my tractor were saved. I apologized profusely for imposing on his time and equipment, but he just laughed and said that the same thing had happened to him once, and someone helped him out also.

Another time one of my calves got out, but another neighbor, Mr. Brown, knew a few "tricks of the trade" and soon the calf was back in the pasture. You know that one just cannot ask a cow to come back inside the fence and it automatically happens. Once our horse got out and ran away after a terrible thunder storm. A mile away, a neighbor found him, penned him up, and called the sheriff and the local feed store. We learned that we should inquire from these two sources and, sure enough, the horse was located and returned. We could not make it without good neighbors. We need each other.

These events, and many more just like them, have caused me to have a new appreciation for the Apostle Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 12:12-27. Please read it again. We need each other, and that is one of the major truths in these verses. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is one body even though it is made up of many parts. By design, God has placed diversity within the body of Christ. Even though the body is one, unity without diversity produces uniformity, and uniformity tends to produce death. This helps explain why some churches and some Christian ministries weaken and ultimately die--there is not sufficient diversity to help preserve the unity of the body.

But, if diversity is not kept under control, chaos and anarchy result. That is why the maturity of faith, hope, and especially love follow strategically in I Corinthians 13. I shudder to think what my part of the county would be like if everyone living out here were greenhorns like me. There would be a whole lot of "left feet." So Paul uses the human body to illustrate truths about the body of Christ in these verses of I Corinthians.

The human body as well as the body of Christ needs different functions if it is to live, grow and serve. With Christ as the head of the body, the entire body is "joined and held together by every supporting ligament, and it grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph. 4:16). What a great truth – the body helps the body grow. I suppose I could learn to walk on my hands, but my feet are more suited for that purpose, so I use my feet. What a blessing that we don't have to smell with our little finger! Each part of our body, each organ, has an important ministry. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to sensationalize certain gifts and place them in the limelight. Paul refutes this idea by helping us understand that diversity does not equate to inferiority. Each member of the body is important to the whole. Praise God for the invalid who prays fervently for the Lord's work. In God's eyes she is just as valuable and important as the missionary in a distant land, or the senior pastor of a large congregation.

In a healthy human body as well as in a healthy church, the various members work in cooperation with each other – even to the point of compensating for each other in times of crisis. On my farm, I found that I had to rely on the skill and expertise of others, and I was very thankful for others who could help me out from time to time. I would have been foolish to refuse their help. Likewise, the instant that one member says to another member, "I don't need you," he begins to weaken and die spiritually. In addition, it also creates problems for the whole body. Diversity is evidence of the wisdom of God, but perhaps the hardest attitude we must harness within diversity is humility. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

Honor one another above yourselves” (Rom. 12:10). God’s desire is that there be no divisions within the body of Christ, but unfortunately disunity occurs when members compete with one another. It is only when we care for one another that unity can exist. When we function according to God’s will for our lives, we help other members to function as well. “If one part (*of the body*) suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (I Cor. 12:26).

It should be of genuine interest to all believers that God is the one who bestows the gifts and assigns the offices (I Cor. 12:27-28). He is the One who has the plan, not only for the local church, but for the universal church. As the head of the body, the command of Jesus is that love prevails among the members (John 15:12). This was the force which would maintain unity within the diversity of the body of Christ. Just as farm life necessitates cooperation among the neighbors in a rural community, so diversity is the wonderful design of God to produce a mutual dependence among the members of the body of Christ. The abundance of the phrase “*one another*” in scripture is no accident. Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 begs the question, “Who is my neighbor?” Who is yours? You might be surprised!

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## The *NORMAL* Christian Life

Alex V. Wilson

How would you define “Normal Christianity”? Here’s my attempt: New Testament beliefs, practices, attitudes, and power—lived out. What does that mean? Here are two examples from church history, to extend our vision and deepen our thirst. Church history is valuable for us in this matter, because many times the examples given in Acts and the teachings of the epistles fail to challenge us as they should. This is because we subconsciously feel, “Oh well, that’s the way things were back, then, but we can’t expect God to work like that *now*.” And so we act as though for all practical purposes God retired from business many centuries ago! (Of course we’d never say it that way.) But church history clearly shows that such a view is mistaken. Let’s see:

In the early 1700s, religious persecution was intensely bitter in Europe. Your job, property, even your life might be taken if you didn’t belong to “the right church.” The right church usually was whichever one your king happened to belong to. Several hundred Christians from various places, all fleeing from such persecution, sought protection by coming to live on the estate of a wealthy Chris-

tian nobleman, Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf of Moravia. Some of these refugees followed Luther's teachings, others Calvin's, but most of them were followers of the reformer John Huss, who had been martyred back in the 1400s. They all loved Christ and the Bible, but as a result of their different church and doctrinal backgrounds, arguing and bitterness and name-calling soon raged throughout the group. Protected now from outside danger, there was "war" within the camp!

Because of this bitter enmity, the more spiritual members began praying desperately for God to overrule. Count Zinzendorf then interviewed every one of them individually and had each adult enter into a solemn personal covenant with the Lord Jesus. Each agreed to dedicate himself entirely to Christ's service, whatever his particular position and calling might be. The Count then had the group draw up and agree to a "brotherly covenant" -- to emphasize the great truths upon which they *agreed* rather than always and only stressing their differences.

Several days later they assembled around the Lord's Table. They had done this many times before, but this time there came upon them all a deep deep "sense of the nearness of Christ," as Zinzendorf later described it. They had quit judging each other because each one had become convinced of his own unworthiness in God's sight. All bitterness melted away and their hearts were knit together in forgiving love. That meeting lasted for hours, as they overflowed with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But that was just the start. Now that God had some instruments He could use, He planned to use them. Again, prayer paved the way. Yearning for others to know the Lord as they had come to know Him, they spent much time in intercession. Some days later, impressed by the fact that in Old Testament times the fire upon the temple altar was *never* allowed to go out, they started around-the-clock praying. Their prayer meeting lasted more than 100 years! Here's how it went:

Twenty-four of the believers (later many more joined them) divided up the twenty-four hours of the day among themselves by lots, so that by relays prayer without ceasing could be made for the Lord's work in every place. And for over a century, at any time of day or night there was someone in that village interceding before God's throne.

God works when His people pray, and He soon burdened them to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. During the following years evangelists went not only through much of Europe but also to

North and South America, Africa, and Asia -- in a period when such a thing as foreign missions was un-thought of throughout all Christendom. From that one small village community in Moravia, more than 100 missionaries went out in twenty-five years.

That was Normal Christianity: wholehearted devotion to the Lord Jesus; loving unity among themselves; persevering prayer; and the most remarkable missionary vision and activity since the days of the apostles

### A Later Time, A Different Place

But other examples also can be found in church history. In the opening years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century quite a few missionaries were located in Korea (which then was one country, not two). In general they were quite pleased with their work, for according to reports they were winning more converts and establishing more churches than missionaries in either Japan or China. After all, they were *above average*. Around 1905 however, they heard about a mighty revival in India which far surpassed anything they had ever experienced. Thus they realized that though they were above average they were nevertheless *subnormal*. This produced in them a deep hunger of heart, resulting in burdened prayer for revival. They prayed for months, and found out--as often happens when people pray seriously--that there were some things in their own lives which needed changing. When they humbly began to straighten out those matters, God began working among them in mighty power.

In very many places overwhelming conviction of sin accompanied the preaching, resulting in large numbers of conversions--in some districts by the hundreds. New congregations sprang up by the dozens, month after month, sometimes in places where no missionary had ever been. One urban church, for example, during 1907 reproduced five other churches in nearby rural areas, yet grew in numbers itself at the same time. But numerical growth alone is no foolproof indication that a movement is a work of God, for some false cults also show amazing growth. So we must look at other characteristics of this revival.

The transformed character of many of the people was noteworthy. In one place many unbelievers were heard to say, "A new Jesus has come to our city." This was because many of the professing Christians had for years been cheating and quarreling with their neighbors; some of them also beat their wives. But this "new Jesus" was making those people confess their sins publicly and afterwards apologize to their heathen neighbors and make restitution when it was owed. Men even apologized to their wives, a thing unheard of in Korea!

Love for the Bible and for prayer were outstanding characteristics. It was very difficult to hold enough Bible classes to satisfy the desire of the people. It was not at all unusual to see Christians carrying their Bibles with them wherever they went, to study during their spare moments, and a great deal of memorizing was done. Also it became the customary thing throughout the churches for the people--large numbers, not just a handful--to gather for prayer meeting early in the morning before going to the day's tasks. This was the regular practice, not an exceptional thing. The practice of family devotions was so widespread that any Christian man who did not hold family worship every day ran the risk of getting a strict talking to from the elders. To neglect it was considered a sure sign of backsliding.

The Korean Christians gave sacrificially to the Lord's work. One missionary told a visitor, "I don't dare mention money to these people, because they are giving too much now"! (Preachers, have you ever had that problem?) Daily witnessing for Christ, both privately and publicly, was common too. Many Christians used their vacation time to visit and evangelize needy regions. Willingness to endure persecution was another characteristic of this revival, for some Christians were fiercely opposed by their clan and in a few cases the ruling Japanese officials used Christians as scapegoats.

From the six or eight characteristics of this movement that we have mentioned, it is easy to see that they were experiencing the Normal Christian Life. And if God did it *there and then* (for it is *His* working that produces such Life), why can't He do it *here and now*? The revivals both in Moravia and in Korea came about when some Christians became thoroughly dissatisfied with their present condition, and began with great yearning of heart to repent of their sins and to pray for God to work among them in His supernatural power. Cannot we do the same?

I do not want to overdraw the picture: God has used us and in His grace is using us now—to some extent. Also, certainly we realize that the Moravian and Korean Christians were not by any means perfect. They, along with the first century disciples, had some weaknesses, problems, and sins. Yet, taking all of these facts into consideration, is it not true that there remains a *great gap* between their level of spiritual vigor and ours, so that the two are hardly comparable? God's "mercy-drops 'round us are falling," but do we not desperately need the full "showers of blessing"? Oh God, make us Normal Christians!

# A Major Shift

by Gene Shelburne

"I grew up in a small church about like yours," a Christian physician told me recently. He then smiled and confided to me that the hustle and hassle of the mega church he and his wife have belonged to for several years were beginning to make him feel tired. Maybe his words were more a comment on his graying hair than on that good church's program.

The pendulum does seem to be swinging from the Walmart-type super church popular in past decades. Many of today's young adults prefer a more intimate, personal setting where everybody knows everybody.

Some church-growth gurus think they see a shift in process. The title of a recent *Christian Standard* article by Steve Wyatt, for example, announced, "The Wave of Change Is Coming."

"Perhaps the biggest difference," Wyatt writes, "is the emerging generation's preference for something different than the one-stop shopping the baby boomer preferred. The mega-church is slowly but surely being passed over by the younger crowd in favor of a sort of specialty shop approach. Like the corner coffee shop, the new church of choice is a place not nearly so all-encompassing. It's a ministry of far more intimacy, in a highly interactive environment, where those who are involved can enjoy a life-on-life encounter with those who are called to shepherd them."

In my own experience, it's not just the new wave of adults whose tastes in church are changing. I also hear retired folks sighing with contentment when they venture back into a church not unlike the small town congregation they grew up in. With a satisfied smile they tell me, "I feel like I'm home again."

Do you know that 90 percent of the churches in America have fewer than 200 members? This figure has not changed much even in the boom decades of the mega-church.

Perhaps this just means that a lot of us simply don't know how to grow a church. Maybe it reflects the concentration of Christians who still inhabit rural America. Or it just might tell us that the majority of believers have always preferred a church where everybody knows their first name.

--*The Christian Appeal*, June, 2006

# Some Modern Sauls-turned-Pauls

## *God Catches 2 Russian Atheists*

“Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, grew up under its atheistic Communist regime. But God got his attention one dreary day. He recalls, ‘In my 27th year, while riding the metro in Leningrad I was overcome by a despair so great’ that life seemed to have no meaning at all. ‘Suddenly, all by itself, a phrase appeared: **Without God life makes no sense.** Repeating it in astonishment, I... got out of the metro and walked into God’s light.’” –Rick Warren in *The Purpose-Driven Life*

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Tatiana Goricheva is a Soviet dissident who emigrated West. Her transformation at age 26 was the explicitly miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. She was raised in an atheistic culture by rather ordinary non-believing parents. She went on to become an outstanding philosophy student, the pride of a Marxist society. Predictably, she was still unsatisfied.

“I was on a journey from nowhere to nowhere: I had no roots and would go into an empty, meaningless future.” After never saying a prayer in her entire life, she ran across the Lord’s Prayer in a yoga book and began to say it as a mantra. [i.e., a mystical formula which occultists repeat when seeking to enter deeper levels of reality]. “I said it about six times, and then I was suddenly turned inside out. I understood—not with my ridiculous understanding, but with my whole being that he exists. He, the living, personal God, who loves me and all creatures, who has created the world, who became a human being out of love, the crucified and risen God.”

...She describes a vibrant Soviet Christian community, growing not despite persecution, but often because of it. [Note the date this was written.] “It is a pity that the West does not understand the value of suffering, its power to renew and purge. The experience of the persecuted Russian Church says to us quite clearly that suffering for God does not take us away from him, but on the contrary brings us nearer to him.”

–*Christianity Today*, Feb. 19, 1988.

# *Church Discipline*

Edward Fudge in GracEmail

*A gracEmail subscriber in Europe asks about the purpose and practice of church discipline. Is it ever proper to exclude someone from the faith community? If so, when?*

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Because Christian fellowship and hospitality are so meaningful to believers, it is a very significant matter to exclude a professing disciple from the Christian "family circle." But sometimes it must be done. The person who is equipped to carry out church discipline effectively -- and hopefully to restore the wayward brother or sister -- is the one who seeks to build up others and not tear them down (2 Cor. 12:19); who grieves at, rather than gloats over, others' wrongs (2 Cor. 12:20-21); who proceeds very cautiously in matters of discipline and acts only on solid grounds (2 Cor. 13:1-2); who is willing to lose face personally if necessary to restore a fellow believer (2 Cor. 13:7-9). Anyone who enjoys meting out "discipline" is probably not qualified spiritually to do it.

The New Testament seems to recognize four situations which call for exclusion from the church family with the goal of repentance and restoration. First, recognition of Jesus as God-in-human-flesh is fundamental to joining the Christian family, and believers must deny Christian fellowship and hospitality to anyone who claims to be a Christian but who does not make that confession (2 John 7-11). Second, because Christian identity requires a commitment to basic morality, a church is to exclude anyone who persists, unrepentantly, in flagrant, notorious immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-2, 7, 9-13).

Third, factiousness (divisiveness) contradicts and destroys Christian fellowship, so Paul warns believers to keep an eye out for (the KJV uses the British idiom "mark") those who cause dissention, and to avoid them (Rom. 16:17-18). Fourth, Paul says to shun a professing Christian who abandons self-discipline and sponges off responsible brothers and sisters who work and earn a living (2 Thes. 3:6-14).

[Additional note by avw: The above is an excellent summary of this matter. I would add Matt. 18:15-16 as another important passage, that gives various steps that might be taken in such situations.]

# NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, BHill40482@aol.com

## How's This For Advertisement?

Following the last Super Bowl interview with the coach of the Indianapolis Colts, Tony Dungy, Jim Nantz of CBS sports: "This is one of those moments, Tony, where there is also social significance in this victory, and to have your hands on the Vince Lombardi Trophy. Tell me what this means to you right now."

Tony Dungy: "I'll tell you what, I'm proud to be representing African-American coaches, to be the first African-American to win this. It means an awful lot to our country. But again, more than anything, I've said it before, Lovie Smith and I, are not only the first African-Americans, but Christian coaches showing that you can win doing it the Lord's way! And we're more proud of that. My relationship, first is with Jesus Christ, and He is the center of my life."

**5th Sunday Singspirations** coming April 29, 2007! The Ebenezer Church of Christ will be the host for Central Kentucky and Graham McKay of Nashville, will be sharing more history of some of our songs. Singing begins at 6:30 p.m. In the Louisville/Indiana area, the Kentucky Ave. Church of Christ will serve as host. Singing begins at 6:00 p.m.

**John McNerney Day**...was observed on Sunday March 4, 2007 with special prayers being offered up for John and Sheila. John is the minister of the Parksville Church and in spite of waiting for a liver transplant, continues with his passion to preach. Many throughout our brotherhood of Churches of

Christ united in prayer for a special time of healing and anointing from the Lord. Why not flood them with a "card shower":

John McNerney (Sheila)  
P.O. Box 55  
Parksville, KY 40161

**Renewal of Animal Sacrifices**...coming to Israel in the near future? A member of the newly formed Jewish Sanhedrin says: "animal sacrifices were not possible when the people of Israel were in the Dispersion, but now they are. The Jerusalem Temple should be rebuilt." (Yaakov Lappin) In ancient Israel and Judea, the Sanhedrin served as the highest court in the land, and was made up of 71 top judges. Now, a group of rabbis say they have reformed the group, although the organization has received no recognition from official religious groups. This group of rabbis intend to educate the people of Israel on how to keep and safeguard the Torah.

**From Athens Greece** comes this report from Emie (Galanis) Paschou: "There have been some changes with my mother (Sophia Galanis). Her health has deteriorated rapidly this past month and I am facing more serious decisions. Unable to stay with a registered nurse, we have brought her home to live with us. She is almost bedridden but manages to get up occasionally and tries to walk around the house. The Neurologist says that she is at the last stage of her disease and he can't raise her medication. Please keep her and our family in your prayers." We wanted to share

this information because many of you have continued to support her financial needs since Bro. George Galanis went home to be with the Lord in 2003.

**Zimbabwe Africa (Robert & Joy Garrett)** are returning to the United States on May 3, 2007 for an 11-month furlough. They would like to visit as many churches as possible who have been prayer and financial supporters. The first 3 months (May, June, July) they intend to visit their children. Bro. Garrett is scheduled to speak on this year's KY-IND Fellowship program doing the exposition daily on Matthew 24.

**Woodland Bible Camp** is gearing up again for their 53rd year of Christian Bible Camp. Last summer was a good year for the camp in that each week showed increased attendance and great spiritual growth. Camp attendance was up 24% from the previous year. There are several needy projects being anticipated for this year and much help is needed.

**Christians Can Disagree Agreeably** Dear Brother Alex, I have wanted to write a few words to you since your article expressing your beliefs on prophetic things. Although I disagree with your conclusions I really respect your right to them. I appreciated your conviction. I thought your writing showed great insight. May our Great God continue to bless you as you continue to serve Him Whom we love and trust. I am sure you join me in repeating John's prayer, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." A. J. Istre

avw's comment: I know that Brother Istre's email message was not intended for publication. But it a clear and strong demonstration of how believers can differ with love

and respect. So we want to hold it up as a model for brotherly "debate." And yes, "Maranatha" is our heartfelt prayer. -avw.

**Prayer Focus on Burma, a desperately needy land** "For more than 30 years the country of Burma has suffered internal warfare and military oppression. Burma is one of the world's poorest countries with one of the worst records of human rights violations. Most of the world's heroin comes from Burma while half of the national budget is spent on arms. Despite religious persecution the Church in Burma, estimated at 7% of the population, continues to grow." -From *ChristiaNet*, Feb. 07.

**We can't do this even in U.S. schools!** "Sometime ago *ChristiaNet* reported on Eastern European Mission's goal to raise \$1 million to place Bibles and Biblical literature in the public schools in the Russian state of Omsk. To date more than \$1.7 million has been given for the drive."

**Called to be a Missionary to Russia** Dan Wilson writes a note of encouragement: "Over the last several years Masha (his Russian interpreter) and I have kept in touch with various members of the former Peoria teams [which host Russian students in their homes, and also visit Russia]. We know of several who are planning and studying for careers in missions as the result of their experiences on these trips. Just this past Friday a young man that went with us last year wrote: 'I don't know if you've heard, but I'm going to be majoring in Russian! God is calling me to be a missionary to Russia or some old Soviet republic!' This is very encouraging and one of the reasons we do this! Thank you for your prayers!"

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## Calling Retired Christians

“Seed Thoughts” by J. L. Addams,  
reprinted from decades ago

Surely, there are no “retired” people in the service of the Lord. Naturally, advancing years make changes in our assignments and duties, those daily duties in connection with one’s livelihood, but the child of God is never released from his responsibilities in the work of the Lord. To be sure, he may not be as active about so many as he once was, such as visitation, ministration to the sick or duties requiring physical effort. However, it seems that there might be a great unrealized source of power for God’s cause which is not being used fully by the church or God’s elderly people.

Often some dear old saint is heard to say, “There is not much I can do any more.” But the truth of the matter is that that one could and should be in the position to render service to the Lord in a way not permitted before.

One of the greatest acts of service that can be offered by anyone is that of the ministry of prayer. Someone said regarding Christ: “He gave thirty years to living, three years to public ministry, one gracious act of dying and 1900 years to intercession.” It is true, “He ever lives above for me to intercede.” But, He needs and wants helpers.

Our “senior” members are (or should be) those mature, established Christians. The years of relationship with the Lord should have put them in a special place of power and blessing. What a wonderful opportunity this group has to be that “power” behind the Lord’s work as it is being conducted more actively by those of younger age! How much more time is theirs to spend at God’s throne of grace! How much do many of God’s servants want their prayers!

No, it is not true that there is not much you can do any more. The fact is that you are in a position now to be of the greatest service in the work of the Lord.