

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

SEPTEMBER, 2002

HONEST
Psalm Writers!

HONEST
Psalm Readers?

**28th ANNUAL
CENTRAL LOUISIANA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

November 18 - 21, 2002

Glenmora Church of Christ

Theme: "Jesus Christ, Our All-Sufficient Savior"

MONDAY NIGHT November 18th

7:30 Jesus' Remedy for Troubled Hearts Antoine Valdetero

TUESDAY November 19th

10:00 FAITH is not an option Dale Foster

11:00 JESUS IS GOD--ETERNALLY Paul Kitzmiller

1:15 Transformed Lives: Man Born Blind J. R. Satterfield

7:30 Jesus' Answer for Seeking Hearts Jack Harris

WEDNESDAY November 20th

10:00 THE NEW BIRTH is not an option Bennie Hill

11:00 JESUS IS GOD--ESSENTIALLY Paul Kitzmiller

1:15 Tranformed Lives: Woman at the Well Nathan Burks

7:30 Jesus' Standard for Serving Hearts Julius Hovan

THURSDAY November 21st

10:00 FRUITBEARING is not an option Sonny Childs

11:00 JESUS IS GOD--EQUALLY Paul Kitzmiller

1:15 Transformed Lives:
Peter--from sand to ROCK Robert Johnson

7:30 Jesus' Legacy for Believing Hearts Paul Estes

Sonny Childs will be speaking each evening to the youth ages
10 and up.

Hospitality Chairman: Dennis LeDoux - (318) 748-4243
Glenmora Church of Christ P. O. Box 314 Glenmora, La. 71433

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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The Psalms--

A Rich Goldmine

Alex V. Wilson

The book of Psalms is a fabulous goldmine filled with valuable treasures. Happy is the Christian who digs into the riches of this mine! It is estimated that the New Testament books quote from Old Testament books 283 times, and that 116 of those quotes are from Psalms--that equals 2/5 of them. So we should seek to "Go for the Gold," to mine the precious nuggets of this part of God's word.

The Layout of the Mine

In the Hebrew Bible this book was called the "book of praises." It was Israel's hymnbook; psalms were religious songs sung to accompaniment. The book actually was a compilation of five books (numbers 1-41, 42-72, etc.). The songs themselves were written by a variety of authors over a span of more than 800 years, from Moses (around 1450 B. C., probably) to the days of Judah's deportation to Babylon (586 B.C.).

Seventy-three psalms are called "psalms of David" but some of those he may have compiled rather than authored. Nevertheless he is of course the main psalmist. What a poet and musician he was; read 1 Chron. 23:2-5, 28-32 for details of the choirs and accompanists he trained and equipped to lead the worship of the Lord in the temple. His was the heart not just of a poet and musician however, but of a worshiper who was thrilled by the greatness and mercy of his God.

Clearing away the Obstacles

In mining for precious metals, a lot of obstacles and debris have to be gotten out of the way. The same is true of Psalms. The modern reader may find some of the following obstacles blocking his enjoyment and benefit: 1) Some psalms contain curses against enemies, and/or boasting about the writer's righteousness. This raises big questions. 2) The psalms are poetry! This turns off many people. 3) They contain many figurative expressions, and also references to historic events and geographic locations unfamiliar to many Christians today. This causes obscurity. Various articles this month and next will try to clear away such difficulties.

But perhaps the major barrier to enrichment from Psalms is the feeling, "Life here and now is so different from life there and then. The psalmist's problems are not my problems." For example, the main problem David faced seems to have been men who wanted to kill him. "How many are my foes," he exclaimed in Psalm 3, and went on to mention my evil enemies (Psalm 5); all my enemies (6); my enemies pursue me (7); my wicked enemies (9);

the evil oppress the righteous (10); the evil ambush the righteous (11); etc., etc. Such passages are relevant to troops on active duty perhaps, but seem distant and unreal to most of us.

The contemporary believer's biggest problems are some of the following: deadlines--too much to do...paying my bills...job insecurity ... a negligent husband or nagging wife...disobedient children or a comatose grandparent...cancer...a grouchy boss or lazy employees or foul-minded co-workers...unfulfilled dreams: life seems to be passing you by...loneliness: no close friends or possibly rejection by someone you loved... etc., etc.

But while the two sets of problems--David's and ours--seem vastly different, the gap between the two is not nearly so huge as it appears at first. His enemies may have wielded sharp swords, but your sharp-tongued boss or spouse may be inflicting wounds nearly as deadly. The pain of a runaway son, a drunk dad or a daughter hooked on drugs may be as tormenting as the thrust of a spear.

Most of it boils down to the fact that sometimes we are almost devastated by our circumstances, and the psalmists certainly knew what that was like. For instance, the seeming inactivity of God ("A wake, O Lord! Why do you sleep? Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?" 44:23f.); the growth and strength of evil "How long will the wicked be jubilant? They pour out arrogant words, crush your people, slay the widows," etc. 94) ; the prosperity of the ungodly and numerous trials of the righteous (Psalm 37, 73); loneliness, misunderstanding and scoffing ("Scorn has broken my heart--I looked for sympathy but there was none" 69:20). This sampling of similarities is sufficient to show that the psalms are relevant after all, and that we can learn valuable lessons and valid principles for pleasing God from those ancient poets. "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

Moses never rode in a Mercedes. David's guitar was not electric. Asaph never heard a cassette. Solomon didn't own a VCR nor a fax machine. The Sons of Korah choir never won a Dove award for top hit of the year. Life in their days was different from ours, no doubt about it. Yet those psalmists knew God, struggled against sin, grew from little faith to large faith, rejoiced in hope, learned from their failures, and delighted to praise the Lord more and more and more. We can learn lots from them, if we dig in and go for the gold.

And as we immerse ourselves in Psalms, let's be sure to see our Messiah there. He loved these songs, quoted them often, saw himself in many of them, and lived them out in numerous ways. Ask yourself, "What would this psalm have meant to Jesus as he read it? And in this passage do I find predictions and/or 'types' of his life, love and ministry?" (Study Psa. 69, for instance.) To meditate on these poems of ancient Israel and not find Yeshua there "would be like owning a goldmine and never even knowing it. Let's go for the Gold!

SCREAMING at God!

Psalms 103 and 145 represent a number of psalms that overflow with joy and praise to the Lord. I hope you often feel like David when he wrote them, and that you imitate him by celebrating and acclaiming the Lord's goodness.

On the other hand, in Psalm 88 -- perhaps the most desolate in the hymnbook -- we hear the writer moaning and groaning in agony to the Lord. Do you ever feel that way? It must be okay, at least to a point, for God put it in His book. And there are still other psalms where we hear folks almost *shrieking and howling at God in rage or despair!* Maybe sometimes you feel *that way!* Well, it too must be okay at times -- for it's in His book. There's *Biblical precedent* for it!

Look at some expressions in Psalm 88, that "hopeless" psalm by a man named Heman the Ezrahite. (Nothing definite is known about him apart from this lament.) It starts out well enough, for verse 1 says, "*O LORD, the God who saves me, day and night I cry out before you*" (NIV). Notice the implications of that verse. Heman trusted in the Lord as his Savior -- "the God who saves me." And day and night he prayed to God for deliverance. Can we say that?

Later he repeats these facts: "*I call to you, O LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you*" (v.9). "*I cry to you for help, O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you*" (v.13). Here is a man of faith and great prayerfulness.

But if we examine the rest of the psalm, we keep bumping up against expressions like these: "My soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave.... You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. Your wrath lies heavily upon me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape.... Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me?.... Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me...." And then the last phrase, translated in various ways: "The darkness is my closest friend." Or: "Darkness is my one companion left." Or: "There is only darkness everywhere." (NIV; Jerus.Bib.; LB.)

No wonder a commentator on Psalms says, "No other prayer in the Psalter is quite as desperate as this one...[where] darkness literally has the last word." What's going on here! This man trusts the Lord to save him, and prays to Him constantly, yet the Lord pours out on him His wrath (mentioned twice) and terror? God has rejected him and is hiding from him? That's what the writer says.

But that's false. Heman was **not** rejected, for our covenant God doesn't treat contrite seekers in such a way. Then why did the psalmist pen such

words? Because he **felt** rejected, and thus thought he was telling the truth. But that raises another question: Why did he feel that way if it wasn't so? Let's take a close look at what's going on here.

In verses 8 and 18 we read, "You have *taken from me my closest friends* and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape.... *You have taken my companions and loved ones from me....*" Heman is lonely and feels abandoned by his best friends. And it seems to him that the Lord is responsible for this: "**You** have taken my loved ones from me." God took his companions away, not by death but by making "my friends to loathe me...they have gone away" (LB). They could visit him if they so desired, but they don't want to.

Then in verses 3-6 we notice another theme. "My life draws *near the grave*. I am *counted among those who go down to the pit... I am set apart with the dead...who lie in the grave....* You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths." He feels so near to dying that it's as though he's already been buried, his obit published, and his life forgotten. In his mind he's already become forsaken and lost from memory as though dead and gone -- a nobody. And again he blames God for this: "**You** have put me in the lowest pit."

But closer observation of Heman's words leads to a further important discovery. His condition and the resulting mood are not of recent origin. Extreme emotional depths are an old acquaintance of his, for he seems to have been a lifelong invalid. Note verse 15: *From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death; I have suffered your terrors and am in despair. Your wrath has swept over me....*" Ponder that.

Human Reactions to Life's Knockdowns

Now the big picture has been revealed. As a *sufferer from severe l-i-f-e-l-o-n-g sickness*, whose *friends have abandoned him as his disease grows more repulsive and death draws near*, Heman **felt** total despair and **believed** God was angry at him and responsible for all these afflictions! (Note those two emphasized verbs.) But actually God was not angry at him, for He added this poem of despair and protest to His people's hymnal.

Here's the point: Psalms are human responses to God -- our voicing out our feelings to Him. Since the maturity and growth of one's faith affect his responses, the psalms express different types of reactions to God. In Scripture's hymnal (as well as our modern ones: remember William Cowper wrestling with total gloom?) we find differing levels of courage, faith, love, and commitment. Among these poets we find differing degrees of knowledge and experience of God's truth.

Some psalms won't speak for you, or 'grab' you -- at least right *now* -- due to **circumstances different from yours**. Or due to the fact that you are

behind the psalmist's stage of development. Or due to the fact that you are *ahead* of his stage of development! For God did not use only advanced, fully mature, "victorious" folks to write psalms. For this very reason psalms are very adaptable to us now in our varied needs, joys and experiences.

Since these ideas may be new to some of our readers, let me run them through again -- this time more directly:

Some Psalms express *not* what is true (!)...but what seemed true to the psalmist regarding God and life ... yet was really false!

That preceding sentence may seem dangerously untrue, some sort of new heresy. But it's not. Please re-read it, then we'll look at other examples.

Believers Struggling with Unbelief

For example, note *Psa. 44:23-26*: "*Waken! Rouse yourself! Don't sleep, O Lord! Are we cast off forever? Why do you look the other way? Why do you ignore our sorrows and oppression? We lie face downward in the dust. Rise up, O Lord, and come and help us. Save us by your constant love.*"

Note this psalmist's struggle between believing in the loving God who did great feats in the past (verses 1-3), and yet finding that God now seems inactive and thus un-loving, un-caring ... or else too weak to do anything (verses 9-16). Notice that after accusing the Lord of not caring for them any more, the psalmist concludes by mentioning His constant or unfailing love! He knew that He did care, but appearances seemed to prove the opposite.

But especially notice the following questions, in the light of our statements above: Was God really asleep, looking the other way, ignoring Israel's sorrows, etc.? No, of course not. But He *seemed* to be, and that is what really shook up the psalmist. That is what we meant by saying that some Psalms express not what is true but only what seemed true to the psalmist at that time regarding God and life.

Over and over we read of struggles like that, **believers struggling with unbelief, striving to overcome circumstances that gave the appearance of disproving their faith.** They called to God to wake up, and get up, and do something! Listen:

Psa. 7:6, **Arise, O LORD**, in your anger; **rise up** against the rage of my enemies. **Awake, my God**; decree justice.

Psa. 10:12, **Arise, LORD!** Lift up your hand, O God. **Do not forget** the helpless.

Psa. 59:4-5, I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me. **Arise to help me...!** O LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, **rouse yourself** to punish all the nations....

And notice Psa. 80:2b, 5-6 as rendered in the translation called *The Message*: **Get out of bed -- you've slept long enough! Come on the run before it's too late....** You put us on a diet of tears, bucket after bucket of salty tears to drink. You make us look ridiculous to our friends; our enemies poke fun day after day.

Again, according to my research, at least 4 times psalmists urged the Lord, "Don't forget!" And at least 12 other times they cried out to Him, "God, remember!" Did they really believe that the great God of creation and the covenant could fail to recall His people and their needs? Did they think He was growing senile, with increasing lapses of memory? Of course not. But sometimes they *felt* as if those horrible thoughts were true.

Here we rest our case, for we believe the point is proved. Like us, psalmists were strongly influenced by what *seemed* to be true in their circumstances, and by their *emotional responses*. They held on to their faith, but at the same time they experienced many struggles.

Why Another Translation?

Along these same lines, read the reason given by Eugene Peterson for producing a modern translation of the psalms (and indeed, of the whole Bible). His paraphrase is the one we just quoted from, *The Message*. It's highly stimulating, though as with all paraphrases -- "handle with care." Here is his explanation for adding another translation to the many already available:

As a pastor I was charged with teaching people to pray -- honestly and thoroughly. It was not as easy as I expected.... Faced with the prospect of conversing with a holy God who speaks worlds into being, we have trouble. We feel, "I'm not good enough for this. I'll wait till I clean up my act and prove I'm a decent person." Or we excuse ourselves: "Give me a few months, or years, to practice prayers that are polished enough for such a sacred meeting...."

My usual response to these difficulties is to put the psalms in a person's hand and say, "Go home & pray these. You've got wrong ideas about prayer."

A common response of those who do that is surprise -- they don't expect this kind of thing in the Bible. Then I express surprise at their surprise: "Did you think these would be the prayers of nice people? Did you think their language would be polished and polite?"

Untutored, we tend to think that prayer is what good people do when they are doing their best. It is not. Inexperienced, we suppose that there must be an "insider" language that must be

acquired before God takes our prayers seriously. There is not. **Prayer is the means by which our language becomes honest, true and personal in response to God. We get everything in our lives out in the open before Him.... These are the utterances of men and women passionate for God in moments of anger and praise and lament....** (End of quote)

To illustrate what Peterson means, Listen to this Psalm:

No doubt about it! God is good....But I nearly missed it, missed seeing his goodness.

I was looking the other way, looking up to the people at the top, envying the people who have it made....

Pretentious with arrogance...pampered and overfed, They jeer-- using words to kill; they bully their way with words....

What's going on here? Is God out to lunch? Nobody's tending the store!

The wicked get by with everything; they have it made, piling up riches.

I've been stupid to play by the rules; what has it gotten me?

A long run of bad luck, that's what-- a slap in the face every time I walk in the door....

When I tried to figure it out, all I got was a splitting headache...

Until I entered the sanctuary of God. Then I saw the whole picture:

The slippery road you've put them on, with a final crash in a ditch of delusions.

That's Peterson's paraphrase of Psalm 73. Did you recognize it? Notice carefully the psalmist Asaph's introductory verse, which was also his conclusion. It proves the point we're making: "*No doubt about it! God is good. But I nearly missed it, missed seeing his goodness.*" He was nearly misled by external appearances and internal emotions.

Hearing about that man's doubts and struggles, recorded in that psalm, we know God understands ours too. Seeing the lessons the psalmist learned, we can learn them too -- from his example.

Please don't misunderstand me, or Peterson. I don't mean we should be disrespectful, irreverent or impudent toward the Most High God. I do mean, *You can be real with the Lord: be honest. Tell Him how you really feel, and this helps overcome your anger, bitterness and despair.*

Now listen to King David. We won't reveal what psalm it is till later.

When those thugs try to knife me in the back, make them look foolish.

Frustrate all those who are plotting my downfall.

You put the down-and-out on their feet,
and protect the unprotected from bullies!

Hostile accusers appear out of nowhere, they stand up and badger me.

They pay me back misery for mercy, leaving my soul empty.

When they were sick, I dressed in black; instead of eating, I prayed.

But when I was down they threw a party!

Yahweh, how long are you going to stand there doing nothing?

Save me from their brutalities....

They spend all their time cooking up gossip against those who mind their own business.

They open their mouths in ugly grins, Mocking, "Ha-ha, ha-ha, thought you'd get away with it? We've caught you hands down!"

Don't you see what they're doing, Yahweh? You're not going to let them get by with it, are you?

Not going to walk off without *doing* something, are you?

Please get up--wake up! Tend to my case. My God, my Lord -- my life is on the line.

Don't let them say, "We've chewed him up and spit him out."

Let those who are being hilarious at my expense be made to look ridiculous.

Make them wear donkey's ears; pin them with the donkey's tail....

But those who want the best for me, let them have the last word -- a glad shout! -- and say over and over and over, "Yahweh is great--everything works together for good for his servant."

I'll tell the world how great and good you are, I'll shout Hallelujah all day every day.

[Parts of Psalm 35 from *The Message*]

"I don't have to learn a new lingo!"

A paraphrase of the Bible, like Peterson's or the New Living Translation, should *not* replace the use of the NIV, NASV or RSV. But I believe they are *good supplements* to them. The latter are needed for accuracy, but the others' vivid contemporary expressions make the

Bible "come alive," especially for folks without much Bible background. "Hey, God speaks my language, my everyday talk."

And more important is the lesson, "Hey, I can Pour Out My Bitterness to God." Yes. That was even the title of an article in *W&W* sometime ago. The unknown author said, "Difficulty in prayer exists because people limit their prayers to just 3 kinds: praise, petition (for themselves) and intercession (for others). There is, however, a **4th kind of prayer; the sort that pours out all our troubles to God, and tells Him exactly how we feel....** The Bible is full of men and women who barraged God with all their complaints and hopes and fears, and He doesn't seem to have objected in the least."

All this may sound extreme, even wrong. But the writer of that article gave many quotes from Job to prove his point. And we have seen many examples from Psalms as well. Study this matter carefully, for some of us have found it to be not only an important lesson but more than that: a life-changing discovery.

Friends, we need to talk to the Lord more. Let's ask our Savior, "Lord, teach us to pray." One thing He will probably reply is, "Okay, *pray the Psalms.*"

Why Prayer Grows Tiresome

R. H. Boll

One thing that has made prayer irksome to so many is the strained, unnatural attitude into which we place ourselves when praying. I am not speaking of bodily attitude, but of the spirit. I feel most comfortable in the presence of the friend who understands me; before whom I can be simply myself without fear of being unkindly criticized or misunderstood; who appreciates, sympathizes, thinks and feels with me; and I call him "congenial." There are others in whose company I feel more or less constrained and cramped. I am, in fact, not quite myself when I am in their company, but assume, unintentionally, a more or less artificial attitude. This latter kind of association soon grows wearisome. The fault indeed lies with us in such a case, but the fact remains that we are burdened and bored.

Now here is the strange thing. Most of us when we go to God in prayer, try to force ourselves into an artificial attitude of heart and are, consequently, very glad to get through and done with it. We have an idea that we must be awfully good when speaking to God; and we put on, forgetting the while that God knows us anyhow, and we can't make impressions on Him anyway. If He does not receive me "just as

I am," He would of a certainty not accept me when I am in a false attitude before Him. So it is a great thing for us to take this lesson: You can be just yourself with God, without being in the least cramped or constrained. What were the use of being otherwise? And God appreciates it. He would have us lay our hearts open before Him and show Him our unworthiest thought and tendency, that He may heal us. Go to Him and say: "Lord, I have no claims to make. I ask this and that. In my self-deceit I hardly know when I am sincere, I do not know even now as I pray whether I am wholly sincere; but here is my heart with all its failings, and my help is in Thee alone." Such a plea, when based on the blood of Jesus, is actually infinitely more so than empty profession and vain praise of all that is not from the heart.

PUT SOME SOUL IN YOUR RELIGION

Dennis Crawford

Our restoration movement was born in a flurry of logic, incisive arguments, and clear thinking. There were steps to salvation and separate acts of worship. Now I'm not one to discount logic and clear thinking--and I wouldn't cast a vote for brainless emotionalism. But often, in the secret of my study (a logical place to be), I get this feeling (can I trust it?) that every once in a while we need to go back and touch our emotional roots.

And that's when I turn to the hymn book of the Old Testament--the heart of the Bible--the Psalms. Words that are difficult to translate such as "maskil," "selah" and "miktam" may reach out and do their best to discourage our reading. But when we get past those unfamiliar words and get into the text, we know we're near the heart of someone who speaks our language and has stumbled around in our shoes. The writer talks of faith, joy, fear, trust, praise--even settling with his enemies. Talk about emotion--the Psalms run the gamut of feelings, all the way from ecstatic praise, to faithlessness, to brain-numbing, sit-and-stare-at-the-wall depression.

Yes, God commissioned some faithful (well, mostly faithful) men in the Old Testament to reveal their feelings. Not just the "religious," pure, acceptable feelings, but the ones that churned down deep inside them, the feelings that crept in during those last few minutes before sleep overcame them at night. The result of this inspired heart-bearing is one hundred and fifty poems that say out loud, "It's all right to feel, God accepts you and your 'heart,' too."

The psalmist often voiced unacceptable feelings, such as, "Lord, please destroy my (our) enemies before they destroy me," and, "O, God, break the teeth in their mouths.... Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime." Now there's a couple of verses (58:6-8--and there are many more where they came from) we never ask anyone to memorize and recite in Bible class. No, I don't recommend that you pray like that in the presence of others--but isn't it honest? And who hasn't felt that way, at least for a nanosecond or two?

With his words, the Psalm writer, with his heart turned wrong-side-out, proved he didn't have God in a neat little box. His faith wasn't all logical and cerebral. "I was envious of the wicked.... My faith almost failed." Those aren't feelings you would want to stand up in the middle of Sunday morning worship and express. And okay, even if you've entertained some of those thoughts, you wouldn't write a hymn and use such thoughts for lyrics, would you? Neither would I. But the ancient songwriter did. And by doing this he says, "Look, this is the way people--even faithful people--feel sometimes."

Some feelings are too shocking, raw, unthinkable and personal to admit--we think.

"I cried all night last night, Lord."

"Lord, where are you. Don't you hear my prayers?"

"I'm in such pain. I can feel every bone in my body."

"I have almost lost my faith, and on top of that I envy the wicked."

The book of Psalms is the answer to the question, "Where can I go if I'm suffering from less than Christian thoughts?" The answer? "Take them to God." And if you need a model, let these songs take you on a tour de force of feelings.

Oh yes, there are songs in the Psalms for all seasons. At the other end of the emotional spectrum he says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And he had the audacity to write, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." But as you can see, on his faith-journey he is often on the emotional roller coaster (with occasional rides on the emotional merry-go-round).

Who wrote with such honesty? Such candor?

David wrote many--but not all--of the Psalms. And of all the other writers David was the most qualified to write poetry that touches the twenty-first century heart. In the course of his life, he killed an

over-sized, loud-mouth who hooted at God's army, soothed a half-mad king with his songs, lived an outlaw life with a rag-tag group of misfits, wore the king of Israel's crown, and as if he couldn't stand the success, almost self-destructed after he had gotten to the top. David not only coveted his neighbor's wife, but took her, and then he killed his neighbor (and along the way broke--or seriously bent--most of the Ten Commandments.) To top it off, David suffered gross family problems all the way to the grave due to his adultery, murder and poor judgment.

Yes, David's life was problem-city. But then life is messy--nobody's life comes in neat, sterile packages. If his emotions resonate with ours it's because he wrote about the real world. Our world.

David went from a nobody in a hick town to the palace and then to the pits. But the upside of his problems is this: in the middle of his ups and downs, spiritual detours, and ins and outs he still wrote songs, prayers and poetry to God. Like the country song writer who writes of cheating, pain and brokenness, David picked up his stylus and put life into words. And don't you love him for it?

Oh sure, some may judge him harshly, and we probably wouldn't want to make him a deacon; but David--the Bible says--in spite of it all, was a man after God's own heart. I think that means he wanted to know what was on God's mind so that he could--in his all too human way--follow him more closely. At the same time, as many of the Psalms show, he wasn't ashamed to tell God what was on his mind. Consequently, David's songs are full of heart and emotion.

We can thank God for Paul who could write straight, logical letters such as Romans and Galatians (which, by the way, contain some heart, too). Paul wrote good arguments and used solid logic to explain our salvation to us. But I also thank God for David who could write and pray "out loud."

We, in restoration churches, who approach our faith in logical, rational ways, sometimes skitter out of balance in the head/heart department. We need David's songs and prayers. Yes, in the privacy of our homes, in our prayer closets, we may need to express some of the honest feelings David expressed. That would be okay.

Because we need to think *and* feel.

--From IMAGE Magazine, with permission.

Appreciating Songs, Hymns and Poems-- and thus Psalms

(Part One of a Sermon by the Editor)

It's good for us to think about hymns, poems, psalms, and figurative language in general. Not that all these are equal in value, of course. The Biblical psalms are inspired by the Holy Spirit. But there is a connection between these forms of literature. As we grow in understanding one of them, it can increase our grasp of the others too.

Looking at our Hymnal, *Great Songs of the Church*

This particular hymnbook is divided into two main parts: Gospel Songs (Part 1, #1- 325) & Hymns (Part 2, #326-540)...followed by some special songs, then children's songs and a mixed supplement. In general (there are exceptions) **Gospel songs** have more lively music, and feature a chorus that is sung at the end of every stanza. The words or messages of many of them are testimonies about personal experience -- *God's blessings to me*. For instance, "This is *my story*, this is *my song*: Praising *my Savior* all the day long." Or, "*I was sinking deep in sin...Love lifted me.*" Many others are invitation songs urging the unsaved to flee to Christ as Savior or calling wishy-washy believers to renew their full devotion to Him.

Hymns usually have music that is more stately and majestic (though not necessarily slow and hopefully never sung in a draggy way). Examples include "O Worship the King" and "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee." Their words or messages contain more doctrinal teaching, and stress *God's greatness even apart from His blessings to me* (though such favors are often duly acknowledged). Examples include "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty...Perfect in power, love and purity." Also "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

Both types are important. We need both the more subjective gospel songs and the dignified classic hymns. Plus a third category -- **contemporary choruses** like "Great is the Lord," "Majesty," and "Shine, Jesus, Shine." Whether you prefer to sing type A, B or C, realize that other believers have different preferences. So in our church meetings we should sing a fairly balanced variety of music and songs week by week. If you love *all* the songs sung in your church week by week, it may be because you have a very wide range of likes, which is good. On the other hand it may be due simply to the fact that you and your song-leader share preferences but that other members (of different age-groups) do not like some of them! If that's the case, the "golden rule" should be applied.

Biblical Psalms in our Church Hymnal

Over 126 songs in our songbook are based on or allude to various **Psalms in the Bible**. (If you have *Great Songs*, note the Index of Scriptures given in the back -- the section between #600 and #601. It reveals which songs refer to which passages in the Bible.) Remember, the Book of Psalms was the original *Great Songs of God's People*, Israel's hymnbook.

What About the WORDS of Gospel Songs and Hymns?

Who Wrote Them? Well, John Newton wrote 5 which are in *Great Songs of the Church*-- including "Amazing Grace" and "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds."

And 5 others in the book were penned by T. O. Chisholm. None of his resulted from dramatic experiences, as in Newton's case. He just loved the Lord and expressed that devotion by writing "O to be Like Thee," "Bring Christ Your Broken Life" and others (including "Great is Thy Faithfulness," not in "the blue book"). Our hymnal has 8 by a devoted though often sickly woman, Frances Havergal-- including "Is It for Me, Dear Savior?" and "Lord, Speak to Me that I may Speak." Philip Bliss has 9 songs. He wrote both the words and music to "More Holiness Give Me," and the music only for "It is Well with my Soul."

"Christ the Lord is Risen Today" and 12 other songs by the evangelist Charles Wesley are in our hymnal. He wrote over 7,000 Christian songs in all! Isaac Watts is called the "father" of hymnody in the English language. We all know "Joy to the World," and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"; those and 14 more appear in *Great Songs*. But the blind poetess Fanny Crosby tops them all, writing over 8,000 gospel songs. We have 24 of hers, including "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine," "Jesus, Keep me near the Cross," "Praise Him, Praise Him, Jesus our Blessed Redeemer," "Rescue the Perishing," "When Jesus Comes to Reward His Servants," and "All the Way my Savior Leads Me."

It strengthens us spiritually to know the stories of these writers and their hymns, just as we are blessed by knowing David's circumstances when he wrote some of his psalms. Like much great poetry in general, many hymns were born in the fires of adversity and pain. That's why they speak to us! George Matheson as a young preacher discovered he was gradually turning blind. As a result his fiancée broke up with him. He wrote "O Love that Will Not Let Me Go." During Joseph Scriven's lifetime he was twice engaged to marry, but both times his fiancée died before the marriage. Did he grow bitter? No, he wrote "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." William Cowper was a brilliant poet who for much of his life struggled off and on with mental disorder. His fierce bouts with depression led him to ask, "Where is the blessedness I knew When first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus and His word?" But when in his right mind he trusted in the blood Je-

sus shed for him, declaring that "Sinners plunged beneath that flood Lose all their guilty stains." Also he wrote two classics which many believers have memorized in full, to their great profit. Here are excerpts:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face. [#384]

* * *

'Tis my happiness below,
Not to live without the cross;
But the Savior's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss.

Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there. [#520]

The authors of some hymns are *unknown* to us. "There is a Balm in Gilead" is identified only as an American folk hymn. "Be Thou my Vision" originated in Ireland. "Were You There when they Crucified my Lord?" is an African-American spiritual. "Come, Thou Almighty King" probably was by Charles Wesley, but a question-mark by his name (song 361; the author's name is on the left) shows that nobody is sure. The authors of these and many more songs cannot be identified with certainty. And the same is true of many Psalms in the Bible.

Some hymns have multiple authors. Thomas Moore wrote verses 1-2 of "Come, Ye Disconsolate," but Thomas Hastings wrote the third verse. In our hymnal the writers of "Father of Mercies" are identified as Frederick Faber "et al." (meaning, "and others"). That is probably true of some Biblical psalms as well.

Sometimes the *same tunes or melodies* are used to accompany *different words*: For example, in our hymnal the same tune is used for the hymns "For the Beauty of the Earth" and also "All Things Praise Thee, Lord Most

High." Another example is "How Firm a Foundation," which may be sung to the tune we always use for "O Come, All Ye Faithful."

Sometimes the *same words* may be set to several *different tunes*: We usually sing "How Firm a Foundation" to the tune found at #397 rather than #398 in our book. And when Brother E. L. Jorgenson compiled our hymnal he also included two tunes for "Am I a Soldier of the Cross," and three for "Alas! and did my Savior Bleed," etc.

Hymns contain *Figurative Language* Commonly Used in Poetry

For instance, "Would [Christ] devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?" "All things are ready - Come to the feast!" "I will pour water on him that is thirsty." "Washed in the blood of the Lamb." "Buried with Christ and dead unto sin." Etc. Many of these expressions are actual quotations from the Bible. Think about what they mean. Or ask someone if you can't figure out some of them.

Radio commentator Andy Rooney said that the meaning of hymns doesn't matter, just the feelings they arouse. "For years I've loved the song, "Rock of Ages," but I don't have the foggiest notion what it means." Humbug! That's really sad. He needs to read our following article. But if you are tempted to shy away from Psalms just because they are poems, remember that poetry has power to *touch and move* us. No wonder the Lord put lots of it in the Bible. Note just one modern poem as an instance of figurative *language* that in a few words says a lot.

Great Grace

His grace is great enough to meet the *great things*,
The crashing waves that overwhelm the soul,
The roaring winds that leave us stunned and breathless,
The sudden storms beyond our life's control.

His grace is great enough to meet the small things,
The little pin-prick troubles that annoy,
The insect worries, buzzing and persistent,
The squeaking wheels that grate upon our joy.

--Annie Johnson Flint

If a short poem like that can stir our imagination and encourage our feelings, how much more the poems in God's word? They are not only inspiring but inspired -- by the Holy Spirit. Don't downplay those parts of Scripture which, while addressed to our minds, are even *more* directed to our emotions. The following article may be of value along this line.

UNDERSTANDING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

(Part Two of that Sermon)

Moving on from our hymnal, let's study **figurative language in general, and how to interpret it.** Consider everyday language today: "When he heard the news he was tickled to death." Or, "Aw, that argument won't hold water." Or, "It rained cats and dogs yesterday" (--don't we wish!).

Each language has its own way of expressing things (called idioms). We sometimes say, "It's six of one and half-a-dozen of the other." But in India they say, "It's the difference between twenty and twenty-one." Same idea. We translate Jesus' words in John 14:1 as "Don't let your heart be troubled." But that would be meaningless to the Uduk tribe in Sudan. They translate it, "Don't keep a shiver in your liver." In *How to Understand Your Bible*, Norton Sterrett explains, "Figures of speech are not true in the literal sense. But they are true. They simply express truth in a different way. And it is a more vivid and interesting way.... We translate it automatically in our minds."

Some Biblical Idioms and Figures of Speech

We might call one of them *'denials that really mean less-preferred.'* In Psa. 51:16 David said to the Lord, "You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings." *Wait a minute!* The Lord Himself had established the sacrificial system with its various offerings. See the books of Exodus and Leviticus. He commanded Israel to practice all of them. How did David dare to say that God took no delight in them and thus that he, David, would not offer them?

The solution is found in the following verses: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you...." In other words, The Lord is pleased with external observances only when they are carried out with internal seeking to do right, plus humble contrition when we do wrong. Hypocrites need not apply!

This type of expression is found elsewhere too. In Jer. 7:22-3 God said, "In the day I brought [Israel] from Egypt I did not speak to your fathers or command them about offerings and sacrifices. [There's the denial.] But I said, 'Obey my voice.'" [There's the preference.] Of

course He did command them, as we just mentioned. But what He wanted most of all was glad obedience from the heart.

Too often Israel's attitude resembled the little boy whose mom told him, "Johnny, sit down." Johnny didn't want to, and wouldn't -- in spite of her repeated pleas and orders. Finally she picked him and sat him down with the threat of a spanking if he got up without permission. Johnny defiantly replied, "Mommy, I'm sitting down on the outside but I'm standing up on the inside!" Ah, yes; attitude matters.

"Hate" also may mean not to prefer, or not to choose someone because of your choice of another instead. In Luke 14:26 Christ said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple." The meaning of that exaggerated statement is seen by His words in Matt.10:37- 38, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

Here are somewhat similar cases where *denials don't mean denials but less important things*. In Gen. 45:8 Joseph told his brothers, "It was not you who sent me here [to Egypt as a prisoner], but God." Literally that statement is false, for in verse 5 he admitted they did send him there. But his meaning is clear. It was **not Only, nor Mainly**, his brothers who sent him. It was God's doing too, to fulfill His purpose; and **God's activity was the most important thing**.

Again, in 1 Cor. 1:17 Paul wrote, "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Some people use that statement to try to prove that baptism is not important but only optional. Yet without a doubt Paul knew that Jesus in the Great Commission commanded us to immerse converts. And Paul did baptize some of the converts in Corinth, for he had just mentioned three such people in the preceding verses. Then what did he mean? That while converts should be baptized, it's more important to make sure they understand the good-news that Jesus died and arose so we can be saved. If they don't grasp and believe that gospel, then being put under water doesn't do a thing but get them wet. That's why infants should not be baptized, because they can neither understand nor believe the gospel.

More Samples of Figurative Language

Two common figures of speech are similes and metaphors. At a picnic two people see Carl stuffing himself uncontrollably. One says, "Carl eats like a pig." That is a *simile*; it points out how two things are similar. The other guy just says, "Carl is a pig." That is a *metaphor*, which makes the same point but in a stronger way. The prophet Joel used a metaphor when he said, "The moon shall be turned into

blood.” (From whose veins?) Revelation 6:12, however, uses a simile to explain the same fact more literally: “The moon became as blood” --that is, it looked like blood, it became blood-red.

When the Bible uses **symbolism**, be careful and don't jump to conclusions too soon. For instance, in Scripture what does a lion represent? Correct answers are, Jesus (Rev.5:5), but also Satan! (1 Pet.5:8.) Think about it. Again, a dove in Hosea 7:11 stands for someone who is silly, senseless and easily deceived. But in Matt.10:16 a dove represents a peaceful, gentle person. And in John 1:32 it represents the Holy Spirit himself!

In the book of the O.T. prophet Hosea, dew is mentioned three times, but not always the same way. Israel was an agricultural society, so rain and dew were very important. Thus through His prophet the Lord said, “I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily.” Here dew symbolizes a blessing that produces fertility and abundance. But later He complains, “What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears.” The love for God which they professed was so temporary. Later Hosea warns, “These people...offer human sacrifice and kiss the calf-idols. Therefore they will be like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears.” Like their “love” for God, the people themselves would be short-lived. Soon they would be conquered by Assyria. (Hosea 14:5; 6:4; 13:2-3.) Hosea's three different uses of dew are obvious. Nevertheless they warn us not to think that symbols in Scripture always have the same or even similar meanings.

But, if someone complains to you that they find Bible language confusing or hard to understand, just remind them that we talk about being “tickled to death.” A foreigner might find that perplexing too. Prayerful, persevering study of the Bible -- alone but also along with others -- will yield profitable results.

VOICES From The FIELDS

Crystal Hardin, July 30,'02 -- [During summer break from teaching in a Christian school in Seoul, S. Korea.]

I was not able to travel around [the U.S. this summer] because of not having a car. I would have loved to see more people. I spent three weeks with Tabitha, and Hope and John both came, too. Hope was there for two weeks before heading to Oregon to take training to do literacy work with Wycliffe Bible Translators. She's still not sure of the Lord's definite leading, but is trying to follow step by step. I'm in Georgia now with Cindy [Brady] and our folks [Hall and Alice Crow-

der]. Karen [Ashley] came in last Thursday to put Philip in Harding University.

I head back to Korea on Thursday for another year. With the mission trip to Spain last year, I had more to do than I could actually accomplish, but God in His wisdom did a few miracles, and I made it through. This year I am dropping sponsorship of the student council and the newspaper, but I am considering starting an extra-curricular singing group since not all those who want to sing can fit choir into their schedules. We'll see what happens with that.

**David Moldez, Central Bible College, Manila, Philippines
Sept. 13, '02**

Two Sundays ago, we conducted a medical-dental ministry here at the Maligaya area [of Greater Manila]. We are happy that about 170 came to be treated. We are now praying and starting to follow them up and hoping to give each of them a Bible.

The challenge for me to continue sharing God's Word to others was very much rekindled by a simple conversation with our new helper who just arrived from the province last week. I asked her if she has a Bible and if she has read one. Her answer was that she has not seen one yet. It is so sad sometimes to learn that there are some people who have not even seen a Bible.

[Note by avw: David's wife Linda is directress of the Bible League of the Philippines. This ministry specializes in Bible distribution, evangelism and planting of new churches.]

Mark Garrett Senegal August 23, 2002

Our return to Senegal is right around the corner and we are getting in the packing spirit. Of course there are mixed emotions. Staying means more time with family and friends. But we also miss our Senegalese friends and co-workers and want to return to the work there.

We anticipate some big changes this term because of a plan to move from the big city to a small "one horse" town. We have lived in Thies (pop. 200,000 +) since we arrived in 1994. The move will take us about 20 miles east to the small town of Khombole (to pronounce; clear your throat and say "humble"). We will be working with Steve and Esther Smith who've spent three years living there, laying groundwork for church planting.

Although it is little more than a wide space in the road, there are good utilities available. But there is no church yet and there are no

known Christians. Currently the Smiths are the only white foreigners in town.

We look forward to more rural emphasis in outreach and evangelism. Many Wolof villages are in this area and we hope to find ways to open doors to teach the Gospel. We've brainstormed many ideas but want to be led by God's Spirit in choosing a method(s). Pray for sensitivity to His leading. It will probably take a few months to prepare housing for us there, but then you can come visit us in our "humble" abode.

"Why do you tell of 100 attending your Wolof Bible Conference and then say on your Wolof prayer card that there are only 30 Wolof believers?" my college friend recently asked. Good question!

There are 3-1/2 million Wolof who speak Wolof and there are thousands of others who are Wolof-speakers but are not Wolof. These non-Wolof came from rural areas to the cities and adopted Wolof as their mother tongue. So far, many more non-Wolof who speak Wolof have accepted Christ than the Wolof themselves. At the annual conference for Wolof-speaking Christians, the Wolof are in the minority. This is one indication that the Gospel has not yet begun to penetrate the heart of Wolof culture. This spurs us on to concentrate more on village focused ministry.

SUPPORT- 93%! (OCT. 5TH FLIGHT PLAN)

God encourages us as He continues to bring new financial partners our way. In the last couple of months He has added some individuals to our team raising our support level to 93%! Praise the Lord with us!

In order to return to Senegal, our mission agency requires us to have full support. Because we are optimistic that God will supply the last of the funding we need to return, we've made our plane reservations. (Oct. 5th departure from Lexington, KY) As soon as we have confirmed 100% of our support then we can buy the tickets. God builds our faith as we wait on Him and watch Him work. How will He do it? Stay tuned! Lord willing, the next newsletter will be written from Senegal.

We told you in our last newsletter of our need for a larger vehicle. The Lord has provided about \$2,100 of the minimum additional \$5,000 we estimate for the purchase. PTL! (Please pray that our '89 Corolla in Senegal brings a reasonable price.) If interested in this project, please send your gift to SIM USA at the address below. Designate our "ministry account" and mention our car fund. Thanks!

Email: mark.garrett@sim.org

Gifts to: SIM USA PO Box 7900 Charlotte, NC 28241

“Discovering Our Roots”

by Dale Offutt

The following compilation of quotations was written by Brother Carl Kitzmiller, in the year of 1994. His gleanings offer us a wealth of information, which enable us to better understand our spiritual roots. Brother Kitzmiller read the book, *Discovering Our Roots*, subtitled "The Ancestry of Churches of Christ." It's authors are Leonard Allen and Richard Hughes.

Excerpts from the book are as follows:

"Human life, as we know and cherish it, is not possible without memory. Without memory we lose our identity. The same is true for Christian identity. Without memory of our origins and beginnings, of the perils and triumphs along the way, and of the people who have shaped our faith, we will find ourselves wandering aimlessly, unsure of who we are or where we hope to go.

"Where did we come from? How did we get this way? What has been the heart of our movement? Why do we read the Bible the way we do? And finally, what can we learn from those who have viewed restoration in ways different from our own? In the addressing of such questions, lies the hope of enlarging our memory and thereby gaining a clearer vision of what it means to be a follower of Christ today...."

"We have often assumed that our roots are simply in the New Testament and that we really have not been shaped in any significant way by the intervening history. We assume that our churches are simply New Testament churches, nothing more and nothing less. The sects and denominations of Protestantism may be products of history, but our origins come entirely from the Bible. The implications of such an assumption are clear: the recent past has scant value in clarifying who we are and from whence we have come....

"(The) call back to the source of our religion - the Scriptures - was a powerful and much-needed call. It was, and still is, the genius of this movement in which we stand. But this call brings a subtle but powerful temptation. It lures us into thinking that we may escape history and tradition entirely, blotting out the centuries that have passed and erasing all their efforts. Such a process leads us to overlook our weaknesses, to think that we are something that we are not, and ultimately to deny the fact that we, too, are mere mortals shaped by time and culture, like everyone else....

"While claiming to reject all human traditions, we have created and perpetuated traditions, all the more entrenched for being unrecognized. Rather than escaping tradition, we...simply have failed to recognize the traditions at work in our midst....

"We are all caught up in a web of traditions. The way we talk, the food we love, the songs we sing, the prejudices we harbor, the political views we hold, the holidays we celebrate--all this and much more testify to the impact of tradition upon us.

"So, it is with our Christianity. We inherit not only the Bible itself but also a traditional way of reading it. From our parents, from the preachers we admire, from Sunday School teachers, from the books and magazines we read, we receive a certain way of reading the Bible....Without a sense of history, however, we are not aware of the tradition. And it is just when we think ourselves entirely immune from tradition and culture that we are most susceptible to their influences. Unable to recognize and criticize our traditions, we unwittingly stand with our feet cemented fast within them."

Brother Kitzmiller noted that the various movements, down through history, which attempted to purify, reform and restore the church, have helped to shape the churches of Christ today.

We are thankful for our spiritual roots. Praise God for His unfailing love!

--From *Sellersburg Church of Christ Chronicle*

[This excellent book, *Discovering Our Roots*, is used as a supplementary textbook in the S.B.S class, Church History II. This subject will be offered again starting Jan. '03, D.V. — AVW.]

Spiritual WARfare!

Lucy Wood Mabery-Foster

Several years ago I attended a national conference whose keynote speaker was a radical feminist. I was astounded at the charisma with which she manipulated her audience of about two thousand people and I was appalled at her blatant heresy. Enthralled, the people were feverishly scribbling notes, anxious to write down everything she said.

Couldn't they see where she was leading? Why were they following her so blindly? I began praying that God would confuse this woman's speech because of her obvious swaying powers over so many people. As I prayed and she continued, I noticed increasing agitation in her voice. She stopped her lecture and asked, "If there's any-

one in this audience who believes in Pauline theology, I want you to get up and walk out!"

I didn't move, I continued praying, now asking God to expose her for the heretic she was. She stopped her lecture a second time, exclaiming, "I don't understand it! I can't feel free to express myself." She returned to her now-blasphemous presentation of how traditional views of God as Father and Sovereign are too binding. I continued to pray, and she stopped her lecture a third time, shouting. "It must be the walls of this hotel, because I can't find the freedom to express myself fully!"

I found her confusion interesting, especially since she claimed to have mystical powers; she never was able to single me out of the audience, even though I was sitting in the second row directly in front of her. I began to wonder how so many people could be so mesmerized by obvious heresy.

The above is from *Women and the Church*, a book highly recommended by Ruth Wilson. The author is the daughter of the late Dr. Horace and Lucy Wood, known to many W&W readers. For years, Dr. Horace was an elder at the old Mount Auburn Church of Christ in Dallas. Dr. Lucy Mabery-Foster was the first woman faculty member at Dallas Theological Seminary, becoming a professor of pastoral ministries. On May 20 this year she was promoted to Glory by her Lord, via a disease caught during overseas ministry. The seminary magazine said, "In her years on the faculty she taught courses in biblical counseling and the role of women in ministry. The impact she had on students is immeasurable.... [She also] was a licensed counselor, a marriage and family therapist, and a popular speaker at women's retreats. Her overseas outreach included China, Ukraine, Europe, Israel and Jamaica."

Counselor's Column

Divorce Prevention?

By Dennis Kaufman

Question: It seems like so many Christian people that I know are going through a divorce these days. As a counselor, what do you see causing this when it is the last thing many Christians want to happen.

Answer: I share your concern that so many people in the church are going through the ripping and tearing of a relationship that God intended for a lifetime.

I suppose every different culture puts pressure on the marriage relationship in a different way. Many of the Old Testament cultures were plagued with the acceptance of polygamy. Numerous factors came together to inch people toward the adoption of this practice which we now see as atrocious. A few years ago, on a mission trip to Kenya, I worked among the Maasai people where divorce was almost unheard of. However, women have very little in the way of rights and are very susceptible to abuse. Polygamy and female circumcision are still common as well.

We have all witnessed massive shifts in our country over the last 40 years. Economically, politically, and morally we have watched the pressure on the marriage relationship increase. Estimates are that about 50% no longer survive. We have accepted this "missing of God's mark" much the way Israel missed it by endorsing polygamy. In addition to this cultural pressure, I think from an individual standpoint, there are three major errors that one can make which increase the potential for divorce.

1) Faulty Covenant - Many people in our land get married for less than ideal reasons. Some of these include marrying to get out of a dysfunctional family, because of pregnancy, on the rebound, or for fear that no one else will come along. As a counselor, working with couples who never really remember being in love is certainly the greatest challenge. Our premarital ministry here at the church is working hard to help couples look at their motive for marriage.

2) Faulty Courtship - Normally we think of courtship as something only prior to marriage, but in reality it continues and is a vital part of healthy marriages. In our culture, it is easy to begin the courtship process in a way that is less than honest. The goal becomes to "put our best foot forward" or be impressive. Often, this extraordinary effort to please the other person is not a real reflection of the person's whole heart. I have seen many couples live a lie for years, then when something like the powerful dynamics of mid-life transition develop, it seems no longer possible, and "all of a sudden" (or so it seems) the person feels like their marriage is some sort of bondage. They feel the urge to go out and "find themselves." Speaking the truth in love is crucial throughout the years of marriage.

3) Faulty Conflict Management - Every relationship has its rifts in the early stages. The ways those are healed are vitally important. Working through our disappointments and irritations keeps intimacy deepening. However, if these hurts are not healed, and they move toward roots of bitterness, it is easy for a spouse to become an "injustice collector." We human beings are generally very determined to be right. Therefore, if we are convinced in our heart that we are not being

treated well, we begin to look for evidence that we are correct. To look for our spouse's faults or injustices almost certainly means we will find them. Poor conflict resolution moves us out of the kind of love that covers a multitude of sins into the role of an adversarial witness looking for evidence of wrongdoing. As this chasm widens, the potential for healing grows dimmer. To quote that great marriage counselor, Barney Fife, "You've got to nip it...you've got to nip it in the bud."

Despite all these contributors to a high divorce rate for Christians and non-Christians alike, we must come face to face with God's standard, and make the mightiest of efforts to honor our covenants. There is no evidence He has changed His expectations of our marriage commitments. Churches should strengthen their efforts to provide marriage enrichment, and help their members avoid this cultural trend.

ADULTERY NOT THE END

Edward Fudge, GracEmail

A gracEmail subscriber writes that he has been unfaithful to his wife. He has just confessed to her, his spiritual leaders and the other people involved. In her pain, his wife has left the house and he fears for her safety. "I am seeing the importance of developing a personal relationship with Jesus first," he says. "God allowed me to drop to the bottom so that I can see that I must truly give every thing over to Him." He asks for my prayers and advice.

* * *

My brother, I pray that God who has given you conviction and repentance will now also make you know and feel his forgiveness, which cost the life and death of his only-begotten Son. Sin is drastic and grace is not cheap - - although it is free to us sinners who will trust God for it. Our actions have consequences, even when our guilt is forgiven. I pray that God will hold you close to him through that process also, whatever it might involve.

I am glad that you have told the persons who need to be told. You must not expect too much of your wife in understanding or dealing with this. Obviously, it must come as a terrible blow to her. I doubt that either of us can really comprehend the pain it has caused her -- pain which will probably be a long time healing if ever. Words cannot erase what you have done. It will take many months, maybe years, of actions, of gentleness, of putting her first, to help her believe that you mean you are sorry, although I have no doubt whatsoever that you are as sorry in your heart as a man can possibly be.

I also pray for your wife right this moment, that God will keep her safe, and that he will begin even now to prepare her heart to hear your repentance and to believe it and to allow God to help heal her heart and also your mar-

riage. All things are possible with God. Don't lose faith now. God will always be faithful.

My friend Joe Beam, a wounded healer, has been used powerfully by God in healing many "impossible" marriages following adultery and even divorce. For information on this ministry, contact Family Dynamics at toll-free (800) 650-9995 or see www.familydynamics.net. Gary Smalley has also written an excellent book titled MAKING LOVE LAST FOREVER, for couples seeking restoration.

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ONE DAY AT A TIME

Edward Fudge, GracEmail

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

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

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

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

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The Master Baker

JOYce Broyles

Pastor Browning Ware told his flock, "Our worst circumstances may be God's best opportunity to bring new meaning to our lives."

Of course, at the time of the worst circumstances, that is the last thing on our mind! We think, "What possible good can come of this?" instead of saying, "What new meaning for my life can I gain from this?"

For weeks, I had been out of sorts with events, people, and myself. Stress played a big part, but mostly, I needed to do some soul-searching. In the midst of that, a good friend sent some notes that helped immensely. One day she sent a story, saying she thought of me when she read it.

The story is "Baking a Cake," and no author's name was given.

A little boy is telling his Grandma how "everything" is going wrong — school, family problems, severe health problems, and on and on. Meanwhile, Grandma is baking a cake.

She asks her grandson if he would like a snack, which, of course, he does.

"Here, have some cooking oil."

"Yuck," says the boy.

"How about a couple of raw eggs?"

"Gross, Grandma!"

"Would you like some flour then? Or maybe some baking soda?"

"Grandma, those are all yucky!"

To which Grandma replies, "Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves. But when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake! God works the same way."

Many times we wonder why God would let us go through difficult times, but He knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and eventually, they will all make something wonderful!

Max Lucado wrote, "God loves us. He sends us flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever we want to talk, He will listen. God could live anywhere in the universe, but He chose our heart." When we count our blessings, we can say like the poor woman who only had bread and water before her, "All this and Jesus, too!"

Learning to trust anyone when we do not understand is difficult. Learning to trust God in His sovereign plan should be easy. If we let Him, He can

make a wonderful "cake" out of our lives, using the difficulties as special ingredients.

If we learn to take the difficulties to Him, we learn to trust Him, and that may lead us to see that those circumstances are His best opportunity to bring new meaning to our personal expressions.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Lilly Dale Church of Christ (Elmer Pacheco) Special 9/11 Church service will be held at Lilly Dale with the Tell City congregation joining. There will be special prayers, a video of WTC, testimonies, and a pitch-in dinner and fellowship. September 29th is designated as All Member's Day. A pitch-in dinner will follow the morning worship service. Afterwards, a hay ride followed by a joint mission meeting with Tell City congregation at 7:00 p.m.

Meetings:

Fisherville Church of Christ Sept. 15-18 with Bro. Jerry Carmichael evangelist.

Pleasant Grove Church of Christ Sept. 29th. 5th Sunday singspiration for area churches.

Parksville Christian Church (Church of Christ) Sept. 29/Oct. 2 with Julius Hovan evangelist.

Mackville Church of Christ (Ky) will be hosting the 5th Sun-

day singspiration on Sept. 22nd for the Central Kentucky Churches beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Mackville Revival begins Monday night Sept. 23 through Thursday night Sept. 26 with evangelist Bennie Hill. Services nightly at 7:00 p.m.

LaGrange (Ky) revival meeting Sept. 30th - Oct. 4th with evangelist Ray Naugle. Services begin nightly at 7:30 p.m.

Tell City (Ind) revival meeting Oct. 6th (Wed.) - Oct. 9th, 2002 with Dick Rueben. Topics will deal with the Jewish roots of Christianity.

Lilly Dale Church of Christ (Ind) Elmer Pacheco begins his 5th year serving the congregation as their full-time minister.

Cramer & Hanover (Lexington, KY) Bennie Hill begins his 28th year serving this congregation as their full-time minister on the 1st Sunday in November.

Glenmora (LA) Fellowship. Please note a change on this year's program: Bro. J.R.Satterfield will be speaking on Tuesday, Nov. 19th at 1:15 instead of Stan Helton. His topic will be: "Transformed Lives: Man Born Blind."

Church of Christ Worldwide (Cramer) will be printing the annual Prayer/Praise Booklet to be ready for distribution by Thanksgiving. Letters have gone out this week asking for information regarding the various mission endeavors. Copies will be available during the Louisiana Fellowship and the annual Thanksgiving service in Louisville. We've noted a growing interest in Missions Around the World and look forward to providing this tool to be used in churches.

Woodland Sr. Citizen's Week (were you there?) In spite of 100 degree temperatures over 100 attended this year's Sr. Citizen's Week at Woodland Bible Camp. It was a blessed time together in the Lord as wonderful messages, praying, fellowship, eating, working, laughing, and crying was enjoyed by all. One stated that as we entered the gate at Woodland we left our "pills and problems" there. What a reminder of Heaven where we'll have none of that there and won't worry about picking them up once we leave Heaven -since we won't be leaving!!! (shared by Janell Lewis)

Buechel (KY) Bud Ridgeway reports the work is encouraging at Buechel. Attendance continues to grow and we're now averaging about 50. The Men's Prayer Breakfast is going to be revived every second Saturday of the month and all men are encouraged to come out for good food and fellowship. Buechel's homecoming is being planned for October 27th.

So Glad to know I'm NOT the ONLY One! --avw

From the Disciples of Christ Historical Society this editor read something very satisfying:

"Do you have a messy desk? In an editor's note before an article in the Millennial Harbinger, *Alexander Campbell writes: 'The following communication should have appeared several months ago. It was laid aside unintentionally among a mass of other papers, and forgotten until now.'*"

Vehicle for Robert & Joy Garrett? A brother from a church in the South generously pledged some help toward getting a car for the Garretts, since theirs was totaled in the recent wreck. Here is Robert's reply to the inquiry sent him:

"I do have a pick-up truck so we are not without transport. As, Lord willing, we plan to return to the States the first week of May, 2003 (for an 11 month furlough) I think it probably best to wait until we return in April of 2004 to buy a new car. My car that was destroyed in the accident

was 20 years old so its value re: insurance was minimal. It still had some years of life left in it and I will sure miss it but we can manage with the pick-up for the next 8 months. Robert”

Christian Previews of the Content of Movies From *Family Voice*, the magazine of the Concerned Women for America, we learn of 3 organizations which may be useful for parents. If you want information about the content of various movies your children want to see, you might contact: (1) **Christian Film & TV Commission**, 805-383-2000; www.movieguide.org (2) **The Dove Foundation**, 800-968-8437; www.dove.org (3) **Movie Morality Ministries**, 800-807-8071; www.previewonline.org

I myself have not used any of these, but the CWA is a Bible-based ministry which upholds Christian values. So you will probably find these helpful. --avw

The Struggles, & Victory, of Faith: A sister in Christ found she had inoperable cancer. In a letter she wrote, “God has promised He would not give us more than we could bear, so I am claiming this Promise, and receiving Peace. Yes, I do have down days, and cry some, but even Jesus cried so that makes it o-k for me too. He gave us emotions so I am using them well!!!....

“We are doing really well and our Church family is carrying more food in here than we

can eat, sending us cards, and dropping by to pray with us. Satan is trying to discourage us, and we refuse to let that happen. Praise God that He promised He would not leave us or forsake us.”

Muslim Accepts Christ-- Edward Fudge writes, GracEmail subscriber and longtime friend Ron Compton of Chicagoland sent the following note about a friend with whom his son Timothy, a high school senior, has shared Christ. “Omair has studied with Timothy for over a year, and has read the New Testament. He is one of their school’s top students, and may be valedictorian. After church this evening he confessed [faith in] Christ, and was baptized by Timothy, who brought him here, where we welcomed him to stay. When I saw Omair, his strength and courage with tears immediately thrilled and inspired me.” His father later called on the phone for him to come home tonight. Before Omair left, I congratulated him, told him that he has strength from God which I see in him, and read Jesus’ promise ‘Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven’ (Matthew 10:32). Omair replied, ‘Tonight He knows me.’ Please pray for continued strength for Omair, and pray for his parents.”

Need a Fill-in Preacher? Brent Heeke works in Indianapolis but has the weekends off. He is available & interested in fill-in

preaching in the Louisville area or anywhere else in reasonable driving range of Indianapolis. Brent is from the Tell City, Ind. church. You may contact him at 317: 862- 7100, extension #268 or #232. Or by email at vw215@juno.com

The Biblical Pattern for God's People "A church that understands the vision of God is one that is reaching out to spread the love of Christ...boldly, inclusively, generously, without holding back. It is a church committed to making disciples and equipping all persons for ministry. It is a church where liturgy [worship] is a transforming experience and where a positive Gospel is preached that touches the heart. It is a church that gives more away than it keeps for itself. It is a church eager to plant new congregations and committed to serving the poor as generously as Christ has served us. That is the Body of Christ that we are meant to be." - H. N. Parsley, Jr., in *The Anglican Digest*.

Keep Praying for Jerry & Judy Samples: A court hearing is set for Oct. 22 to decide about the custody of their granddaughter. Her mother (their daughter) was shot and killed a few months ago, along with 2 other women.

Update on Sister Irene Allen-- Sister Allen was a longtime missionary to Alaska, along with her husband Winston. She now lives in Iowa with son Norman and his family. In mid-August she was hospitalized with pneumonia. In answer to a later query, on Sept. 15 she wrote, "I remained in the hospital nine days and then soon saw a back specialist for ongoing distress. Diagnosis is spinal stenosis, but surgery is not recommended. Surgery in 1997 was less than successful. I'll just look to the Lord to direct my way in the days ahead. Getting about without my cane and someone's help is difficult, but the Lord is good and I have much to be thankful for."

If you wish to correspond by email, her address is iallen@kdsi.net

*Oh, do not pray for easy lives,
Pray to be stronger men.*

*Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers,
but for powers equal to your tasks.*

*Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle,
but you will be the miracle.*

*Everyday you shall wonder at yourself and
the richness of life which has come to you
by the grace of God.*

--Phillips Brooks