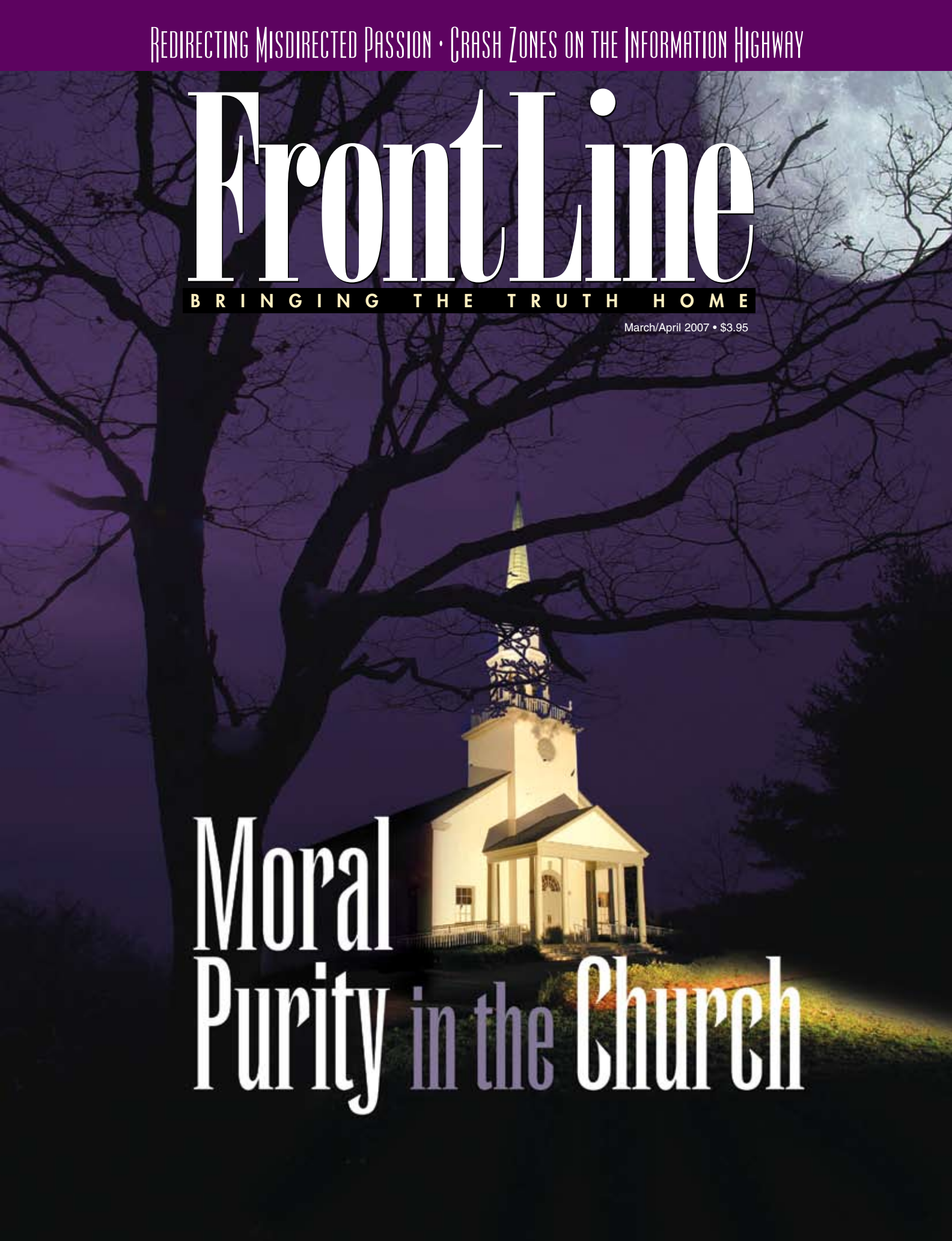


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We are grateful to Dr. Michael Yarborough for his editorial assistance with this edition of *FrontLine*.

We want to hear from you!

Let us know what you like or don't like about *FrontLine*. Address your comments to **Managing Editor, *FrontLine***
500 West Lee Road, Taylors, SC 29687.
You may also fax your comments to (864) 322-0838 or send them by e-mail to info@fbfi.org.

You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.



As I read your November/December Contents, "The One Lost Sheep" by Mark Johnson gripped by attention! It got through the fog, "ringing" true and efficacious. And that's only the first page! Please, thank him for that article and testimony for me.

Just as bad thinking leads to bad actions, I didn't want to read nor understand the truth of his article. It would devastate my own self-deceptions and require a response from me toward my Holy God and Savior, Jesus Christ, and it's easier not knowing nor acting accordingly! But surely, not safer!

Thank you, Mr. Johnson—there is a Balm in Gilead. And we do stand alone in His presence.

Norman Freitoy
Waupun Correctional
Institution
Waupun, WI

I thoroughly appreciate receiving *FrontLine* on a regular basis. I'm very thankful the folks at Beth Eden Baptist Church had a *FrontLine* Sunday to bring this wealth of information and analysis to my attention. I have since purchased another subscription for another

brother in Christ.

David Rogol
Jefferson, MA

I greatly appreciated the work of Pastor Scott Aniol (Nov/Dec 2006) putting together in one article the numerous facets of Christmas as it relates to pagans and God's precious saints.

I pastored my last church for forty years and always presented to our people—adults and children—such truths that helped believers to have a "balanced" view and appreciation for the Christmas season. The negatives were, and need to be, balanced against the positives with nothing to be purposely omitted.

Every Christian needs a spiritual, Biblical, and reasonable balance in most things. "Tangents" and "chasing rabbits" to try to prove an unnecessary point will often result in very unbalanced and often unhappy believers. To those very ones our Lord has said, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do ALL to the glory of God" [cf. 1 Cor. 10:29–33].

Thank you for *FrontLine*. Every edition carries God's blessings into our homes.

Howard M. Pyle
McDonough, GA

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On the Front Line

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Looking for a Substitute for God

John C. Vaughn

One of our FBFI Chaplains recently told me the story of a young soldier who came to him and shared that he was so discouraged that he spent every evening getting drunk to drown his emotional pain.* The Chaplain had asked him, "How is that working out for you?" The soldier had to admit, "Well, it's not helping, and I think it might be making things worse." That simple exchange expresses the reality of the most common approach man takes to his problem. His own unbelief deceives him into thinking there must be something better that he can still control. But whatever he feeds a selfish appetite only increases it.

There is a better way. You hold in your hand appeals for integrity, morality, and ethics—articles that offer real hope by focusing on the problem in the heart. There are words here that will bring conviction and, we pray, genuine repentance. Some of these articles present the words of the ancients as they struggled. Other appeals come from preachers long since gone to Heaven who we often assume were above temptation. Men who walk among us today appeal for us to arm ourselves with modern weapons against the ancient foe. The long war against the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life must still be waged as long as we walk this earth.

As a young man, I heard a sermon that still speaks to my heart today.

Dr. Guenther Salter was speaking in chapel during a summer college session. His title was "Doing Right with the Wrong Heart." His point was that we must never forget the difference between an outward performance for Christ and a heart relationship with Christ. All human religion demands a performance; the Bible offers a relationship. God would have us focus on what He has done for us more than on

what we presume to do for Him. Doing right with the wrong heart means a man can spend his ministry out of fellowship with God. Why are we so surprised when a man who gratifies his lust for praise in public gratifies his other lusts in private?

A powerful new resource to help us understand this deception, taught by Dr. Jim Berg, will soon be released. In *Purity: Winning the Battle in a Perverse World*, Dr.

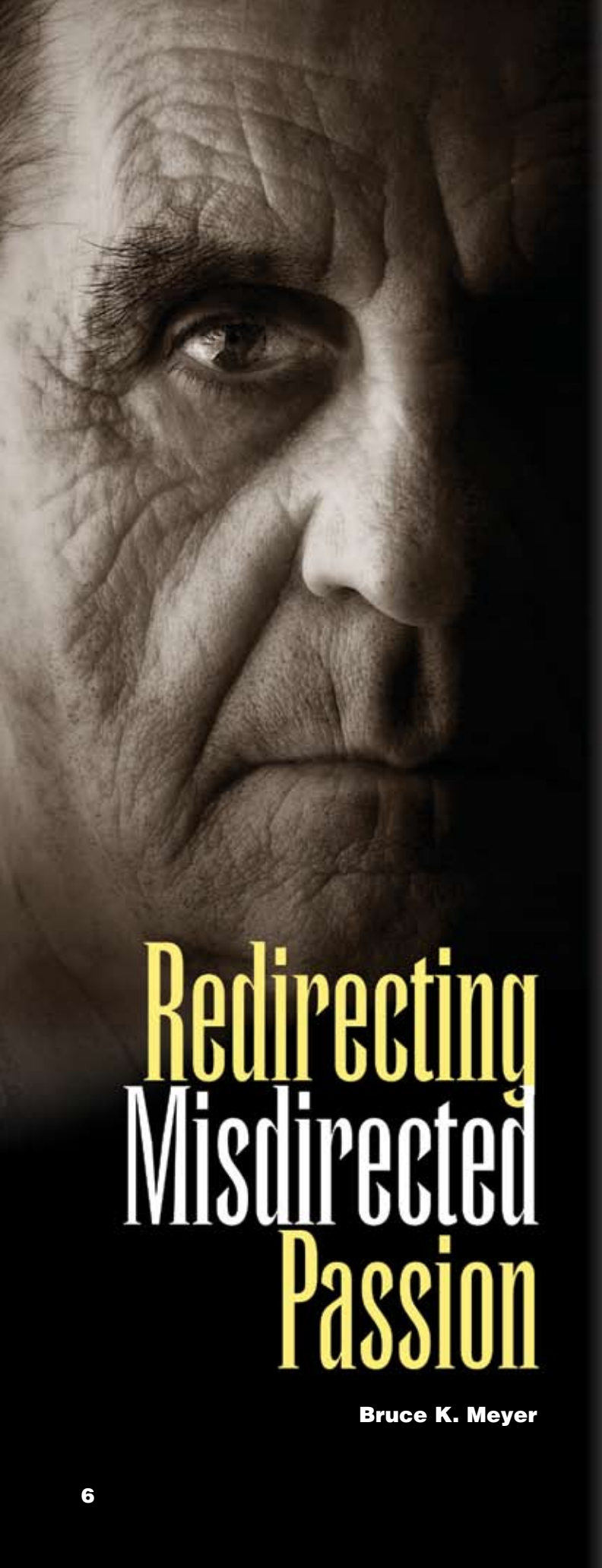
Berg explains the "anatomy of lust" and cuts to its root: unbelief. As in *Changed into His Image* and *Quieting a Noisy Soul*, he exposes the lie that God Himself is not enough. How can those of us in the ministry ever hope to help others see that He is enough for them, if He is not enough for us? Do we preach deliverance while practicing indulgence? Do we offer "sin management" or salvation?

Spurgeon called us away from the "bumbling administration of the healing balm," and Solomon warned us that "dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is

in reputation for wisdom and honour" (Eccles. 10:1). Folly finds a home in the heart that lack integrity. It is spread through the virus of a silly story told in spite of the Holy Spirit's check. Its roots are sent down by the delay that dulls the cutting edge of conviction. It seems like such a "little folly," this longing for human appreciation that supplants divine blessing. The reputation for wisdom and honor become the cloak of the wicked ethic that draws attention to ourselves—attention that rightly belongs to our Savior.

At a recent Men's Conference where Dr. Berg presented this material on purity, over 600 men humbly came to find the spiritual resources to live and help others live with spiritual victory over their lusts. The near unanimous testimony of those who came was the realization of a shockingly simple truth: the perversity that all fallen men have in common is the demand of "self" to rule the life. The outward expressions of that self-rule cover the spectrum from celebrated success to humiliating defeat, but they are the symptoms of a life-destroying deception. The central point of the *Humanist Manifesto* is that "no God will save us; we must save ourselves." That statement has become a prevailing worldview, not because of the success of the Humanists, but because it expresses the fallen nature of man. Every man who indulges his sinful lusts is looking for a substitute for God.

*For those who are looking for resources to use in ministering to members of the Armed Forces, there is a beautiful, high-quality set of tracts available. They are addressed to specific branches of the military, and one is designed for the bereaved. You can see them or order them at www.chaplainsmith.com.



Redirecting Misdirected Passion

Bruce K. Meyer

Misdirected passion begins with the subtle slide of a spiritual leader away from a vibrant fellowship with God. Having drifted from God worship, he pursues idols that he foolishly believes will meet the needs of his hurting heart. The real problem, however, is not the appearance of temptation, but the individual's willful exchange of God for heart idols.

What are the Biblical solutions, and what plan can be established for spiritual growth at each level of addiction? Biblical change must occur from the inside out, rather than simply changing externals—the kind of renewal that Paul outlines in Ephesians 4:17–32.

Life Purpose

Throughout the Scriptures, God calls believers to pursue a praise-driven life (Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:14; et al.). Whenever a believer gives into sinful impulses, he has strayed from a Biblical life purpose to serve other purposes. Other prevalent life purposes may include control, success, prestige, satisfaction, relief from pain, ministry opportunities, acceptance/esteem/popularity, respect, comfortable or “stress free” living, numerical church growth, and love. Even in ministry, a spiritual leader can find many noble purposes for his service, but none of those purposes is suitable to replace the Biblical mandate of glorifying God.

For instance, a man may enter the ministry searching for significance in service. He is so propelled by the need for success and acceptance that his decisions are shaped more by approval than by divine mandate. When a person pursues success purely for the sake of success, he makes an idol out of performance and acceptance. The fulfillment of his dream will prove to be both elusive and disappointing.

If, however, a person makes God's glory his ultimate purpose, he will find Biblical success as a natural outcome of seeking God's glory. In *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* Kent Hughes illustrates well this theological displacement: “But imperceptibly, my high Christian idealism had shifted from serving to receiving, from giving to getting. I realized that what I really wanted was a growing church and ‘success’ more than the smile of God.”¹

Likewise, a person can dedicate himself to finding relief from pain, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. The individual quickly discovers there are numerous ways of easing pain that are effective and instantaneous. Such a drive, however, will lead to an enslaving idolatrous life, since the person's purpose is not God-focused but rather self-focused.

The point is that one's motives become a critical point of contact when assessing one's heart. There are within the Christian life a number of worthy goals to pursue (service, purity, healthy relationships, commitment to devotions, to name a few). But whenever a person elevates a lesser goal to life-purpose status, a goal that should be merely another way of bringing glory to God, that goal becomes an idol that supplants God's preeminent position.

Furthermore, all would agree that believers should pursue sexual purity. But what is one's motive for pursuing sexual purity? If a person is seeking sexual purity simply to avoid the consequences of sexual promiscuity (disqualification, STDs, or relational pain), he will fail because he lacks the ultimate Biblical reason for purity—God's glory. Sexual purity becomes another god that enslaves and the person becomes self-oriented. Motives of the heart are critical (Prov. 4:23).

Solving the Problem Biblically

As one begins pursuing Biblical change, it is essential for that person to remember that he must place any “steps” the Scriptures teach within the framework of relationship with Christ. “Steps” alone do not change a person's heart, although they may change one's behavior, albeit only temporarily at best.

It is through relationship only, however, that one experiences renewal of the heart (Eph. 4:17–24).

Acknowledge the Sin

The first step for the individual is to personally recognize and acknowledge the serious nature of his misdirected passion. If one rationalizes the problem away, he will never seek the deliverance that God offers. Acknowledging the problem means that there will be a Biblical sorrow (2 Cor. 7:9–11), brokenness, and humility about the problems the person encounters.

Because of the subtlety of one's heart, the individual will battle with a number of rationalizations, argumentative “thought-barriers” that protect his system of rebellion. These rationalizations may include “I deserve sexual gratification” or “I work hard serving Christ; I deserve a bit of pleasure.”

Both of these responses reflect a self-focus.² The believer must dismantle such false justifications with the truth of the Scriptures (2 Cor. 10:5).

Second, the individual must acknowledge his sin in confession to God (Prov. 28:13). Solomon warns that the one who “covers” his sin will never “advance” or “move on.” The promise in the text provides the impetus for revealing and forsaking personal sin—God's mercy.

At the root of the problem is the heart condition, that is, the orientation of the person's heart either towards idolatry or towards genuine God-worship.

Having accepted the truth about the foolishness of idol worship, the individual must understand the positive truth about his relationship with Christ. In Philippians 3:1–11, the apostle argues convincingly against those who would seek joy (“rejoice in the Lord,” vv. 1, 3) in the flesh (vv. 3, 4). The context here argues for the sense of sinful human nature as that inclination in man to find satisfaction (joy) in human endeavor.

The solution is for the struggling individual to reacquaint himself with his Lord and to become impressed with who He is. The believer should be careful at this point

to recognize the difference between ritual and relationship. The Judaizers were concerned with ritual, while Paul was concerned about relationship with Christ. A person can simply practice useful Christian discipline without engaging in genuine fellowship with Jesus. Spiritual disciplines must be about knowing Him rather than routinely doing certain obligatory tasks.

Deal with Sinful Responses

Once a person has redirected his own worship from idols to God, through God's grace and repentance, he must begin responding to circumstances and the resulting pain he may feel with Biblical responses rather than unbiblical methods. This work includes continuing to turn to God for care instead of idols. Ephesians 4:17–32 provides the necessary instruction for this step. First, Paul instructs that this methodology is not a man-made therapy but a God-prescribed theology of Biblical change (v. 17).³

In verses 17c–19, Paul outlines the specific dangers associated with unbiblical, dysfunctional lifestyles. He depicts the Gentiles as having an emptiness of the mind, a darkened reasoning (cf. Rom. 1:21) and as excluded from the life of God through ignorance and hardening of their hearts. In addition, they are past feeling and working all filthy greediness having given themselves over to unrestrained living.

Paul demonstrates through these statements the connection between unbiblical thinking and unbiblical behavior.

Third, Paul reminds his readers of the necessity of regeneration as the prerequisite to change (vv. 20, 21). For the believer, this statement highlights the necessity of grace in producing spiritual change, for the same grace that saved the sinner is the same grace that will renew him.

These two verses stress the essentials of discipleship, since Paul uses the words “learned,” “heard,” and “been taught” by

Christ. The pastor who has struggled with declining spiritual interest due to increased ministry pressure must return to the basics of relational development through fellowship with the Savior.

The apostle describes the nature of spiritual renewal in verses 22–24. Believers are to “put off” those responses that are unbiblical while “putting on” those responses that are Biblical (v. 22, 24). As the believer actively obeys these instructions, God performs an essential work in the believer's heart—renewal. For the person who has repeatedly “repented,” “laid his sin on the altar,” or sincerely “promised” to forsake a particular sin, only to engage in the same behavior again, here is the solution. Change comes only through fellowship with Christ, who produces genuine renewal of heart.

Finally, in verses 25–32, Paul lists a series of behaviors that illustrate how one should put off sinful responses and put on righteous behaviors. The replacement principle permeates the Scriptures, and it answers what a person should do when confronted with painful feelings. In going to God with those feelings, the hurting believer can

*The solution is
for the struggling
individual to
reacquaint
himself with
his Lord and to
become impressed
with who He is.*

experience the healing touch of God through comforting fellowship with Him.

For example, Paul teaches that believers should put off anger, replacing it with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness (vv. 31, 32). Therefore, a person may experience bitterness and endeavor to ease the bitterness through forays into immorality. Rather than choosing the good feelings the idol produces, Paul commands the believer to put off that practice and replace the bitterness with forgiveness. Such a practice calls for an active dependence upon God (worship), for the person cannot practice replacement without the renewing grace of Christ and his resulting empowerment.

Deal with Temptation

The renewal of the mind through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit forms the basis for victory over external temptations (Rom. 12:1, 2; Eph. 4:17ff). Without that work, the temptation possesses too much appeal for the addict to resist. Temptation *feels* like a five-thousand-pound gorilla in the corner when a person is not worshiping God. In the power of relationship, however, the menacing beast feels more like an annoying cockroach. A person who is walking in the Spirit, however, now possesses both the desire and the ability to please God (Phil. 2:12, 13). It is important, therefore, for the individual to continue pursuing a relationship with God. But what should the person do concerning external solicitations to sin when his mind seeks to betray him through acquiescence?

The pattern Jesus established in using the Scriptures is certainly essential, for no one has enough inherent power to resist or expel temptation (Matt. 4:1–11).

Philippians 4:8 provides a functional model. In the context, Paul is addressing the worrisome thoughts a person can experience in the midst of hardship (vv. 4–7). Paul's example, however, encompasses any thought that would lead a believer astray from Christian virtue, resulting in a loss of God's peace.⁴

The apostle establishes one of the most overlooked but critical principles in defeating satanic disobedience. In similar fashion to Ephesians 4:22–24, here Paul advocates replacing one's sinful thoughts with those that are righteous (cf.

Matt. 12:43–45; Luke 11:24–26). Paul issues a command to think on those things that are true (displaces sinful rationalizations), honorable or noble (displaces the detestable), right (displaces the immoral), pure (displaces impurity), lovely or pleasing (displaces that which is hideous), admirable or of good repute (displaces the shameful), virtuous (displaces the debauched), and worthy of praise (displaces the despicable). Paul commands the believer to be habitually thinking these kinds of thoughts.

The believer who is battling with lustful thoughts can replace those thoughts with a variety of righteous ones. For instance, meditating upon Scriptures refocuses one's mind upon worshiping God. The person may also plan a romantic evening with his spouse, culminating in physical intimacy.

This text provides strong validation of the connection between Biblical thinking and beliefs producing virtuous living. The believer who has developed unbiblical patterns of living must experience God's renewing work in his mind (heart) so that his actions change. Reversing this order will prove unfruitful.

Conclusion

The tragedy of ministerial failure does not have to continue to be a grim reality. The Scriptures provide truth that renews even the most stubborn of life-dominating problems, including sexual immorality. When a person understands the multilevel approach to renewal, he can experience permanent change from the inside out, beginning with worship, responses to circumstances, and finally, in handling temptation.

Dr. Bruce K. Meyer is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Maranatha Baptist Bible College in Watertown, Wisconsin.

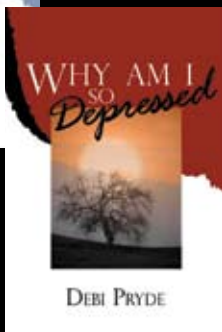
¹Kent Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), 30.

²A. C. Thiselton, "Flesh," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 1:680.

³Peter O'Brien, *The Letters to the Ephesians*, from *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.,



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Rand Hummel

Do You Really Want to Be a Slave to Sin?

This Is What God Says

He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. (Prov. 7:22, 23)

Now Think about It

Straightway, immediately, all at once, without fighting the temptation at all, *he* chased *after* that which he thought would satisfy his sexual desires, with as much sense as *an ox* that hurries towards the butcher who has some tasty grain in one hand to lure him and a knife in the other ready to take his life from him, *or as a* nonthinking deer that steps into a bear trap, holding him captive until the hunter shoots his bow, sending an arrow of death straight *through his liver*, *or as a bird* that flies straight into a *snare*, not knowing that the hunter put the snare in that very place to catch and kill him.

How Can This Affect Me?

Those caught up in sexual addiction are quite impulsive. They act first and think later. When they are faced with any sexual temptation, from filthy pornography to a promiscuous person, they "straightway" run to the sin without any thought of the consequences. All they desire is that instant satisfaction the flesh so deceitfully cries for. They are blinded to the fact that you cannot sin and win. The immoral butcher is ready to slit the person's throat, and the seducing hunter has his arrow ready to fly through the heart of

the unsuspecting sexual addict. Satan will kill and destroy every man or woman he can get his wicked hands on. He uses immorality as the bait, and, sad to say, often bags his limit. Satan would love to add you to his list of trophies. He wants you dead.

This Is What God Says

But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. . . . Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children. . . . For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. (2 Peter 2:10, 14, 18, 19)

Now Think about It

God will be especially hard on those who *walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness*, follow their own evil, corrupt, lustful desires, *and despise* all authority or anyone who tries to tell them that they are in sin. They are *presumptuous*, proud, bold, and so arrogant that *they are not afraid to speak evil* of, slander, or scoff anyone. They feast their eyes on *adultery* through pornographic magazines, movies, and Internet sites, *and* are so addicted to committing adultery and fornication in their minds they *cannot* quit

or *cease from sin*; they *beguile*, seduce, entice, and make a game of getting *unstable*, weak, and unsuspecting people to join them in their filthy immorality; *they have exercised* their *hearts* through hours of practicing their sin and have become experts in greed and covetousness, desiring people and pleasures God never intended them to have; and even though they may not know it, they have made choices that could doom and *curse* them for eternity. *For when they speak great swelling words of vanity* and brag about themselves with empty, foolish boasting, *they* try to *allure* or coax others to be involved in their sin by appealing to their fleshly desires. These are the ones who are trying so hard to escape from following such empty, lewd, and fleshly lifestyles. *While* those who are addicted to habitual, sexual sin *promise* them freedom and *liberty*, trying to make them believe that they are free to live out any sexual desire they have, *they themselves* are slaves to their sexual idols and *servants* of their depravity and *corruption*: *for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*, for you are a slave to whatever controls you.

How Can This Affect Me?

Not only do those consumed with sexual sin have filthy minds, they are out of their minds! They don't think clearly! They think they are free to do whatever they want but cannot see that they are actually slaves. They have lied to themselves, justifying their own sin so many times that they think they are doing others a favor by getting them to join them in their sin. They choose not to think about the first few words of 2 Peter 2:10. God is going to be especially hard in the way He deals with them. They may believe they are free and having fun, but their judgment day is quickly approaching. Can you imagine what it will be like for those

who spend their entire lives satisfying fleshly desires to someday explain their choices to God?

This Is What God Says

As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. (Prov. 26:11)

Now Think about It

As a dog goes back and eats its own vomit, so a fool repeats his foolish sin over and over again.

How Can This Affect Me?

This has got to be one of the grossest pictures of habitual sin I can think of. The cycle never stops. A dog eats, gets sick, throws up in the grass, eats it again, gets sick again, throws it up again, eats it again, etc. A dog never seems to learn. Even if it hates eating its own vomit, it still does it over and over again. Those on the edge of sexual addiction do the same thing. Even though they sometimes hate what they're doing, they do it anyway. These are the individuals who go to God over and over again asking for forgiveness for the ten-thousandth time. The constant repetition of the same sin not only reveals a man's foolishness and weakness; it also reveals his real heart's desire. He obviously loves himself and his sin much more than he loves his God. That is why he goes back to his nauseating sin over and over and over. If you, like the dog we read about today, constantly go back to the same habitual sin, you are headed for a big fall. Repeating the same sick sin over and over again should make you sick. It makes God sick.

Do you really want to be a slave to sin?

Rand Hummel is the assistant director of The WILDS Christian Camp and Conference Center in Brevard, North Carolina.

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Light in the Shadows

Are You Getting a Call from God?

John Vaughn

Imagine a young person who is considering doing something wrong, when suddenly he receives a cell phone call from a Christian friend inviting him to do something right. Now, imagine yourself facing temptation and at

that very moment getting a call from God. That is essentially what Paul is teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8. Fundamental Baptists have a lot in common with the believers in Thessalonica. They understand what is involved in salvation and spiritual growth. As one devotional commentator has put it, "the Thessalonians were exemplary in their conversion," (1:1–10). They were "exemplary in their evangelism," (2:1–16). Then, they were "exemplary in their discipleship," (2:17–3:13). Having reminded them in chapters three and four how they were saved, Paul then teaches in chapters four and five, how they should live.

And, thankfully for us, in doing so, he taught them about holiness and admonished them to it. Fundamental Baptists know what to do, but they too need an exhortation to actually do it. When Paul begins (4:1) with “Furthermore,” he is saying, “All that remains now is this exhortation that follows.” He “asks,” yea “pleads” in “the authority of Jesus Christ,” that “as they have been taught, so they would live.” His appeal is earnest: “Please, in Christ, you know what to do; now do it!” Moral failure is rooted in disobedience more than ignorance. Rather than developing impure habits, Paul pleads for habits of holiness, that “ye would abound more and more,” in right living.

Admit it—you already know what to do. “For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus” (4:2). You already know what the will of God is in Christian morality. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (4:3). God does intend to make His people holy, but the language here does not present that promise. This statement requires a life of holiness. Holiness is what God expects. Thus, we must not separate the requirement for the condition from the requirement for human compliance. This word “sanctification,” also used in Romans 6:19, and 1 Corinthians 1:30, refers to “purity of life,” which involves ceasing to do evil and learning to do well.

That same concept is developed here in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4, as we are taught to “abstain from fornication” and “know how to possess [our bodies] in [holiness] and honour.” This we know: we were born into a fallen condition and still live in sinful flesh, facing temptation to sin, but, now that we have been saved and are being sanctified, we participate in our sanctification by not sinning and continuing to grow in the knowledge of Christ. The very immature must hear it often; “Stop doing that wrong thing; do this right thing.” Those who are growing to maturity are learning to say it themselves; “I will not do that wrong thing; I will do this right thing.” Full maturity rehearses it almost unconsciously, making the right choice out of habit as the selfishly immature make the wrong choice out of habit.

Gaining increasing mastery over lusts and appetites is not just for those who have fallen into the embarrassing sin of moral failure. It is a basic responsibility of all Christians. The old nature has as its essence the attitudes that bear fruit in moral failure. Selfish, indulgent carnality is the essence of the flesh. We are commanded to restrain it—to abstain from its outward expressions. But there is not just an appeal here to behave properly; the appeal is to believe properly. It is fairly easy to understand that gross gratification of lust, here called “the lust of concupiscence,” is completely inappropriate. When we see it in the world, we recognize it immediately (4:5). But the Christian must see it in himself and realize that his requirement to do right goes much further. It is inappropriate to create any expectation

that cannot be righteously satisfied.

Even sinful cultures set up barriers to behaviors that tend to destroy those cultures. American culture mocks the sanctity of sexual relationships and amuses itself with childish attempts to “cross the line” with its humor. But there would be nothing to laugh about at all if there weren’t an admission that there is a line to be crossed. The basest man who imagines or engages in immorality with another man’s daughter is outraged that it could happen to his own daughter. Men sear their consciences, but they have consciences to sear. Paul draws the line; “That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter” (4:6). Don’t put a temptation beyond the obvious barrier so that a man overreaches his own restraints to have it. Don’t encourage a desire that cannot be righteously fulfilled. God deals with that kind of thing because “the Lord is the avenger of all such.”

Be “forewarned” because this has been “testified” clearly. It is not popular to preach on modesty, propriety, and standards. Holding the tempter or temptress responsible for his or her part in another’s sin brings scoffing and ridicule, but 1 Thessalonians 4:6 forbids “defrauding” of any kind. This is a barrier that no believer is to “go beyond.” It is “out of bounds.” That is God’s will for Christian purity. It is contrary to God’s will to cross that line. There is a fence far enough away from moral failure that should not be climbed. The Holy Spirit has every right to treat those inside the fence as trespassers.

Because purity of life is the will of God, purity of life is the call of God. God calls us out of worldliness altogether. He calls us into moral purity, not just the purity of the body, but of the heart. The choice is clear: “uncleanness or holiness” (4:7). If you reject holiness, you choose uncleanness; if you reject uncleanness, you must choose holiness. The man who is not enthusiastic about practical holiness is warming up to uncleanness. “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit” (4:8). This is not unclear: “If you reject purity in your life, you are rejecting the God who requires it.” If you do not train your eyes to close the instant they fall on a temptation and then look elsewhere before you open them, you are not rejecting the temptation.

When temptation is “received” it brings forth sin (James 1:15). It is not enough to explain, “I didn’t mean to.” You have to mean not to. If you would not fall into sin, don’t lean over its edge for a look. Paul’s argument is profoundly simple: God requires this; He has given you the Holy Spirit to help you (4:8); don’t do the things that will tempt you, and don’t do things that will tempt others. You are called to purity of life: answer that call.

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*God calls us out
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Marsh and Gretchen Fant

My Beloved and My Friend

Maintaining Moral Purity within Marriage

“What is the problem, as you see it?” I asked the couple sitting across my desk. The answer I got was too predictable. The names and faces were different, but the situation that seemed unique to them was becoming so common to me that it was disturbing.

The tension was thick. Marie and John were married and in their early thirties. They had begun their relationship with much hope. But eight years and three children later, things somehow had changed. Marie’s eyes were red and swollen; John looked defeated. “How could he do this to me?” she demanded.

The weekend before, Marie had awakened in the middle of the night and noticed John was not in bed. Concerned, she crept down the stairs to see what was wrong. As she looked into the den, there he was—gazing at the despicable image on the computer screen that now was embedded in Marie’s mind. At first he claimed it was a mistake—just a fluke. But she knew better, and he finally confessed to his regular habit of Internet pornography.

Some might say John had fallen into sin, but in reality he had *jumped* into it. Falling is what we do my mistake. Jumping is intentional. For some reason he had justified living in a fantasy world of lust apart from the relationship with his wife he had once vowed to be faithful to. How could this happen? Was there something missing in his relationship

with his wife that would compel him to jump into this lifestyle of adultery in his imagination? At this point, to Marie, the thought of a physical relationship with her husband was repulsive. “How can I be sure he’s not thinking of someone else while he’s being intimate with me?” she sobbed. “I’ve had three children. . . . I’ll never look like those women on the Internet!” There seemed to be no hope.

That there is no hope for the relationship is a lie, because as long as we look in God’s Word for answers, there is hope (Rom. 15:4). That there is something missing in John and Marie’s relationship, though, is true. Since the scenario is so common, could the missing ingredient also be a common one? Could it be that there might be a common kind of “glue” that would hold our Christian marriages together, that would help us to preserve moral purity and marital intimacy?

When we search the Scriptures on the subject of sexual intimacy, an obvious place to start is the Song of Solomon—the book of the Bible that gives us a picture of God’s design for the physical relationship in marriage. In this book God reveals to us conversations between Solomon and his bride. We could dissect it and receive instruction on the mechanics of marital intimacy, but we know that is not the root problem in the case of John and Marie. As we read through this unusual love story, we find something even deeper, something foundational that might help us guard or mar-

riages from moral failure. This “something” is revealed in the way this bride describes her husband. She states, “This is my beloved, and this is my friend” (5:16).

The simple question is, are you a friend to your spouse? Are you willing to work to develop or rekindle your friendship? In calling Solomon her “friend,” his bride reveals an aspect of their relationship that perhaps is missing in many marriages today. *Although true friendship can exist without physical intimacy, true physical intimacy cannot exist without genuine friendship.* In any marriage, physical intimacy can be interrupted by temporary situations such as pregnancy, illness, or separation. But the friendship we have with our spouse should never be interrupted; it is this friendship that gives us the ability to work together through the trials and difficulties of life. It is this foundation of friendship that enables us to maintain a life of moral purity and physical intimacy with our spouse.

So how can I be a friend to my spouse? Or how can I develop or rekindle that friendship? To answer that question, we need to ask yet another: What does Biblical friendship look like?

Friends Spend *Time* Together

Getting to know someone takes time. The first challenge I would give Marie and John is called the “fifteen-minute assignment.” It may seem too simple or even trite, but you may be surprised at how difficult it is for some. This is it: every day you must spend at least fifteen minutes with the Lord (in personal Bible reading/devotions and prayer), fifteen minutes with your family, and fifteen minutes talking with your spouse. In the fifteen minutes with your spouse you are to talk *only* with your spouse (send all children out to a safe place). In the book of 1 Peter, husbands are instructed to “dwell with [their wives] according to knowledge” (3:7). How can a husband and wife develop friendship if they don’t spend any time together? How can the husband dwell “according to knowledge” if he can’t even spend fifteen minutes per day talking with her? It is surprising how many couples claim as impossible the simple task of talking at least fifteen minutes per day to their spouse.

Friends *Trust* Each Other

Another quality of true friendship is mutual trust. A wife will grow in trust as she sees her husband’s willingness to express sacrificial love to her. The husband’s goal in loving his wife is help her to grow spiritually in order to prepare her for the judgment seat of Christ.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:25–27)

A second challenge for John would be to begin leading in family devotions. This could be something as simple as gathering to memorize a passage of Scripture together. It

does not have to be anything elaborate or complicated; he just needs to take an active role as the spiritual leader of the home. As the husband resolves to take the spiritual leadership of the home, his wife and children will respond in increased trust. As a wife resolves to follow in obedience to God and her husband, the husband will respond likewise in increased trust to her (Prov. 31:11).

Friends Are *Teachable*

For a married couple to grow as friends, they both must be learners. A husband and wife who commit to seek God’s truth and be changed by it will grow in friendship as they grow closer to their Lord. God’s ways are not our ways. To even know how to act in certain situations toward your spouse, you must be willing to understand your Biblical role and commit to fulfill it by God’s grace.

One obvious area in which husband and wife must be teachable is that of the sexual relationship. Whether the issue is withholding sexual intimacy or demanding it, both need to understand God’s mind on the issue in order to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities before Him. In 1 Corinthians 7:2–5, the apostle Paul speaks on this subject.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

God’s Word is clear: The sexual relationship is not about you; it is about satisfying your spouse. Self-satisfaction, masturbation for example, is unbiblical. My challenge for Mary might be to examine her attitude about her sexual relationship with John: has she been too tired, too preoccupied with the children, or has she just had better things to do lately? She may need to repent of her attitudes and actions. As they work to restore their relationship, she must accept her God-given responsibilities, acknowledging that she may have inadvertently contributed to John’s sin by not fulfilling her responsibility to him in this area. John, however, is entirely responsible for his sin. Another challenge I might give him is to make a list of the ways in which he has shown selfishness by turning to pornography to satisfy his own lust.

There must be a reason Solomon’s bride described him as “my beloved and my friend.” Although the focus of the Song of Solomon is physical intimacy, maybe she knew they needed more than just that in their marriage to maintain godly, moral purity.

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You know the sinking feeling in your heart when you’re traveling down the interstate and traffic slows to a crawl. Blue lights flash in the distance—there is an accident ahead. You stare at the twisted metal that was once an SUV and notice with sadness the bodies lying on the side of the road that have been covered with a blanket. Someone has been mortally injured. You have entered into a crash zone.

The highways of the Internet are filled with moral wreckage, collapses, and breakdowns. Sally, a twenty-three-year-old mother of two began to fill the time her husband spent away from home with “harmless” conversations with men in a chat room. Seven months later, she left her two children with a relative and began an adulterous relationship with a man she had met online.

In a western U.S. city, a twenty-seven-year-old faces up to five years in prison after being convicted of four charges that included sexual misconduct and furnishing alcohol to a minor. “The criminal complaint resulted from a romance that began after he read the girl’s profile on the computer service MySpace.com.” The girl, who was fourteen, published mostly accurate information about herself on the site but lied about her age, claiming that she was nineteen in order to set up an account.¹

These two accounts, one true the other fictional, serve to emphasize that the dark streets of the Internet can be a dangerous place to travel; you must proceed with caution when entering into a “crash zone.”

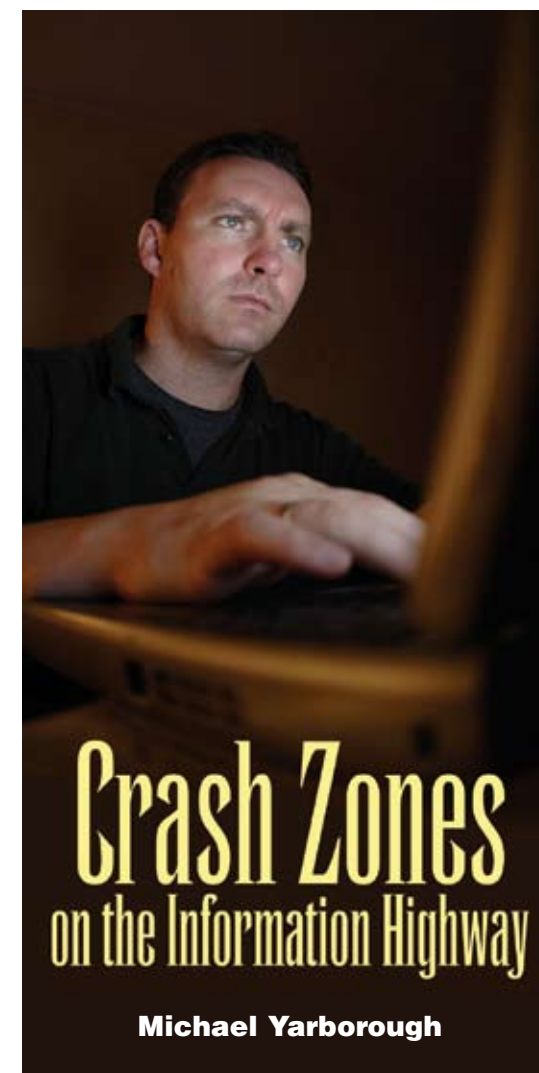
Crash Zone #1: Newsgroups

Newsgroups² are places on the Internet in which users may post messages for others to read and respond to. Messages are limited to a specific subject area for efficiency’s sake. Objectionable newsgroups fall into two different categories: conversational (conversations about sexual subjects or inappropriate subject matter) and visual (providing links for downloading sexually explicit and/or inappropriate material).

Not all newsgroups are evil, but those that are may be blocked by use of a few simple commands and Internet filters.

Crash Zone #2: Chat Rooms

A chat room is a meeting place or open forum where people from anywhere in the world can converse with each other by typing messages. Chat groups are newsgroups that



occur in real time. A chat group is like a telephone conference call with typing instead of speaking.³ According to Dan Olinger in his article “Internet Safety,”

Like newsgroups, the chat concept is not inherently objectionable. It holds tremendous potential for group communication on specific subjects. Imagine being able to hold a conference call with scores of participants around the world for no more than the cost of Internet access. In its infancy, however, chat technology has become popular as a sort of virtual singles bar, useful to those who want to “talk dirty” to someone. In some, it seems that the area is filled with young men who are trying to pick up young women (or other young men). There are cases on record of child molesters establishing contact with young people through chat areas, finding someone from their town, and establishing contact directly for purposes of molestation.⁴

Chat rooms include online forums, graphical multi-user environments (used by gamers), and other forms of multi-user Internet

interactions that connect people to other people with similar interests. Chat rooms can range from text-only communication to webcams that allow participants to see one another in real time online.

A one-on-one form of a chat-room that is popular with teens in instant messaging (IM) through a cell phone. Young people will send text messages and/or pictures to one another through their cell phones. Teens and preteens do not always have the maturity and/or discernment to monitor their messages. Parents should be aware of “cyber-bullies” who intimidate and bring harm to other young people through graphic or demeaning pictures or comments that may be posted on a website, in e-mail, or through cell phones.

Chat room participants often communicate with one another through abbreviated letters and numbers called “chat acronyms” that stand for certain words or phrases. BTW means “by the way” and G2G stands for “gotta go.” Discerning parents should monitor instant messages and be aware of your child’s conversations. You can look up the meanings of these acronyms by typing in “chat acronyms” into an Internet search engine (Google, Yahoo, etc.).

Marc Monte, in a message entitled “Threat of the Net,” lists three dangers regarding chat rooms.⁵

- Chat rooms allow people to build “relationships” with others at a distance.
- Chat rooms are frequented by child molesters and other seedy characters seeking to make contact with teens and children.
- Chat room “friendships” frequently lead to personal contact—often with horrific results.

Some helpful sites that can help parents stay informed include chatdanger.com, netaalert.net, onlinesafety4teens, and blogspot.com.

Crash Zone #3: Social Networking Sites

Technically, social networking sites could be considered chat rooms, but Internet entrepreneurs such as MySpace.com or facebook.com offer young people a cyber combination of a yearbook, personal diary, and social club. MySpace and other social networking sites are “Friday night meeting places” for millions of young people across America.

There are some things that you should know about social networking sites that should raise concern about your children having a webspace there.

- *Teens/predators who post inappropriate and suggestive pictures and comments.* Those who visit these sites will find all kinds of pictures of young people in revealing positions and pictures of teens scantily dressed. Language is often vile, and these sites include scenes of binge drinking and apparent drug use. Teens frequently list not only their names and addresses but even cell phone numbers and after-school schedules.
- *Teens who give personal information that can be used by online predators.* Young people can post pictures of themselves and write about their likes, dislikes, friends, and school. Most teens assume only their friends can see their profiles. Teen users often do not realize everyone with Internet access, including sexual predators, may see the pictures and personal information they post. Privacy and cyberspace experts relate that teens who don’t list their name and address can provide enough personal information—such as the kinds of bands and boys they love—for a pedophile to use to con their way into their lives.⁶

How should parents respond to social networking sites? At the very least, you should monitor your children’s activities online. You must know their passwords and review their space regularly. There are some good reasons to steer your young people away from these sites.

- The revealing of personal information can create serious security and safety issues.
- Language, content, and environment in many spaces are suggestive at best and pornographic at worst.
- Such sites have a reputation for attracting predators and disreputable types.

You should ask your children if they have space on one of these social networking sites. If they do, you need to examine the “crash zones” on these sites.

- Have you learned “cyberlanguage” so that you know what your children are writing?
- Have you visited your child’s space? Do you know what he or she is saying to his or her “friends”?
- Can you be assured that their “friends” are not in fact sexual predators and/or deviants?
- Have you browsed the “social networking” neighborhood? Is this a place you want your children to “hang out”?
- Can you be assured that personal information will not end up in the wrong hands?

Some necessary precautions for your home computer would include a firewall, Internet filters, and spyware software. Computers should be password protected, in plain view, and young people must understand that their sites and activities may be reviewed at any time. Parents must have a “zero tolerance” policy concerning abuses and violations on computers used by their young people.

Crash Zone #4: Blogs

Greg Linscott, in a recent *FrontLine* article,⁷ defined a blog as “an online journal or diary, usually with capability for readers to interact with the author/material through comments.” Pastor Linscott’s article gives an excellent overview of blogging practices and challenges. There are two important “crash zones” to avoid if you choose to interact with others by blogging.

- *Arrogance.* God places a premium on humility and sounds out strong warnings concerning the devastation that occurs when motivations, actions, and responses arise from a proud heart. Proverbs 16:18a reminds us that “pride goeth before destruction.” Ecclesiastes 7:8b asserts that “the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” Romans 12:16 challenges us to “be not wise in [our] own conceits” (e.g., do not be wise in your own estimation). Young men in the ministry today are well educated and articulate, but without a loving, humble spirit, words become swords that destroy rather than instruments that edify and challenge. James reminds us that we should be “quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath” (1:19).
- *Time use.* Time is life. God has given each person a certain number of days on the earth, so we must be good stewards of time. Reading and participating in weblogs certainly may be helpful in order to stay informed, but the discerning pastor and other believers must measure time expenditures and contemplate before God whether or not the amount time spent on the Internet might be better spent in other activities that positively impact eternity (prayer, evangelistic efforts, family time).

The information highway can be a useful tool for discerning, mature believers. Keep in mind that you should not be involved with unbelievers in sinful, intimate relationships (1 Cor. 5:9–11). Use your time to grow in Christ, avoiding unnecessary use of time on the Internet (1 Pet. 2:2; Eph. 5:16). Parents, you are responsible to God in guiding and protecting your children (Deut. 6:7; Prov. 1:8).

Spirit-filled Christians must be circumspect and prudent while driving on the information highway. Keep in mind that there are underage users on the Internet, and some may be your own children. Whatever your calling—pastor, parent, lay leader, or growing believer—beware of the crash zones. The Internet highways can be dangerous, but if you will be prudent and circumspect in your use of it, you can avoid the heartache of a destroyed relationship or the tragedy of a child drawn into the clutches of sexual predators.

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¹Portland *Press Herald*, December 19, 2005.

²*Internet Safety*, Dan Olinger, found at <http://www.bjupress.com/resources/articles/t2t/1005.pdf>.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Sermon by Marc Monte, “Threat of the Net,” found at SermonAudio.com.

⁶Parry Aftab, parryaftab.blogspot.com/.

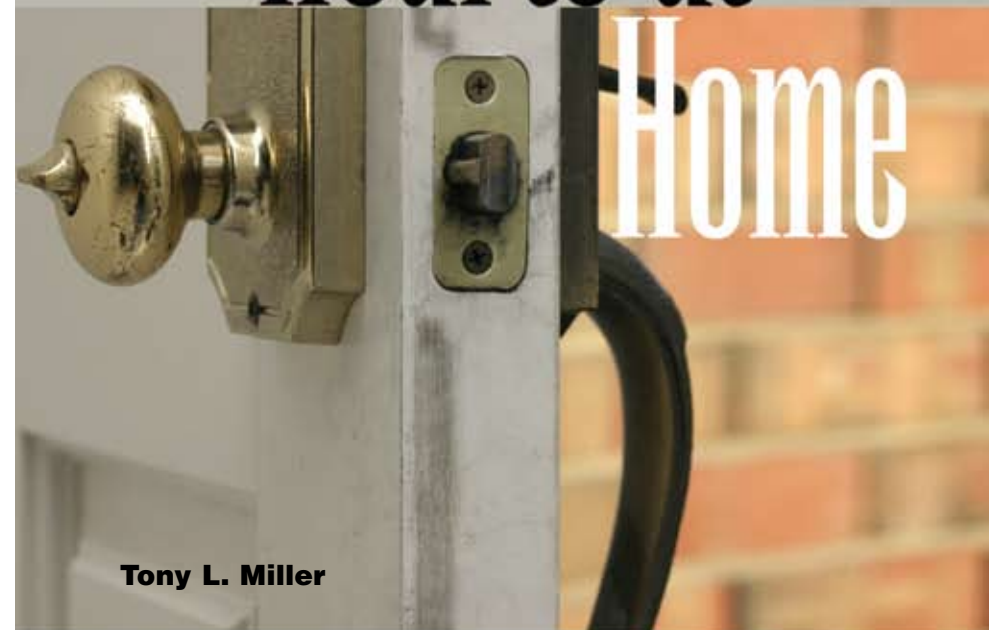
⁷“Blogging or Flogging,” Greg Linscott, *FrontLine* Magazine, July/August 2006.

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Protecting the Hearts at Home



Tony L. Miller

When our daughter was in high school, a European film company came to our area to produce a documentary on Christianity in America. They interviewed and filmed our family for this program. The main focus was an extended private interview of our daughter by one of the company’s women. To say the least, we wondered what kind of interrogation or indoctrination might occur during that interview. Ultimately, though, we believe our daughter gave a clear presentation of what a Christian teenager should Biblically be.

Think of it—what if you had a stranger show up at your doorstep saying, “I want to spend an extended private time with your child,” wanting not only to question your Christian beliefs but also to indoctrinate your child on how to steal and not be caught? Or to learn to be a wizard without warning about the dangers of the occult? Or how to enjoy drinking and illegal drugs without negative consequences? Or to have sex outside of a normal marriage relationship without contacting STDs? What would your response be? You say, “There is not enough money in the world for a stranger to pay our family to access our child this way.” But *we* are paying money for strangers to access our children and influence them against our Bible beliefs. How? By paying for media entertainment that promotes evil without showing the consequences.

As leaders of our homes, we have not made the heart resolutions that David did.

I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. (Ps. 101:1–3).

In *Exploring the Psalms* John Phillips says, “It is said that Ernest the Pious, Duke of Saxe-Gotha, sent an unfaithful minister a copy of this psalm. It became a proverb in the land that when a minister of state was guilty of misconduct, ‘He would soon get the prince’s psalm to read.’” Better yet would it be if we “got” this psalm *before* we fail as leaders, rather than afterwards. Note the nine “I wills” and the six “I shall,” which indicate strong resolve of heart about what would come into the hearts within the psalmist’s home.

The First Resolution

In Psalm 101 the first resolution to protect the hearts in our homes is “I will sing of mercy and judgment.” In verse 1 he says he twice says he will sing of God’s faithful love (“mercy”) and His righteous decision-making (“judgment”).

The heart that is rejoicing in God’s faithfulness and righteous acts is not easily tempted to immorality. Romans 1:21 demonstrates the protective reality of thanksgiving, which keeps us from idolatry and immoral perversion: “When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.” Worshipping, praising, and giving thanks to God inoculate a believer’s heart from being tempted toward the “pleasures of sin for a season.” When our hearts are mad and not glad in the Lord, a “root of bitterness” will lead to a “profane” life of fornication like Esau’s, as Hebrews 12:15–17 shows:

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Good music in the home with the resolution “I will sing” is “first base” in the game of a godly home. Joyful people are normally Spirit-filled people, and joyful people do not need illegitimate pleasure for happiness. They already have the joy of the Lord as their pleasure.

The Second Resolution

“I will behave myself wisely” is the second resolve David makes toward a blameless life. When David uses “perfect” twice in verse two, he is not determining to be a perfectionist but to have a blameless life. In light of behaving wisely, remember wisdom in the Bible is a practical, not just intellectual, concept. Wisdom basically means choosing the best means to the best end in all matters of life. David

was determining to make godly decisions so he would end up well. And though he had one major failure in his life, he certainly ended life with God’s commendation. His predecessor king, Saul, experienced a bad end because of the many bad means he chose. Let us resolve, “I will behave myself wisely.”

The Third Resolution

The third resolution is “I will walk within my house with a perfect [blameless] heart.” Note the psalmist’s effort to live (walk) in the home and with a right heart. The heart of living is a matter of the heart motivation. That motivation is to please God in private as well as in public life.

In the next verse a personal standard is set: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” All Christian standards should come from heart convictions connected to the attributes of God. As you are forming your convictions (internal persuasion of what pleases God) and your standards (external parameters or guidelines from your convictions), from what personal quality of God are those standards flowing? For example, why should we have a conviction not to put anyone before God in an idolatrous way? Because the Bible says, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Why? Because “I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.” God’s jealous nature is one of several reasons we should keep our lives from idolatrous relationships.

In the U.S. sexual pleasure outside of marriage is a huge idol. We need to get into the Bible and thoroughly study it, allowing it to convict us and to bring us to the right resolutions for our homes when through it we connect to the attributes of God.

The Fourth Resolution

“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” is the fourth resolution (v. 3) and the most quoted of all eight resolutions in Psalm 101. The “wicked thing” is the “work” of wicked men or those who go astray. For our emotional being to be Biblically balanced, we must fervently love and equally hate. The psalmist demonstrates emotional love toward God’s faithful love (v. 1) and faithful men (v. 6), yet he still hates wicked works of wicked men (v. 4). Loving God means that we should hate the sin of wicked men.

Do we hate pornography, adultery, and abortion? In what ways should we see to it that no wicked thing is set before our eyes in our homes?

We pay big bucks for our computers, DVD players, televisions, and reading materials; each teaches a lifestyle while it entertains our families. Allowing children to have a TV, to have access to the Web, and to view videos in the privacy of their rooms is dangerous. Computers with access to the Internet should be filtered, located in a public room of the house, and not used privately after the rest of the family goes to bed.

The original question was, “Would you allow someone to teach your children positively concerning immorality, wizardry, thievery, and drug and alcohol addiction?” Though we immediately respond, “No!” in fact many Christians do pay teachers to come into their homes to lead their families toward the four general categories of the works of the flesh: immoral passion, idolatrous power, “I”-

exalting pride, and intemperate pleasure. (Note Galatians 5:19–21.) Wicked people come freely into our homes not by the door but via cable and satellite, the Internet, magazine subscriptions, and DVDs. The first question we should ask ourselves is, “Are we setting people before our children who will teach them to enjoy the works of the flesh instead of being stirred toward the fruit of the Spirit?”

Avoiding “Wicked Things” in the Home

Having counseled men for over thirty years, I am convinced the greatest downfall of American Christian men is toleration rather than hatred of flesh-exciting media at home. How can leaders in the home prevent setting “wicked things” before their eyes and hearts? Some book and magazine subscriptions should be cancelled. If television companies do not offer technological features to block pornography, certain movies based on their ratings, or program content, they should not be paid to come into your home. All computer Internet access should be filtered; spam should be blocked, chat rooms monitored; logs should be easily checked. There should be no private use of the Internet during the day or after everyone else goes to bed, and, if necessary, a system of accountability should be installed for all logs if participation in pornography is a temptation.

This is not an extensive list, but there are services to assist with many of these. For example, Dan Olinger has written an excellent two-part article on “Internet Safety” in the Bob Jones University Press publication *Teacher to Teacher*. He gives insight in part one on how to responsibly access the Internet with its technical dangers (spam, pop-up ads,

spyware, viruses, hackers, sexual predators) and personal dangers (violations of privacy and false information). Part two gives a look at ways to prevent access to pornography and other objectionable types of material.

Another example: We don’t have to watch movies to learn about their content. Leaders in the home can go to websites such as www.screenit.com to check content categories such as violence, music, language, sensuality, and even the general storyline. By using modern technology we don’t have to be “surprised” by movie content. Responsible men can find out the content before exposing their hearts and households to sin-provoking media. American Christians need to start viewing Christian DVDs that excite to the Spirit instead of feeding the flesh nature.


Four More “I Wills”

Four more “I wills” conclude Psalm 101: “I will not know a wicked person”; “I will cut off a slanderer”; “I will not suffer a proud heart”; “I will destroy the wicked in the land.” Interestingly, the Hebrew word “wicked” is best translated into Greek as *ponoros*, which is half of our English word “pornography.”


The psalmist took a no-tolerance “I will” stance to eliminate certain kinds of people from influencing his house or nation. As New Testament believers, we are not asked of God to “destroy the wicked of the land,” but we should do everything to destroy and eliminate the *works* of those who go astray. It starts at home.

Tony L. Miller pastors Morningside Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.


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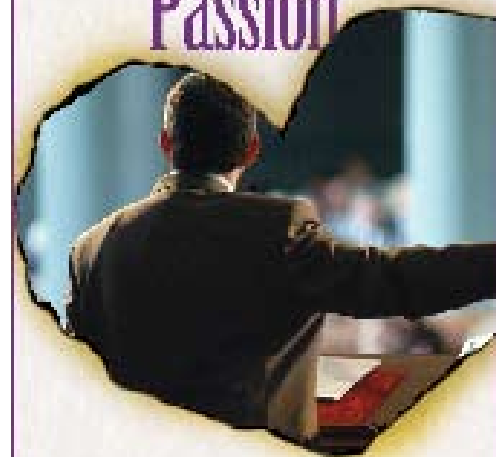
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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

Avoiding a Preacher's Perils

Of the literally hundreds of books that have been written on preaching, there are perhaps less than a dozen that can justly be called “classics.” G. Campbell Morgan’s *Preaching*, James Stalker’s *The Preacher and His Models*, C. H. Spurgeon’s *Lectures to My Students*, and *Preaching and Preachers* by David Martyn Lloyd-Jones are among that small, select company in many preachers’ estimation. A fifth work that it would be almost impossible to omit is John Henry Jowett’s seven-lecture series delivered at Yale University (1911–12) and subsequently published under the title *The Preacher: His Life and Work*.

How do you know a classic? Well, the old joke about them is that they’re books everyone’s heard of but no one ever reads. But Jowett’s series certainly doesn’t fit that description in my experience. I’ve reread most of his lectures several times since I first obtained the book over twenty-five years ago. In fact, just a few weeks ago I started back through and have caught myself looking up from various passages several times and breathing a prayer that I might be more like the ideal he describes. It’s this quality of drawing a reader back time and again and filling him with new wonder each time that makes a book a classic in my book!

Jowett’s second lecture is provocatively titled “The Perils of the Preacher.” He bases it on Paul’s personal guardedness about his practices, *Lest . . . I myself should be a castaway* (1 Cor. 9:27). *The Apostle Paul foresees the possibility*, Jowett observes, *of his becoming a counterfeit coin in the sacred currency, a spurious dealer in sublime realities*.

What would the average pastor today include among his top five perils to a preacher? Tragically, the stan-

dard of ministerial ethics and behavior has fallen to such an all-time low in this generation that the first dangers that come to most of our minds include really sordid sins, the kind that actually call into question whether a man is even regenerated.

It doesn’t seem to have crossed Jowett’s mind that the young listeners before him needed to be warned about addiction to sports or counseling women or pornography or any of our other current dangers, though the history of that period includes a certain share of men who made shipwreck by succumbing to those kinds of temptations. Instead, Jowett singles out the really big perils, the ones so common to preachers that few seem to take any notice of them.

For instance, *deadening familiarity with the sublime*. That is, becoming so accustomed to God’s words and the weekly routine of preaching them that *our studies may be workshops instead of “upper rooms.”* We’re like those who live under the shadow of the Alps and for that very reason gradually lose our sense of wonder at their stupendous heights.

There’s also the danger of the *perilous gravitation of the world*. But what Jowett feared most for preachers wasn’t their being lured into scandalous sin, but their developing an *illicit spirit of compromise*. He warned that it *calls itself by many agreeable names, such as “expediency,” “tactfulness,” and “diplomacy.”* It takes, he said, *the medium-line between white and black and wears an ambiguous grey. It will entice you to wear grey habits when you mix with the business-men of your congregation, and to “talk grey” in your conversation with them. We pay the tribute of easy tolerance to ambiguous pleasures. We soften everything to a comfortable acquiescence. We seek to be “all things to all men” to please all. Grey is a very useful color, it is in keeping with a wedding or a funeral. And yet the word of Holy Writ is clear and decisive, raising the most exalted standard: “Keep thy garments always white.”*

“The husbandman
that laboreth must
be first partaker
of the fruits”
(2 Tim. 2:6)

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There are other perils of which Jowett warns, each of them just as subtle and just as commonly tolerated. But what I'd like to do is transition to the last half of this same lecture and let him expand on two related topics: the results of giving in to these kinds of temptations, and the only ways in which we can avoid them. With little editing, here is the remainder of Jowett's classic lecture.

Surely, of all pathetic sights on God's earth there is none more pathetic than a preacher of the gospel who, by the benumbing power of custom, or by the wiles and guiles of the world, has been separated from his God! For when a preacher, by an unhallowed absorption in the mere letter of truth, or by a successful invasion of worldliness, gets away from God, the direful consequences are immediate and destructive. Let me mention some of the results.

First of all, our characters will lose their spirituality. We shall lack that fine fragrance which makes people know that we dwell in "the King's gardens." There will be no "heavenly air" about our spirits. Atmospheres will not be mysteriously changed by our presence. And, surely, this ought to be one of the most gracious

There is an exquisite line in Paul's portrayal of his friend Onesiphorus which describes this very characteristic of ministerial service. "He oft refreshed me," and the refreshment is just the bringing of fresh air, a vitalizing breath, a restoring climate for faint and weary souls. The coming of Onesiphorus was like the opening of a window to one held in close imprisonment.

services of a Christian minister, by his very presence to create a climate by which the faint and overburdened are revived.

There is an exquisite line in Paul's portrayal of his friend Onesiphorus which describes this very characteristic of ministerial service. "He oft refreshed me," and the refreshment is just the bringing of fresh air, a vitalizing breath, a restoring climate for faint and weary souls. The coming of Onesiphorus was like the opening of a window to one held in close imprisonment. He brought an atmosphere with him, and he himself had found it in the breathing of the Holy Ghost. My brethren, it is our spirituality that provides that atmosphere of refreshment, and

it is active in our silences as well as in our speech. If we are snared away from God that atmosphere is devitalized, our personal "air" loses its power of quickening, and no "faint-heart" calls down blessings as we pass by.

But a second thing happens when, for any cause, we are separated from the Lord whom we have vowed to serve. Our speech lacks a mysterious impressiveness. We are wordy but we are not mighty. We are eloquent but we do not persuade. We are reasonable but we do not convince. We preach much but we accomplish little. We teach but we do not woo. We make a "show of power" but men do not move. Men come and go, they may be interested or amused, but they do not bow in penitent surrender at the feet of the Lord. We go on talking, talking, talking, and the haunts of "the evil one" ring with scorn of our futility. Our words are just the "enticing words of man's wisdom," they are not "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

And as it is with our preaching so it is with our enterprises. If our perils overwhelm us our enterprises become pastimes rather than crusades. We are busy but we are futile. We may be always active but the strongholds do not fall. We pass multitudes of resolutions but nobody quakes. We form clubs and societies but there is no vital movement towards God. The central fact of the matter is this: when a preacher is snared away from God and from the good-pleasure of God he does not count, and he is, therefore, not counted, and evil dances flippantly along the open road heedless of his presence, because he has no magic weapon by which it can be either crippled or destroyed.

But I turn to a more positive aspect of my theme. How can all these perils be avoided? Nay, how can we make our perils minister to a richer, stronger, and more fruitful life? For that is life's true victory, not to ignore dangers but to despoil them. It is possible to take the strength of a peril and enlist it in our own resources. That is the privilege of temptation: we can sack it and transfer the wealth of its strength into the treasury of our own will. That is a great principle. The minister's life has many perils, and he has, therefore, many possible stores of enrichment. We cannot affirm this to ourselves too often and too confidently: conquered perils become allies—in every victory there is a transfer of dynamics. Perils may indicate our possible impoverishment; they equally indicate our possible enrichment.

How, then, is it to be done? By studious and reverent regard to the supreme commonplaces of the spiritual life. We must assiduously attend to the culture of our souls. We must sternly and systematically make time for prayer, and for the devotional reading of the Word of God. We must appoint private seasons for the deliberate and personal appropriation of the Divine Word, for self-examination in the presence of its warnings, for self-humbling in the presence of its judgments, for

self-heartening in the presence of its promises, and for self-invigoration in the presence of its glorious hopes. In the midst of our fussy, restless activities, in all the multitudinous trifles which, like a cloud of dust, threaten to choke our souls, the minister must fence off his quiet and secluded hours, and suffer no interference or obtrusion.

I offer that counsel with particular urgency now that I have come to labor in this country. I am profoundly convinced that one of the gravest perils which beset the ministry of this country is a restless scattering of energies over an amazing multiplicity of interests, which leaves no margin of time or of strength for receptive and absorbing communion with God. We are tempted to be always "on the run," and to measure our fruitfulness by our pace and by the ground we cover in the course of the week!

Gentlemen, we are not always doing the most business when we seem to be most busy. We may think we are truly busy when we are really only restless, and a little studied retirement would greatly enrich our returns. We are great only as we are God-possessed; and scrupulous appointments in the upper room with the Master will prepare us for the toil and hardships of the most strenuous campaign. We must, therefore, hold firmly and steadily to this primary principle, that of all things that need doing this need is supreme, to live in intimate fellowship with God. Let us steadily hold a reasonable sense of values, and assign each appointed duty to its legitimate place. And in any appointment of values this would surely be the initial judgment, that nothing can be well done if we drift away from God. Neglected spiritual fellowship means futility all along the road.

But the discipline of the soul must be serious and studious. This high culture must not be governed by haphazard or caprice. There must be purpose and method and regularity. And you may depend upon it, that when you give yourselves to soul culture in this serious way, it is a travail and not a pastime. If it were easy it might scarcely be worth counseling: it is tremendously difficult, but its rewards are infinite.

One of the most cultured spirits in modern Methodism, a man whose style is as strong as his thoughts are lofty, has recently given this judgment as he looked back upon the years of his ministry: I have not failed to study: I have not failed to visit: *I have not failed to write and meditate: but I have failed to pray. . . . Now why have I not prayed? Sometimes because I did not like it: at other times because I hardly dared: and yet at other times because I had something else to do. Let us be very frank. It is a grand thing to get a praying minister. . . . I have heard men talk about prayer who never prayed in their lives. They thought they did but when you have heard them, they made their own confession in a ruthless way.*

These sentences lift the veil upon a naked experience, and they expose the solemn fact that prayer is very costly, even at the expense of blood, and that churches which have praying ministers may not realize the travail by which the power is gained. We are permitted to look upon our Master as He prays. *In the days of His flesh He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. It was a holy and a costly business. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was, as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* There was something here which we can never share, and yet there is something which we must share if we are leagued with the Lord in the ministry of intercession, and enter into *the fellowship of His sufferings*.

Words like these, written for no eye but God's to see, give deep significance to the sentence I quoted from our distinguished Methodist friend: It is a grand thing to get a praying minister. And another thing becomes evident in the light of this journal: real prayer is the sharing of "the travail which makes God's Kingdom come." Andrew Bonar was a strong minister of "the grace of the Lord Jesus," and in the wrestling communion of prayer he became mighty with God and man. Men of his type, whose souls are elevated and refined by lofty fellowships, approach everything "from above," and not "from beneath."

Perhaps I cannot better illustrate the costliness of this intensive soul-culture than by the example of Dr. Andrew Bonar. Dr. Bonar laboured in Scotland a generation or two ago, and he adorned his ministry by a very saintly life and by very fruitful service. He kept a private diary or journal, contained in two small volumes, containing regular entries from 1828 to within a few weeks of his death in 1892. His daughter has permitted this most priceless record of a soul's

pilgrimage to be given to the world, “in the belief that the voice now silent on earth will still be heard in these pages, calling on us as from the other world to be ‘followers of them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises.’”

Let me give you one or two extracts from this journal. *By the grace of God and the strength of His Holy Spirit I desire to lay down the rule not to speak to man until I have spoken to God: not to do anything with my hand until I have been upon my knees: not to read letters or papers until I have read something of the Holy Scriptures. . . . In prayer in the wood for some time, having set apart three hours for devotion: felt drawn out much to pray for that peculiar fragrance which believers have about them, who are very much in fellowship with God. . . . Yesterday got a day to myself for prayer. With me every time of prayer, or almost every time, begins with a conflict. . . . It is my deepest regret that I pray so little. I should count the days, not by what I have of new instances of usefulness, but by the times I have been enabled to pray in faith, and to take hold upon God. . . . I see that unless I keep up short prayer every day throughout the whole day, at intervals, I lose the spirit of prayer. . . . Too much work without corresponding prayer. To-day setting myself to pray. The Lord forthwith seems to send a dew upon my soul. . . . Was enabled to spend part of Thursday in the church, praying. Have had great help in study since then. . . . Last night could do little else but converse with the Lord about the awakening of souls, and ask it earnestly. . . . Passed six hours to-day in prayer and Scripture-reading, confessing sin, and seeking blessing for myself and the parish.*

Words like these, written for no eye but God’s to see, give deep significance to the sentence I quoted from our distinguished Methodist friend: *It is a grand thing to get a praying minister.* And another thing becomes evident in the light of this journal: real prayer is the sharing of “the travail which makes God’s Kingdom come.” Andrew Bonar was a strong minister of “the grace of the Lord Jesus,” and in the wrestling communion of prayer he became mighty with God and man. Men of his type, whose souls are elevated and refined by lofty fellowships, approach everything “from above,” and not “from beneath.” The trouble with many of us is just this—we come to our work from low levels, from the common angle, with the ordinary points of view. In that way we come to our sermons, and to our pulpits, and to our pastoral work, and to the business affairs of the Church.

We are “from beneath.” We do not come upon our labors “from above,” with the sense of the heavenly about us, with quiet feeling of elevation, and strong

power of vision, and the perception of proportion and values. Men who are “from beneath” belittle and degrade the things they touch. Men who are “from above” elevate them, and give distinction and dignity to the meanest service. And if any minister is to live “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” and to have this lofty bearing and this uplifting constraint in his common work, if he is to be pure and purifying, he must learn to “pray without ceasing.”

And I would add one further word in reference to the discipline of character by the culture of the soul, and it is this: it is only by this primary culture that we gain those secondary virtues which play so vital a part in our moral defenses, and in the effectiveness of our work. The fragrance of character usually rises from the apparently subordinate virtues, the very virtues which are commonly neglected or ignored. All the ten lepers had faith, only one had gratitude, and he is the one who remains beauteous and winsome in the regard of the Lord. And this very grace of gratitude fills a great part in a minister’s life, and so do courtesy, and patience, and that wonderfully beautiful thing we call considerateness, and forbearance, and good-temper. I have called them secondary virtues, but I am afraid I have degraded their rank, so high and so princely a place do they fill in the shining equipment of the Christian ministry. And I name them here in order to reaffirm my conviction that such strong and attractive graces are not “works”; they are “fruits,” the natural and spontaneous growth of much communion with the Lord. We may be fragrant in character, having “beauty” as well as “strength,” if we abide in the King’s gardens.

Gentlemen, I have mentioned our perils, and I have suggested our resources, and the one is more than sufficient for the other. A calling without difficulty would not be worth our choice. You will have traps and enemies, allurements and besetments, all along your way, but “grace abounds” and “the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

If you find these kinds of insights challenging, you’ll want to read Jowett’s entire series. Chapters 4 and 5, “The Preacher in His Study” and “The Preacher in His Pulpit,” are alone worth the cost of the book. Gems stand out on every page. *Preaching that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. . . . The weakness of smaller preachers is that their time is “always ready,” the mighty preachers have long seasons when they know their time “is not yet come.” . . . When you have discovered a jewel give it the most appropriate setting. A fine thought can bear, indeed it demands a fine expression. . . . We are prone to drift through a service when we ought to steer. . . . If we can never be “great” in the pulpit, we can be prayerfully ambitious to be pure, and sincere, and void of offense. Amen.* ☞☞



Mark Minnick is pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980. He speaks frequently in churches and at conferences across the nation and ministers regularly on mission fields around the world.

Bring . . . the Books

Years ago many seminarians were introduced to Richard Baxter through his work *The Reformed Pastor*. Sadly, Baxter has all but disappeared from most seminary programs for ministerial training. Thankfully, there are some who still call attention to his life and written work. Several issues ago Dr. Mark Minnick provided a fresh and helpful review of Baxter’s life and ministry in his column (“First Partakers” *FrontLine*, Sept.–Oct. 2005), reminding readers of Baxter’s ongoing value as an example and encouragement for contemporary ministers. Another reminder comes in the form of a recent edited version of Baxter’s *The Reformed Pastor* retitled *Watch Your Walk: Ministering from a Heart of Integrity* (Victor, 2005). Editors Richard C. Halverson and James M. Houston express their aim for the volume.

The goal for the reader of these books is not to seek information. Instead, these volumes teach one about living wisely. That takes obedience; submission of will; change of heart; and a tender, docile spirit. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he reacted, “He must increase, and I must decrease.” Likewise, spiritual reading decreases our natural instincts, to allow His love to increase in us.

In his introduction to the most recent reprint of *The Reformed Pastor* (Banner of Truth, 1974), J. I. Packer called Baxter “the most outstanding pastor, evangelist and writer on practical and devotional themes that Puritanism produced.” Richard Baxter (1615–91) suffered ill health, persecution, and ministerial rejection as a dissenting nonconformist minister in the Church of England. Whatever his weaknesses, all agree on one aspect of Baxter’s life and ministry—his extraordinary capacity as a pastor.

The secret to Baxter’s pastoral success at Kidderminster lay in his passionate commitment to teach sound doctrine to the adults in the congregation and to call the unconverted to respond to the gospel message. Packer commended *The Reformed Pastor* to modern ministers for three important qualities it possessed. First, it possesses an unusual energy; Baxter’s words goad one to spiritual activity. Second, the book is penetratingly honest and compelling. Finally, Baxter’s writing is marked by rationality. Perhaps Packer’s own words best explain this quality.

Like Whitefield and Spurgeon, he knew that men are blind, deaf, and dead in sin, and only God can convert them; but, again like Whitefield and Spurgeon, he knew too that God works through means, and that rational men must be approached in a rational fashion, and that grace enters by the understanding, and that unless all the evangelist does makes for credibility his message is not likely to be used much to convince. So Baxter insisted

Watch Your Walk! Good Advice from an Old Preacher

that ministers must preach of eternal issues as men who feel what they say, and are as earnest as matters of life and death require; that they must practice church discipline, to show they are serious in saying that God will not accept sin; and that they must do “personal work,” and deal with individuals one by one, because preaching alone often fails to bring things home to ordinary people.

In addition to Packer’s three reasons, the editors of this revision of *The Reformed Pastor* offer another six! Baxter’s writing reveals the true heart and nature of Puritan ministry, which is so often misunderstood by the modern church. Baxter’s words also have an unusual ability to encourage those who are discouraged about ministry in the contemporary church. He calls the contemporary church to define and measure its growth against a Biblical standard rather than a numeric one. Baxter reminds the pastor of his duty to instruct families in his congregation individually so they grow strong in the understanding and obedience of the apostolic faith. He also addresses many of the ills that plague modern ministers and congregations:

Instead of living with one another as one heart, one soul, and one mouthpiece . . . we have lived on the contrary in mutual jealousies and drowned holy love in bitter contentions. We have studied how to disgrace and undermine one another to promote our party’s cause. We have also drawn our people into these struggles, dividing and slandering one another. The public takes notice of all this and not only derides us but also becomes hardened against all religion. When we try to persuade them, they see so many factions that they do not know which to join—and think it is better not to join any of them. Thus thousands grow in contempt of all religion by our divisions. If you are offended by my harsh language, I can tell you I have learned it of God. You should be much more offended by such satanic practices.

Baxter should be read again by ministers because of the alarming Biblical illiteracy of many congregations and the need to disciple such congregations to grow in grace, knowledge, and truth. For those who are already familiar with Baxter, this revision can be a useful tool to present his material in a more readable form for those in the pew. For those who have yet to learn of Baxter, this is a good introduction. ☞☞

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

“ . . . when
thou comest,
bring with thee
. . . the books”
(2 Tim. 4:13)

Straight Cuts

This verse is used commonly to provide a Biblical foundation for condemnation of people and deeds of all kinds. The idea is that this passage forbids not only doing those things that the Bible specifically condemns as sin, but also doing anything that *looks* like it might be sinful or associated with something sinful. This interpretation says that while it might not be sin by any other Bible restriction, an “evil-looking” act (behavior, song, hairstyle, etc.) actually becomes sin based upon the perception of others.

While it is not wise, and may actually be sinful, to purposefully engage in an activity that causes confusion about our morality or ethics, that is not the proper interpretation of this verse. In order to get a better understanding of Paul’s specific intent, we must understand the command in the context, and then we need to explore what the word “appearance” (*eidous*) means.

This command comes last in a list of commands. The list often reminds me of the type of list my wife leaves for our children when we go out for the evening—a last-minute “catch all” of various tasks that must be accomplished. While the commands do not seem to be tightly related, there is a connection, and it is very important.

The previous two commands (v. 21) provide specific insight into verse 22. In verse 21 Paul instructs believers to “test” or “prove” everything. He intends for us to take a careful attitude toward sin in our lives and put everything in life to a holiness test. We cannot exempt any aspect of our lives from Biblical sanctification requirements, even if we do not readily see the connection.

The next command is a logical response to the “proving” or “testing.” “Hold fast” to that which is good. Once we have determined something to be good and valuable, we must continue to “hold on” to it and keep it as part of a life intended to bring glory to God.

But what should we do about that which we find to be evil or unprofitable? Paul’s answer states that we should “abstain from all appearance of evil.” This command in verse 22 is not only logically connected to the commands in verse 21, it is absolutely necessary to complete the thought of the two previous imperatives. If we test everything, what should our response be to the results of the testing—both positively and negatively?

The word *eidous* appears five times in the New Testament. In each of those occurrences it refers to a “visible form” or “manifestation.” In our King James

“Avoiding All Appearance of Evil” 1 Thessalonians 5:22

Version it is translated “shape” (Luke 3:22; John 5:37), “fashion” (Luke 9:29), “sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), or “appearance” in the passage in question. In no place, either in New Testament usage or in any lexicon is there an indication that the word should be translated “appearance” in the sense of “visual similarity.”

Perhaps the source of the misunderstanding is in two distinct English uses of the word “appearance” (according to *Webster’s New World College Dictionary*). In the first sense, we use the word to mean “anything that appears, something seen”: “They made their appearance late in the evening.” In the second sense, we use the word to mean “an outward show; pretense”: “He had the appearance of being innocent.” The word *eidous* is used in the first sense and not in the second.

Thus a translation, using various synonyms for clarity, would look something like this:

Prove (test) all things.

Hold on to (keep) to the things that are good.

Hold away (avoid, keep back from, keep away from, maintain your distance from) every type of (appearance of, visible reality of, form of, occurrence of) evil.

The difference between the proper interpretation of this passage and the common interpretation is significant. The common interpretation says that this passage is about abstaining from everything that looks as though it may be evil. It is about outward appearances. The proper interpretation says that we must abstain from every type of evil, no matter where or how it might look. The first interpretation subjects the believer’s behavior to the perceptions of others—whether correct or not—and creates a standard that is virtually impossible to meet. The second subjects the believer’s behavior to the clear standards of the Word of God—regardless of what others might think.

Conceivably, seeking to abide by an incorrect interpretation of the third command (“abstain from all appearance of evil”) could drive a sincere believer to violate the equally obligatory second command (“hold fast that which is good”). Once I have put a particular aspect of my life to the test of the Word of God and found it to be righteous, I am commanded to hold it—even if others might disapprove through malice or ignorance.

It’s the difference between being a man-pleaser or a God-pleaser. ☞

“Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth”
(2 Tim. 2:15)

Windows

Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Proverbs 31:28

Historically, women have played an important part in the Church. They have gone with courage to martyrs’ deaths;¹ they have served as faithful wives and helpmeets to support the ministries of many of the great and faithful men of God;² they have faced the dangers of the mission fields with their husbands; they have worked tirelessly to serve in the church and the needy of the world; they have been some of God’s truest prayer warriors and they have reared sons and daughters to God’s glory.³

As the month of May approaches, I ponder the impact that countless mothers have made on their children throughout the centuries. Mother’s Day affords all of us opportunity to consider (and express!) the impact our own mothers have made on us. Mother’s Day should remind us of how important motherhood is to our church and society. A cartoon in the *Saturday Evening Post* showed a five- or six-year-old boy talking on the telephone, saying, “Mom is in the hospital; the twins and Roxie, Billy, Sally, the dog, and me and Dad are all home alone.” A home is lacking much when a mother and her love are not there. It is told that excavators among the ruins of Pompeii came upon the body of a child with outstretched arms. A worker exclaimed, “There is a mother here somewhere!” Excavating in the direction of the outstretched arms, they found the mother’s body.⁴

Throughout the years I have heard pastors preach sermons to mothers on Mother’s Day that left the mothers discouraged and defeated rather than inspired and encouraged. While there are times when all of us (including mothers) need to be rebuked, Mother’s Day is a wonderful time to practice Proverbs 31:28: “Her children arise up, and *call her blessed*; her husband also, and *he praiseth her*.”

Praise the Mothers Who Pray

Three important words are found in 1 Samuel 2:1: “And Hannah prayed.” What an impact Hannah made on her family and nation because she prayed! Susanna Wesley and countless other mothers have made a tremendous impact on their children simply because of their prayers.⁵ D. L. Moody tells about speaking to a man who was in great agony of soul. Moody asked him, “‘Was it the address, or any of the hymns?’ He looked up . . . and said, ‘It was my mother’s letter.’ She had written him, asking him to attend the meeting, and had said she would be praying for him when he was at the meeting. The thought of his mother’s prayers and agony had gone home to his heart, and that night he found the Saviour.”⁶

She Shall Be Blessed and Praised!

Hudson Taylor’s Mother. Hudson Taylor was born to Christian parents in Yorkshire, England, in 1832. His father was the local drug-gist and Methodist preacher. His mother was a godly woman who believed in prayer. It was through her prayers that Hudson Taylor was saved. Although he was born in a Christian home, he was somewhat skeptical and rebellious. On one

particular Saturday afternoon Hudson was looking for a book to read in his father’s library. He “happened” upon a tract entitled *It Is Finished*. Hudson figured that he would find and enjoy a story in the beginning and the end of the tract. The words “the finished work of Christ” captured and dominated his thought, and after much contemplation, he trusted Christ later that day. Several days later he told his sister of his conversion and made her promise that she would tell no one. The interesting part is that his mother was more than fifty miles away when she had an overwhelming burden to pray for Hudson’s salvation on the very day that he trusted Christ. She locked herself up until “her heart was flooded with a joyful assurance that her prayers were heard and answered.”⁷ When she returned home ten days after his conversion, Hudson anxiously met her at the door to tell her the good news. Years later he wrote of the incident, “I can almost feel that dear mother’s arms around my neck, as she pressed me to her bosom and said, ‘I know, my boy, I have been rejoicing for a fortnight in the glad tidings you have to tell me.’”⁸

Praise the Mothers Who Give Godly Instruction

Consider the two Biblical examples of Herodias’s daughter and Paul’s son in the faith, Timothy. The daughter of Herodias was “instructed of her mother” (Matt. 14:8), while Timothy, whose mother possessed “unfeigned faith” (2 Tim. 1:5), knew the Scriptures “from a child,” and those Scriptures made him “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15). Both received instruction from their mothers—one led to murder and the other to true salvation in Christ. What a difference godly instruction makes.

John Newton’s Mother. John Newton, the author of the beloved hymn “Amazing Grace,” was born in London on July 24, 1725, to a pious Christian woman and the commander of a merchant ship. In July 1732, thirteen days before John’s seventh birthday, death took his mother, leaving him with only the memory of a godly mother and her Christian teaching. When he was eleven, John went to sea and immersed himself in all the ungodly vices of seamen. Years later, after living

“To every preacher of
righteousness as well
as to Noah, wisdom
gives the command,
‘A window shalt thou
make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

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an ungodly and wretched life as a sailor, John's recollection of his godly mother and her Christian teaching prompted him to seek Christ. On May 10, 1748, when his ship nearly sank in a violent storm, John trusted Christ as his personal Savior. As a result of his mother's influence, John's life affected many generations.

J. B. Gough's Mother. J. B. Gough (1817–86) was a British temperance lecturer in America. Though he had been raised by a godly mother, Gough spent seven years living in open sin. On the night Gough was saved, thoughts of his deceased mother and her teaching flooded his heart. "All at once it seemed as if the very light she left as she passed had spanned the dark chasm of those dreadful seven years, struck the heart, and opened it. The passages of Scripture that she had taught me, and that had been buried in my memory, came to me as if they were being whispered in my ear by the loving lips of my mother herself." How true is the saying, "Mothers write on the hearts of their children what the world's rough hand cannot erase!"⁹

C. H. Spurgeon's Mother. In his autobiography Spurgeon states that the two reasons that accounted for the position God had given him were his mother and the truth of his message.¹⁰ He credited his mother not only for God's blessing on his life but also for his decision to trust Christ. Spurgeon said that shortly before he was saved, "my heart was greatly impressed by something which I heard my mother say. I had been some years seeking Christ, and I could not believe that He would save me. She said she had heard many people swear and blaspheme God, but one thing she had never known—she had never heard a man say he had sought Christ, and Christ had rejected him. . . . I went to the Master, with nothing of my own, casting myself simply on His mercy."¹¹ Concerning his upbringing, Spurgeon stated, "I was privileged with godly parents . . . [that] taught the way of God from my youth up."¹² In a letter to his mother he wrote, "You, my Mother, have been the great means in God's hand of rendering me what I hope I am. Your kind, warning Sabbath-evening addresses were too deeply settled on my heart to be forgotten. You, by God's blessing, prepared the way for the preached Word, and . . . I love you as the preacher to my heart . . . as my praying, watching mother."¹³

In a sermon (based on Moses' mother) that Billy Sunday preached to mothers, he reminded them of the power of their words, acts, kisses, songs, love, and trust. He also reminded them of the power in their hands when he said, "There's more power in a woman's hand than there is in a king's scepter."¹⁴ Mothers must not underestimate the impact that they are making on their children. Winston Churchill, on being asked to check a list of those who had taught him replied, "You have omitted . . . to mention the greatest of my teachers—my mother." Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, the well-known Bible expositor and preacher, had four sons, and they

all became preachers of the Word. At a family reunion, a friend asked one of the sons, "Which Morgan is the greatest preacher?" While looking at his father, the son quickly replied, "Mother!" "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy!"¹⁵

One day a medical college student heard Dr. Clarence McCartney preach a sermon on 2 Timothy 4:21, "Do thy diligence to come before winter." The Lord used that verse to challenge the student to think about his own mother and her passing the winter months alone. He wrote a letter to his mother expressing how much he missed her and appreciated her love and support. In a couple of days he received a telegram saying, "Hurry home; mother is dying." When he arrived home she was still alive, and the letter he had written her was lying on her pillow.

As I conclude this article I think of two special ladies in my life. The first is my mother, who passed away just over a year ago. She was not perfect, but (especially in my teenage years) I knew she loved me when no other human being did. She loved me for who I was and what she prayed I would become by the grace of God. I am glad that I demonstrated and voiced my love for her while she was alive! The second lady is my wife. I am thankful that she values motherhood as she faithfully nurtures our four children for the glory of God! Whether it is your mother or your wife who comes to your mind, "do thy diligence" now before it is too late!¹⁶

I have heard the phrase, "If Momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." Why not do your part to "make Momma happy" by giving her the praise that is due her!

¹For illustrations see Michael Green, *Evangelism and the Early Church*.

²For illustrations see: *John Paton: Hero of the South Seas* by Bessie Byrum; *Beloved Partner—Mary Moffat of Kuruman* by Mora Dickson; *The Three Mrs. Judsons* by Arabella Stuart; *Luther: An Experiment in Biography* by H. G. Haile; and *The Role of Women in the Church* by C. C. Ryrie.

³Mark Sidwell, *Scenes from Church History* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1989), 17.

⁴Walter B. Knight, *Knight's Illustrations for Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1970), 206.

⁵See *Susanna Wesley* by Charles Ludwig.

⁶Walter Baxendale, *Dictionary of Illustrations for Pulpit and Platform* (Chicago: Moody, 1955), 405.

⁷E. Meyers Harrison, *Heroes of Faith on Pioneer Trails* (Chicago: Moody, 1945), 16.

⁸Ibid.

⁹F. W. Boreham, *Life Verses*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 100–101.

¹⁰C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1981), 22.

¹¹Ibid., 76.

¹²Ibid., 43.

¹³Ibid., 118.

¹⁴Clyde Fant, *20 Centuries of Great Preaching*, Vol. 7 (Waco, TX: Word Publishers, 1974), 249.

¹⁵T. W. Higginson.

¹⁶Additional illustration on this subject can be found in the following sources: *Prevailing Prayer* by D. L. Moody (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), 117–19; and the March/April 2000 issue of *FrontLine*, which was dedicated to "Christian Womanhood." ☞

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Resource Guide and Annotated Bibliography

Compiled by Dr. Jim Berg and Dr. Mike Yarborough

Please note that inclusion of a work in this list does not imply endorsement of other works by these authors nor of the ministries they represent. God has used them to be of service to the Body through these works, but many of the resources listed here mention and promote other ministries, movements, and authors from the broader Evangelical spectrum that a separatist could not endorse.

Biblical Morality and Overcoming Sexual Sin

■ Arterburn, Stephen and Fred Stoeker with Mike Yorkey. *Every Man's Battle: Every Man's Guide to Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time*. Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2000. TWO CAUTIONS: (1) This book is very helpful to those who have been ensnared in deep sexual sin but is too graphic for those who have not. (2) This is the only book with Stephen Arterburn's name on it that can be recommended. It is Biblically sound because it was written by Fred Stoeker with Arterburn's name used to promote the book. The study guide for this book and everything else in the "Every Man's Battle," "Every Young Man's Battle," and "Every Woman's Battle" series is very tainted with integrationist philosophy, which mixes pop psychology with Biblical truth. Fred Stoeker is faithful to the Scriptures; Stephen Arterburn is generally not.

■ Berg, Jim. *Quieting a Noisy Soul: Overcoming Guilt, Anxiety, Anger, and Despair*. Greenville, South Carolina: BJU Press, 2005. This DVD seminar/worktext program is a natural follow-up to the *Purity—Winning the Battle in a Perverse World Seminar*. It offers a 24-week structured program to saturate your mind with truth in order to deal Biblically with the guilt, anxiety, anger, and despair that accompany sexual sin. See www.QuietingANoisySoul.com for details. A Leader's Guide, available as a free download from the website, offers suggestions for use of the program in personal counseling, small groups, or larger church viewings.

■ Binney, Jim. *Living Purely in an Impure World*. New Concord, Ohio: The Counselors Pen Publications, 2003 (192 pages). A helpful tool for the Christian man seeking to understand his own battles and looking for practical help for deliverance. Check out other resources from Dr. Binney at www.LeadMinistries.net.

■ Dallas, Joe. *The Game Plan: The Men's 30-Day Strategy for Attaining Sexual Integrity*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005 (225 pages). Practical guidance for personal study but best used with an accountability partner. Presents the R.O.U.T.E. (Repentance, Order, Understanding, Training, Endurance) back to stability. Check out other resources from Joe Dallas at www.JoeDallas.com.

■ Gallagher, Steve. *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*. Dry Ridge, Kentucky: Pure Life Ministries, 1986, 2000 (285 pages). This is perhaps the most helpful book available today. It is intensely

practical since it is born out of Gallagher's own sexual addiction and subsequent ministry to the sexually addicted at Pure Life Ministries, but is entirely Biblical. This is a must-read for those in sexual bondage and for those who disciple them. Check out other resources from Steve Gallaher at www.PureLifeMinistries.org.

■ Harris, Joshua. *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World* (previously released as *Not Even a Hint*) Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2003 (190 pages). Every father should read this book with his teenage son and discuss its principles—after the father has read it himself to see whether his son is ready for the content. Very Biblical and very practical.

■ Heimbach, Daniel R. *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004 (525 pages). This is the most complete exposition of everything the Bible says about moral standards and immoral practices. Heimbach traces four moral positions through history (romantic sexual morality, playboy sexual morality, therapeutic sexual morality, pagan sexual morality) and contrasts their errors with Scripture. The book lays a theological foundation for sexual morality and addresses every immoral practice mentioned in Scripture, including adultery, prostitution, polygamy, pedophilia, homosexuality, and bestiality. This is a rich resource for pastors and studious fathers.

■ Hummel, Rand. *The Dark Side of the Internet*. Greenville, South Carolina: BJU Press, 2004 (128 pages) is a helpful book by Rand Hummel of The WILDS. A condensed audio version is available free at <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=9260110262>.

■ Hummel, Rand. *Lest You Fall: Meditations to Fight Moral Impurity*. Greenville, South Carolina: BJU Press, 2005 (133 pages). Provides eighteen meditations on moral purity and teaches the reader how to meditate upon the Scriptures himself. Appropriate for young teens on up.

■ Lutzer, Erwin. *Winning the Inner War: How to Say No to a Stubborn Habit*. Victor Books, 2002. Originally published as *How to Say No to a Stubborn Habit*.

■ Mahaney, C. J. *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004 (139 pages). Mahaney's main theme for husbands is "before you touch her body, touch her heart and mind." Very Biblical and practical book on how a husband can restore romance into his marriage.

■ Minnick, Mark. *Getting Back Up—Spiritual Renewal*. This is a series of ten messages preached at Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina, and available from the church website at www.mountcalvarybaptist.org. Though not dealing with sexual sin exclusively, the series very thoroughly

addresses the struggles and Biblical solutions for those who have stumbled in their Christian walk.

■ Piper, John, and Justin Taylor, editors. *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005 (283 pages). Very sound and uplifting call to Biblical morality by several authors. Addresses homosexuality, sexual addiction, singleness, and sex for both men and women and exalts sex within marriage.

■ SettingCaptivesFree.com offers a strong accountability system but is not Fundamentalist in association.

■ Smith, Robert D., M.D. *Biblical Principles of Sex*. Stanley, North Carolina: Timeless Texts, 2003 (51 pages). Dr. Smith is a retired physician and a nouthetic counselor who blends his wisdom from both fields into a very short but helpful book for every husband and for about-to-be-married men.

■ Wheat, Ed., M.D. *Intended for Pleasure: Sex Technique and Sexual Fulfillment in Christian Marriage*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1977 (256 pages). Though this book has been around many years, it is still the best manual for premarital counseling as well as a resource that addresses problems that will arise with pregnancy, menopause, impotence, and aging. References to a "giving-to-get" philosophy and self-esteem crop up occasionally, but overall the book is extremely valuable. Every couple should own a copy—and read it.

■ White, John. *Eros Defiled: The Christian and Sexual Sin*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1977 (300 pages). This frank and Biblical treatise was one of the first to discuss sexual sin and still remains a solid study. It covers masturbation, petting, homosexuality, and adultery. Very helpful.

■ www.ReformU.com is the website for Reformer's Unanimous, a Biblically-based organization that, in addition to its on-site residential counseling ministry, provides training for churches who wish to start a ministry to those with addictions of any kind. Materials are Scripturally sound and effective.

■ www.WisdomInLivingLife.org is a Greenville, South Carolina-based ministry to drug and alcohol addicts. Winn Freeman, the founder and director and a former drug addict himself, has established a Biblically based ministry that not only offers counseling to addicts but provides educational services for churches and parent groups about the prevention of drug abuse. A soon-to-be-constructed residence facility will include a detox center operating upon the Biblical principle that addiction is not a disease but a sin.

Modesty for Women

■ Brock, Michelle. *What Is Modesty: Discovering the Truth*. Newberry Springs, California: Iron Sharpeneth Iron Publications, 2005 (162 pages). This is a helpful survey of the Scriptural issues and contemporary problems women face concerning dress and deportment. Michelle received her undergrad and graduate degrees from BJU and prepared this material originally for the college women at Maranatha Baptist Bible College where she was teaching.

■ DeMoss, Nancy Leigh. *The Attractive Christian Woman*. This is an audio CD collection of talks given from her "Revive Our Hearts" radio ministry. They are available through www.ReviveOurHearts.com. This series of talks based upon 1 Timothy

2:9, 10 offers practical application of Scriptural truth to the question of how a Christian woman should dress.

■ DeMoss, Nancy Leigh. *The Look: Does God Really Care What I Wear?* Buchanan, Michigan: Revive Our Hearts, 2003 (56 pages). A very helpful study booklet for the Christian woman. Presents Biblical foundations and forces the reader to apply them to her daily choices about dress and deportment.

■ Feldhahn, Shaunti. *For Women Only: What You Need to Know about the Inner Lives of Men*. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2004 (192 pages). Based upon extensive research from both Christian and unsaved men, the author teaches women how men think about many issues but is especially helpful in helping women understand sex from a man's viewpoint and how that should govern the way a Christian woman dresses.

■ Gresh, Dannah. *Secret Keeper: The Delicate Power of Modesty*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005 (96 pages). Though it draws many illustrations and statements from popular culture (movies, CCM artists, etc.), this book offers a very direct and powerful punch against today's obsession with immodest fashion. Mom and Dad should read this first before giving it to a teen girl to see whether the references to popular culture will make the book more problematic than helpful for their particular teen.

■ Jones, Beneth Peters. *In the Best Possible Light: Godly Femininity in the Twenty-First Century*. Greenville, South Carolina: BJU Press, 2004 (241 pages). Discusses more than just a philosophy of dress; also addresses etiquette, speech, weight and care of the body, spiritual life, and much more. A great guide for mothers and daughters.

■ Minnick, Mark. *Scripturally Defined Modesty* (1995) and *Scripturally Adjusting Our Conception of Modesty* (2004). These are two two-message series preached at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, and are available from the church's website, www.mountcalvarybaptist.org. They are filled with Biblical insight and sound application as one would expect from the pulpit of Dr. Minnick.

■ Vaughan, David and Dianne. *The Beauty of Modesty: Cultivating Virtue in the Face of a Vulgar Culture*. Nashville: Cumberland House, 2005 (226 pages). A thorough look at the issue of women's dress and deportment. Careful attention is given to Biblical exegesis and to the practical application of the Scriptures for today's culture.

Entertainment Choices

■ Medved, Michael. *Hollywood vs. America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992. Medved is a media critic and former screenwriter. The book traces the decline of moral standards in the entertainment world and demonstrates how that decline has contributed to many of society's ills today. Caution: The book contains explicit language and descriptions.

■ Myers, Kenneth A. *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1989 (213 pages). An insightful study in how our culture changed with the Sexual Revolution of the sixties. It addresses how popular culture has affected Christian thought about sex, rock music, etc. Very helpful study.

■ Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985. Though now over two decades old, this book still provides a solid foundation for understanding how visual media have changed the mental processes as well as the expectations of modern man. It is a valuable tool for parents who must make choices—not just about the content of the media their children consume—but the amount of exposure to the media in the first place.

■ Wilson, Wayne A. *Worldly Amusements: Restoring the Lordship of Christ to Our Entertainment Choices*. Enumclaw, Washington: WinePress Publishing, 1999 (299 pages). After finishing a degree in television production from Columbia College, Wilson was called into the ministry, finished seminary, and began pastoring. He blends his training in the media, an astute understanding of the history of entertainment, and sound theology into a must-read for every pastor and parent.

■ Winter, Richard. *Still Bored in a Culture of Entertainment: Rediscovering Passion and Wonder*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002 (160 pages). Though his perspective as a Christian psychiatrist occasionally interjects itself into his writing in ways that can be distracting to a reader from a non-integrationist viewpoint, Winter offers much insight into how today's culture is infecting its members with restlessness, boredom, sensuality, and ingratitude. He explores the effects of many entertainment modes today—extreme sports, electronic games, movies, television, and pornography. This is a rich study for the thoughtful pastor or parent.

■ www.ScreenIt.com is a tremendously helpful site for checking out movie content. It is only marginally helpful until you become a member for approximately \$25 a year. The movie reviews not only describe the storyline but tell to what extent violence and sexual themes or scenes are portrayed and list every word of profanity used and with what frequency. No other Internet resource is as detailed as this site. There is no excuse anymore for being surprised by a movie's content.

Homosexuality

■ Dallas, Joe. *Desires in Conflict: Hope for Men Who Struggle with Sexual Identity*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1991, 2003 (253 pages). Perhaps the best tool for both the homosexual and for the counselor. Joe's own previous homosexual practice and his rich ministry to homosexuals since coming back to Christ provide practical help for applying Biblical principles. Useful appendix articles include "The 'Born-Gay' Question," "Pro-Gay Theology," and "Seven Questions Most Frequently Asked by Parents." Check out other resources by Joe Dallas at www.JoeDallas.com.

■ Dallas, Joe. *The Gay Gospel: How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible* (formerly, *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the "Gay Christian" Movement*, 1997). Eugene, Oregon, Harvest House Publishers, 2007. This is a current revision of Dallas's previous work tracing how the gay rights movement morphed into a *Christian* gay movement, complete with a gay theology to "authorize" their lifestyle. The book concludes with several chapters of useful talking points that expose the error of homosexuality—socially and Scripturally.

■ Dallas, Joe. *When Homosexuality Hits Home: What to Do When a Loved One Says They're Gay*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2004 (191 pages). Discusses the Biblical response to sinning family members and offers advice for dealing with a gay child, a gay spouse, and other gay family members. Practical and Scriptural, though the opening chapter is structured around Kubler-Ross's "Five Stages of Grief." The stages represent findings from secular studies but are not determinative for believers who are maturely walking in Christ. His discussion of each of the states is instructive for those who may experience them, but should not be taken as validation that Kubler-Ross's findings are binding for believers.

■ Haley, Mike. *101 Frequently Asked Questions about Homosexuality*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2004 (221 pages). We have not read and reviewed this book, but it comes highly recommended by Joe Dallas.

■ Paulk, Anne. *Restoring Sexual Identity: Hope for Women Who Struggle with Same-Sex Attraction*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2003 (272 pages). We have not read and reviewed this book, but it comes highly recommended by Joe Dallas.

Internet Use and Filter Software

■ Aftab, Parry, cyberlawyer. Aftab's blog will take you to a number of informative websites regarding online pornography, "cyberstalking," and so on: <http://parryaftab.blogspot.com/>.

■ <http://uk.biz.yahoo.com/12042006/244/myspace-safer-space.html>. Information on MySpace's efforts to "[get] serious about online safety."

■ Lovegrove, Bill. "Christians in Cyberspace: A Biblical Perspective." Copyright 2000 and available at <http://www.pilgrimworks.com/inet.html>. Provides a good introduction to the use and dangers of the Internet from a Christian standpoint.

■ Olinger, Dan. *Internet Safety*. Copyright 2006 and available in two parts at <http://www.bjupress.com/resources/articles/t2t/1004.pdf> and <http://www.bjupress.com/resources/articles/t2t/1005.pdf>.

■ SafeEyes from www.safebrowse.com is a powerful Internet filter and accountability program for your computer. In 2006 it was rated #1 by *Consumer Reports* and received the *PC Magazine* editor's choice. It not only blocks unwanted content but also allows the administrator of the software to block Internet use by time of day or shut off access after a predetermined length of time. It logs all browsing and can forward e-mail, phone message, or text-pager alerts to an accountability partner when an attempt has been made to access a blocked site. SafeEyes uses one of the most robust pornography databases in the industry. Runs on both the PC and the Mac. This is a must-have for your home machine and laptop.

■ www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11064451. An MSNBC/*Dateline* report that includes safety tips for parents concerning MySpace.com.

■ www.Wiredsafety.org. Wired Safety is a charity that serves as a cyber-net safety resource for parents.

Almost all our laws, criminal and civil alike, are base on morality. We forbid murder, stealing, and pedophilia because they are immoral and because we believe that human beings are creatures with intrinsic worth and moral significance. —David Limbaugh, *Bankrupt*

Twenty-three percent of the religious people surveyed admitted to having an extramarital affair, as did twelve percent of the pastors while in ministry. —Tim Stafford

When a leader falls into immorality, attention tends to focus on the already highly visible and powerful leader, to the exclusion of a hurting spouse and a very confused congregation. —Jan Winebrenner

In a large majority of the churches we observed [in our study], the adulterous pastor's lifestyle did affect his preaching, and the sheep that followed him, expecting to be fed, were instead either beaten, poisoned, or starved. —Debra Frazier

People who are lied to [by an unfaithful spouse] become dependent, anxious, delicate, and over-reactive. —Frank Pittman

In every case we encountered where the pastor was involved in sexual sin, he was known for coercing others into supporting activities and endeavors they did not favor. —Jan Winebrenner and Debra Frazier

In one New Mexico diocese alone, more than 300,000 parishioners are coping with the agony and fear surrounding allegations of sexual misconduct within the priesthood. —*Dallas Morning News*, April 11, 1993, 37A

We've created supply-side spirituality where God has become one of many avenues to success and self-fulfillment and where our focus of faith has shifted from the glorification of God to the gratification of man. —Richard Ostling on the contemporary atmosphere in American Christianity, an atmosphere that makes us ripe for impurity in the church; *Time*, "The Church Search," April 5, 1993

Immoral pastors will often denigrate and demean the authority and influence of strong church members who would hold them accountable. —Jan Winebrenner and Debra Frazier

Dalliance, like no other sin, destroys trust. . . . When the dike is breached by adultery, spouse and children can drown in the tide of pain. And the ripples and eddies of hurt reach far beyond the immediate family. —David Neff, *Christianity Today*, November 20, 1987
Every one that hangs about the court does not speak with the King. —Thomas Watson

As Christ hath His saints in Nero's court, so the devil has his servants in the outer court of the visible church. —William Gurnall

After proof and trial is made of their fidelity, we are to trust our brethren without any further suspicion. Not to try before we trust is want of wisdom, not to trust after we have tried is want of charity. —Thomas Fuller

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

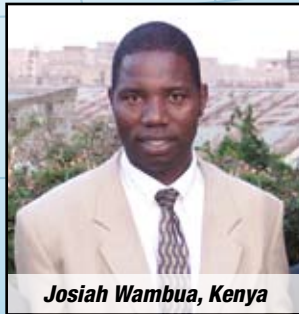
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Kitchen Clean-Up

Claudia Barba

I'm not sure why I was sitting on the kitchen floor that Monday morning. I think it had something to do with the dog. But there I sat, nose to nose with Max (who was a very short dog). I looked around and was appalled at what I saw. Morsels of dried-up food in dark recesses. (Why didn't you eat those, Max?) Splatters of milk and grease on cabinet doors. Splotches of I'm-not-sure-what on the floor by the stove. Several dead flies. And that greasy grunge along the edge of the refrigerator—yuck.

Yesterday when company was here for Sunday dinner, this kitchen had been clean! At least I thought it was. It had looked clean when my eyes were up at people's head level where they usually are. I distinctly remembered my pride in its shininess. This pastor's wife could manage it all, I thought. Even on Sunday, she glides easily through her duties, both public and domestic.

How smug I was. And how fortunate that yesterday's guests were too dignified to inspect my kitchen's grubby crannies. Or maybe they had noticed and were too polite to mention it. This kitchen wasn't clean at all. It was sparkling on the surface but grimy underneath.

I was tempted to ignore the covert dirt. If nobody else knew about it, I could just pretend I didn't either! But my housewifely conscience soon conquered my laziness. I pulled on plastic gloves, grabbed a rag and a strong cleanser, and attacked. It wasn't a quick or pleasant job, but it was satisfying. Soon the kitchen was genuinely clean. The hidden crud was gone. No one else may ever have noticed, but that didn't matter. Max and I knew, and that was enough.

Memories of that morning came to me recently when I studied Psalm 51—King David's psalm of private repentance. "Wash me completely, thoroughly, fully," he begged the Lord. "Eradicate my sin. Cleanse me with hyssop, like a leper is cleansed. Purify my inward, hidden parts. Make my heart as white as snow."

David was not satisfied with outward show. He wanted absolute personal purity. It was not enough for him to look kingly; he longed for inward righteousness. Nowhere in his prayer-song did he ask God to restore his reputation or the respect of his court. He just wanted to be right with God.

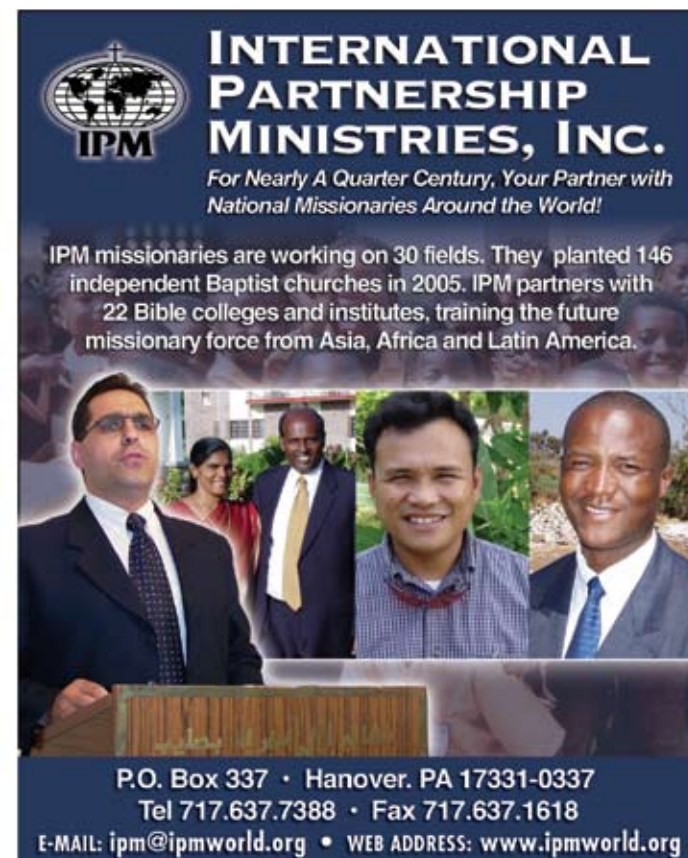
As I read, I wondered: Do I care more about what church friends think of me than about what God knows me to be? Do I sit smugly, self-righteously, in my queenly pastor's-wife pew week after week, hoping

that all those wicked sinners listening to my husband's sermon will get right with God? Why I am so seldom found kneeling in repentance during the invitation? (What would people think?) Am I complacent about my sin as long as I believe nobody else knows? Am I only superficially righteous?

Those questions sent me to my knees. The Lord and I peered into the grubby crannies of my heart. He exposed the grime of secret sin. Once I saw it, there was no place for lazy apathy. I needed the immediate application of Christ's cleansing blood.

The problem with cleaning the kitchen is that it gets dirty again in a hurry. It's about time now for another on-the-kitchen-floor dirt hunt. Come and help me, and then we'll have dinner! But as for my heart, that's a private, daily cleaning project that keeps me on my knees. You may not ever notice, but God and I know, and that's enough.

Claudia Barba is the wife of Evangelist Dave Barba. You can read more of her writings at www.ipresson.com.



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On Ritual

Ritual involves regular repetition. Much ritual is continued from former generations; some we develop ourselves. Some ritual, as in the military, is compulsory. Some is perhaps nothing more than habit, such as shaving the right side of the face before the left. Some ritual, thus, is almost totally meaningless. In “religious” activity, what we do repeatedly may also be meaningless, may be what others have taught us to do, or may even be considered so important that the ritual must be performed just right in order to satisfy the deity. Belief that performance of a ritual can gain divine approval is labeled “sacramentalism.”

Probably every concept of sacramental accomplishment came initially from Satan; it’s a lie, and he is the father of lies. Any act, whether it is an ecclesiastical endeavor or for social benefit, if done to gain divine acceptance, is a variation of works-salvation. “Do good to gain points” is of Satan. Gain by human effort is always contrary to grace enablement. All pagan religions are efforts to do something to satisfy a deity. But no human being has ever improved his standing before God by doing good works or by repeating some ritual. It cannot be of works lest any man should boast.

Pagan sacramental ideas influenced Christianity very early in its history. Some came through Judaism. The ritual of circumcision was a problem among believers during the first decades. Believers quickly recognized it was assigned to the former dispensation and was not to be a part of the new life that had displaced God’s dealing with national Israel. But the Jewish concept of sacramentalism began to enter into the thinking of believers. Also, as Gentiles were saved, many brought sacramental assumptions along with them. Before the close of the canon, Christian leaders had to contend with various magical/mystical teachings by false prophets.

Religious ritual can be viewed either as didactic or sacramental. Romans 4 emphasizes that the salvation of Old Testament saints was of faith, that is, believing/accepting God in trusting His promises. The Epistle to the Hebrews emphasizes that what was appointed under the law was instructive or symbolic, not effective. No one was ever any better before God because of offering any sacrifice, even a blood sacrifice. Priestly and tabernacle worship patterns had certain social benefits; they were never sacraments. All forms of worship, including rituals, were means for true believers (saved by personal faith in God’s coming Messiah) to use as memorials for remembrance

or as symbols of expected fulfillment of God’s plan. They were solely didactic, never sacramental.

Habits can be good or bad. Ritual can be good or bad. Didactic ritual, if true to the Bible, is always good. Sacramental ritual is never approved by God. God has never approved human endeavor of any sort as an acceptable covering for sin. Only the shed blood of His perfect Substitute on the cross was efficacious before a holy God. Total rejection of all human endeavor and simple trust in the provision of God’s grace is the one and only way unto eternal life for any human of any dispensation.

What we believe is as important as what we do. Assuming a sacramental purpose for the offerings and other rituals of the Old Testament period denies the clear teaching of the New Testament. Some teach that Old Testament saints were saved by animal sacrifices and that New Testament saints are saved by the blood of Jesus. Some try to improve on that by saying the sacrifices under the Law had efficacy based on the coming death of Jesus. Some suggest sacrifices covered sins until Jesus’ death. Sacrifices and ritual were divinely appointed pictures; pictures never save anyone! Sacrifices then had no more power than immersion or the Lord’s Supper has now. Sacramentalism was never a part of true revelation.

Today many people expect to be rewarded by God for going to church or performing some particular ritual. Such works-attempts are a slap in the face to the Holy Deity! No doubt some true believers perform rituals for expected gain rather than as the means of honoring God in spirit and in truth. All of us do well to examine our hearts to see whether our efforts are memorial and/or prophetic in nature, or whether we go through the motions as of mere habit, or whether perhaps we are dishonoring God in thinking He might reward our efforts.

Our purpose in performing a ritual counts with God. The manner in which we do that which He assigned us to do when we observe His ordinances is important. Repeated self-examination in light of His Word applies both to secular and sacred endeavors. Do the right thing always; do the good deed, by all means; but do not do it to earn brownie points toward redemption. Do it as an expression of thankfulness to God.

Warren Vanhetloo, A.B., B.D., Th.M., Th.D., D.D., is Adjunct Instructor in and Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Calvary Baptist Seminary in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. He now resides in Michigan.

Integrity in the Ministry

Jerry Sivnksty

The life of any leader for the Lord must be heavily guarded against the attacks of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The Word of God warns us in 1 John 2:15, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” We read in Galatians 5:17, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” Again, in 2 Corinthians 2:11 the Scriptures declare, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” There will always be a battle in our lives against these three mighty foes who will constantly try to sidetrack us—and not just to sidetrack us, but even to shipwreck our lives and render us useless to God. This was the concern of the apostle Paul, who stated in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” We cannot be careless and let down our guard. First Corinthians 10:12 declares, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

No one is above the temptations of this flesh. If anyone thinks otherwise, he will fall the hardest. We read in Proverbs 20:7, “The just man walketh in his integrity.” The trumpet of integrity must be blown loud and long! It has to resound to the very depth of our soul; it must be an echo bouncing off of every side of our heart. The dictionary defines “integrity” as “a firm adherence to a code of moral values, i.e., incorruptible, honorable, reliable. The quality or state of being complete or undivided, i.e., completeness.” A person of integrity ought to strive to be righteous in his living and godly in his example to others.

Sometimes an individual will be accused of something he did not do, but he will always respond in the right way if he is a man of integrity. For example, many years ago when we pulled a forty-foot trailer, we had an incident that tested my integrity. As I was leaving a church with our trailer, the hitch broke, which caused the trailer to fall on the bed of our truck. My insurance company viewed the damage and gave me a check to cover the loss. When I arrived at our next meeting, the pastor told me he had a man in his church who could fix it for me. The man made the repairs and told me the amount, which I paid in full immediately, after thanking him for a good job at a good price.

“Is that all I owe you?” I asked.

He answered, “Yes,” and I wrote out the check for the amount he had quoted.

A year later I was speaking at a youth camp in North Carolina. The youth pastor from the church where the man had fixed my truck came up to me at the close of a morning session and said, “You know the man who fixed your truck? He left our church because of it.”

I was shocked and said, “Why? What happened?”

The youth pastor said, “The man said you didn’t give him anything for his labor in fixing your truck.”

I answered, “You were with me when I paid him for his work and heard me ask him, ‘Is that all I owe you?’ And you heard him say, ‘Yes.’”

Then the youth pastor said, “Well, if you would just send him one hundred dollars and tell him it was an oversight on your part, then I believe everything will be all right.”

I told the youth pastor I would be lying if I said it was an oversight because it wasn’t. So I said to him, “I won’t send him one hundred dollars. I’ll send him five hundred dollars!” I sent the man five hundred dollars because my name is more important than money.

Proverbs 11:3 says, “The integrity of the upright shall guide them.” If you are a person of integrity, you also will want to make a matter right even if you are not at fault. Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” I trust that your desire is to be a person of integrity.

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EZRA, PART 2

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Outline

As the previous column pointed out, Ezra is part historical, part autobiographical. In the first six chapters of the book that bears his name, Ezra records events that precede him by eighty years. He does not come into the story until chapter 7. Ezra divides into two major segments:

- Ezra 1–6: The First Return under Zerubbabel (538–516 B.C.)
- Ezra 7–10: The Second Return under Ezra (458–424 B.C.)

The events of Nehemiah, Ezra’s contemporary who returns in 445 B.C., also occur within the time frame of the last segment of the Book of Ezra. This column surveys the second segment of Ezra.

Historical Context

Ezra 1–6 covers the period from 538–516 B.C. Ezra 7 opens in the year 458 B.C. That means there is a gap of nearly sixty years between the end of Ezra 6 and the beginning of Ezra 7. What happened during that time that Ezra doesn’t tell us? The Biblical record is silent for the first thirty-five years after the end of Ezra 6 (516–481 B.C.). The book that breaks that silence is the story of Esther, which takes place from 482 to 473.

What else happened during those sixty years between Ezra 6 and 7? As we saw in the previous column, Ezra 4:6 and 4:7–23 telescope ahead to give us brief glimpses into the second half of that timeframe (ca. 485–460 B.C.). From these glimpses it is apparent that they began trying to rebuild the rest of the city and the walls and were repeatedly resisted by those around them. We know, for instance, of a letter of complaint sent to Ahasuerus (Xerxes) in “the beginning of his reign” (ca. 485–482) mentioned in Ezra 4:6. Then come the events of the story of Esther (482–473). We also know that the opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem continued into the reign of Artaxerxes I, for we have another letter of complaint to him (ca. 464–460) along with his reply commanding the Jews to cease rebuilding the city until further word from

him—all recorded in Ezra 4:7–23.

But something, or Someone, changed Artaxerxes’ heart. Because it was Artaxerxes who commissioned a Jewish priest and scribe named Ezra (458) to return and supervise the rebuilding of Jerusalem. And it was Artaxerxes who later commissioned his personal cupbearer and confidant, another Jew named Nehemiah (445), to return to Jerusalem as the Jews’ governor. The explanation is ultimately providential; but God providentially employs common and natural means to accomplish His purposes. Other historical records help us fill in the gaps.

Persian King Xerxes’ defeat in the West by the Greeks (which occurred in 480 B.C., between Esther chapters 1 and 2) led him to a self-indulgent neglect of the welfare of his more immediate empire. Remember the assassination plot that Mordecai discovered in Esther 2? Apparently Bigthan and Teresh weren’t the only ones upset with Xerxes. He was later successfully assassinated.

Xerxes’ son, Darius, should have succeeded him. But the general of Xerxes’ military persuaded a younger son, Artaxerxes, to murder his brother Darius. Under these inauspicious circumstances Artaxerxes became king in 464 B.C. King Artaxerxes tried to restore the damage to the stability of the empire done by the neglect of his father, but there was widespread unrest and even revolt, especially in the more remote provinces. By 460, Egypt refused to pay tribute, allying itself with the Delian League (formed among the Greek city-states that had defeated Xerxes back in 480 B.C.). Persia managed to undercut this threat by bribing Sparta to go to war with Athens. By 458, the Greek commander Pericles was leading Athens to predominance in Greece, resulting in civil wars and unrest there—and freeing Artaxerxes to focus on matters closer to home.

Given the tenuous situation with Egypt, Artaxerxes saw the necessity of establishing a stable and loyal government in neighboring and strategically located Judea. We know he sent Megabyzus (the Persian governor of Syria and the agent who negotiated Sparta to go to war against Athens) to lead Persian troops against Greek and Egyptian troops in Egypt, finally bringing them into subjection in 456. The creation of a buffer state—a loyal, secure, and contented Judean province—would have been crucial for controlling Egypt. That is the providentially orchestrated historical background to the decision of Artaxerxes to send Ezra (and later Nehemiah) to Judea with both religious and governmental authority. That is where Ezra 7 picks up the story.

Survey

Artaxerxes’ Decree and Ezra’s Return (Ezra 7–8)

In 458 B.C., Artaxerxes commissioned Ezra the priest-

scribe to travel to Jerusalem. Ezra 7:12–26 (written in Aramaic, not Hebrew) details the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra:

- Take everyone who wants to go with you (v. 13).
- Investigate the situation there (v. 14).
- Carry our offering to the temple and use it for your worship (vv. 15–17).
- Use the rest of the money for whatever you think you should (v. 18).
- Collect from any of the treasurers across the river whatever you need for the house of God (with certain limits) (vv. 21–23).
- Those involved in the temple ministry are tax exempt (v. 24).
- Govern and administrate Judea according to God’s law and mine (vv. 25, 26).

The text has one explanation for the remarkable authority and latitude the king granted to Ezra and the Jews: it was all done “according to the hand of the LORD” upon them (7:6, 9, 28; cf. 8:18, 22, 31).

I indicated above that something, or Someone, changed Artaxerxes’ heart between Ezra 4:7–23 and 7:11–26. Political developments and historical circumstances certainly played their part, but Someone orchestrated and used those developments and circumstances. Ezra understands that ultimately it was not something but Someone who changed Artaxerxes’ heart: “Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king’s heart . . . and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king’s mighty princes” (7:27, 28).

Ezra 8 recounts the details of who returned, the names of 1760 Jews (8:1–20), and how they fasted and prayed for God’s protection (8:21–23). Why were they so concerned to have God’s protection? Because of what they were carrying with them (8:24–30). The journey to Jerusalem was safe and successful, thanks once more to “the hand of God” upon them (8:31–36).

Internal Threats to the Welfare of God’s People (Ezra 9–10)

Ezra 4–6 dealt with *external* threats to Judah’s security: harassment, opposition, persecution. Ezra 9–10 details the *internal* problem Ezra had to battle upon his arrival: intermarriage, leading to compromised values, practices, and identity. Internal threats are much more subtle, complicated, and difficult to address. The central issue was not simply intermarriage among the people, but intermarriage among the leaders, and intermarriage with the very kinds of unbelievers in the land that had corrupted

their right relationship with Jehovah in the first place and finally led to their decimation and captivity only four generations earlier.

Ezra’s reaction (9:1–4) was so severe because he understood the broad historical perspective. He realized that all that was lost in the captivity and regained in God’s gracious restoration was now suddenly at risk again. You hear this in his prayer of humiliation and confession (9:5–15, especially vv. 13–15).

Applications

A closer look reveals a number of strikingly modern applications. This should neither surprise us nor arouse suspicions. The Bible is a timeless book designed and preserved for the instruction and equipping of believers in any age (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Tim. 3:16, 17).

First, 9:1 indicates that we can safely extend the application beyond the explicit danger of marrying unbelievers (“the people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations”). The marriages themselves functioned merely as the means of introducing pagan elements into the pure worship of Jehovah.

Second, that being the case, the issue verbalized in 9:2a (“the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands”) has much to say about the effects of marrying the church to the culture and means and methods of the world around us.

Third, both 9:1 (“the priests, and the Levites”) and the end of 9:2 (“the hand of the princes and rulers have been chief in this trespass”) have compelling implications for the unique responsibility and culpability of *leadership* in the area of separation.

Fourth, there is also a humbling lesson here for separatists themselves. It is easy for separatists to cultivate the attitude that we are not the problem and have nothing to confess; our job is to point fingers and identify the problem people and offending ministries. But this is not the whole Biblical pattern. Ezra 9—and Nehemiah 9 and Daniel 9—consistently confront the reader with a stunning example of the separatist’s solidarity with the people of God. *It is the separatists who take the lead in confessing the sins of the community of God’s people and interceding for God’s people.* If anyone could have pointed fingers, it was men such as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel; they were the separatists of their generation. Yet these godly and obedient men prayed and confessed as though *they too* were the guilty ones; listen to the pronouns they use when they pray. Evil practices and compromising brethren need to be identified, but it is not just *their* problem. It is our problem because it is the Church’s problem. It is our problem because God’s honor and cause and people are at stake. The Church

Continued on next page

At a Glance Continued

is not about us and them; it is about us—all of us—and God. Our attitude both in censure and in prayer should reflect that awareness. If the separatists do not pray for compromised ministers and ministries, who will?

Finally, as Ezra 10 demonstrates (see 10:1, 3, 7–14, 17, 18, 24, 44), the only solution to the failure of separation and its effects is a simple one, but not an easy one: sacrificial abandonment of the sins that lead to it and single-eyed obedience to God. Ezra 10 does not paint a pretty picture. Men had to be willing to put God's Word above their own desires and affections and loves, even to the point of painfully (but "according to the law," 10:3) tearing apart the emotional ties with which they had bound themselves.

There are two options for putting God's Word above your own desires and affections: *before* you make a choice or *after* you make it. It is much easier and less complicated to do it before. It is costly and painful to do it after. But it is the only right solution; and as Ezra 10 proves, it *can* be done.


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An Inconsistent Witness

In light of Ted Haggard's moral failures, some Fundamental brethren sought cheap comfort in the fact that Haggard's association with New Life Church and the NAE sufficiently distanced his testimony from their own. The New Life Board acted decisively and correctly. But his failure will still be associated with us. His type of failure is not that distant either. Fundamentalist pastor J. Michael Bates resigned over "immoral activities inconsistent with the qualifications for pastoral ministry." Let every man of God heed 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (<http://www.emmanuel-newington.org/>, accessed February 8, 2007)

Praying in Jesus' Name

Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt was officially court-martialed for defying his superior officers' command by praying in Jesus' name while in military uniform in a public ceremony. According to Klingenschmitt's testimony, sixty-eight other chaplains are suing the Navy for their guaranteed freedom of religion. In spite of an 1860 federal law that states, "An officer in the chaplain corps may conduct public worship according to the manner and forms of the church of which he is a

member," a February 21, 2006, policy was written to censor chaplains who pray in Jesus' name. Chaplain Klingenschmitt is appealing his court-martial.

New Lobbying Legislation

In the wake of recent lobbyist scandal, new legislation has been introduced that could have a direct impact on the role churches can play on public issues regardless of the moral nature of such issues. The American Center for Law and Justice has sounded immediate alarm to H.R. 4681 and S.1. While an amendment has been proposed for S.1 that "[ensures] that churches and many other public interest organizations and individuals would not be subject to lobbying regulation," the ACLJ has not rescinded the appeal for action. Groups that fall within the limits of the new lobbying definition would be required to register with the government, file quarterly reports of activities, and carry criminal and financial penalties for failure to disclose. For more information see <http://www.aclj.org/media/pdf/HR4682ExecutiveSummary.pdf> (accessed January 17, 2007).

Rick Warren's New Direction

In an article posted November 20, 2006, at http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=53030, Joseph Farah reported on

Rick Warren's recent trip to Syria. According to Farah, Warren's public comments regarding the absence of Christian and Jewish persecution, government-sponsored terrorism, and Islamic extremism were viewable for a short time on YouTube. Initially Warren indicated that these comments were taken out of context by a Syrian news agency. But this film demonstrated otherwise. *World* magazine also reported on Warren's second Saddleback-sponsored international conference, which included a keynote address by pro-choice Democratic senator Barak Obama. (Cf. <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/politics/4371093.html>.)

Dungeons and Dragons

The Israeli armed forces have taken a visible position on incoming personnel who have played or play the game Dungeons and Dragons. In this game a number of players assume the roles of warriors, thieves, dwarfs, or magicians, while another assumes that of "dungeon master." Decisions are made and carried out by the roll of dice. So what is the Israeli army's opinion?

"These people have a tendency to be influenced

by external factors which could cloud their judgment," a military official says. D&D players "may be detached from reality or have a weak personality—elements which lower a person's security clearance, allowing them to serve in the army, but not in sensitive positions." (<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0%2C7340%2CL-3052074%2C00.html>, accessed January 17, 2006)

New Voice for Baptists

Former Presidents Carter and Clinton are heading an initiative to present a new voice for

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Baptists here in the United States. The *Christian Post* reported, "Baptists joining the Carter and Clinton initiative—"The Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant"—include representatives of groups connected to the North American Baptist Fellowship, a regional affiliate of the BWA. They were critical of the conservative Baptist voice dominating the media and are now set to counter the 'negative' Baptist image and to demonstrate Baptist unity at a convocation in 2008." Many Baptists are skeptical.

In response to the "negative image" portrayed by conservative Baptists, this group hopes to focus on the social agenda of HIV/AIDS awareness, sex trafficking, poverty, and religious diversity. The group's planners anticipate 20,000 to attend its 2008 convocation. (http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070113/25051_New_Baptist_Voice_Fails_to_Convince_Some_Southern_Baptists.htm, accessed January 17, 2005)

NOTABLE QUOTES

The old cross is the symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said good-bye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.—A. W. Tozer

First there cometh into mind, a bare thought of evil, then a strong imagination thereof, afterwards delight, and evil motion, and consent. And so little by little our wicked enemy getteth complete entrance, for that he is not resisted at the beginning.—Thomas à Kempis

Lust can be defined as "desiring something that God forbids us to have." Lust is a desire that focuses on satisfying self and no one else, not even God. Sinful lust cannot be blamed on parents, environment, hormone imbalances, demons, or society. James 1:14 clearly tells us where our lust comes from: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust!" Intense passion for the forbidden may give you what you want, but it will take away and destroy everything you already have.—Rand Hummel

The reality of life is that life isn't supposed to make sense or bring any lasting peace and satisfaction without God.—Jim Berg

Compiled by Robert Condict, Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International Advisory Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

Newsworthy is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

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Global Focus

The Need in Romania

Peter Beltechi

It was late winter in 2004 when I received an invitation from a Polish pastor, Dr. Jan Tolwinski, to attend the conference his church was hosting in Warsaw. The promise of encouragement in the Word and fellowship with fellow pastors and brethren excited my heart and compelled my will, in spite of the long drive from Romania to Poland. This was to be my first contact with FBFI. At the conference I had the privilege of meeting some European pastors who had lived, like me, within the Iron Curtain. The guest speaker was Dr. Bob Jones III, and the messages he brought from Acts reminded us that the gospel of Jesus Christ permeates cultures and cannot be changed by them.

I enjoyed many wonderful conversations with our gracious host, Dr. Jan, and Dr. Bob Jones III, who told me of his visit to Arad, Romania, in 1994 on the occasion of a Fundamentalist conference. I remember thinking how nice it would be to host such an event in our church. But that seemed so far-fetched. We had just planted the first independent Fundamental Baptist church in my home town, Beius.¹ The first service had been on April 6, 2003, in a small house that we rented on the outskirts of town. Nevertheless, I worked up the courage to invite Dr. Tolwinski to visit our church, knowing that he too had traveled to Romania during the Communist era.

He candidly said, "Would you like to organize the next FBFI Conference?"

I reluctantly replied, "You know, we don't have the facilities you have here . . . although my country truly needs such an event. The independent Fundamental Baptist movement is in its infancy, and many hearts would be encouraged."

And then I thought about my fellow countrymen who had professed to be Fundamentalists at the 1994 conference but who no longer identified with that theological and practical stand, and I wondered whether they had ever been true Fundamentalists.

A Brief History of Baptists in Romania

Romania is privileged to have an historical Baptist witness. In the sixteenth century, Anabaptists from Moravia fled to Transylvania because of persecution, and there are historical records of their continuity.² We might also mention the German missionary J. G. Oncken³ and Mihai Cornea,⁴ two Baptist ministers who were involved in planting churches throughout Central and Southeastern Europe. From the beginning Baptists were persecuted in my country, sometimes by the state, sometimes by the established church, and sometimes by both institutions as they joined forces for this cause.

In the beginning Baptist churches in Romania were

autonomous and unaffiliated. But in 1921 most of these local churches formed the Baptist Union of Romania, an organization that has gained more and more authority over the years. The current theological orientation of the Baptist Union is Neo-Evangelical.

After the 1989 revolution we could enjoy freedom, we could express ourselves publicly, we could rent stadiums and large meeting rooms for the purpose of evangelizing, we could make ourselves heard. But liberty also brought the snares of the wicked one. A Romanian Baptist leader said some time after the Revolution that Baptists in Romania are all Fundamentalists (although what he was referring to was probably legalism, not true Fundamentalism). About two years ago one of the president's advisors praised the Romanian Baptist Union for being "the most ecumenical group of Christians in Romania!" What has happened in these years in Romania? I suggest it is the same thing that happened in America in the first part of the twentieth century.

The Present Condition of Baptists in Romania


There was so much enthusiasm after the Revolution, and Christians of all denominations came to help. Our first concern was to erect large buildings and call them "churches," and then we set up Christian schools and obtained accreditation. People were not interested in what doctrine ministers from the West brought. And more and more churches opened their doors to "Christian" rock. Leaders looked the other way because they wanted more financial support for their building projects, whether churches, orphanages, schools, etc.

Another factor that contributed to a change in the doctrinal climate of Romania was the exodus of Baptist leaders and preacher boys to liberal theological colleges and seminaries in Western Europe and America. Upon their return they delivered their various philosophies to congregations. At present in my country more and more pulpits and filled with "philosophers," not preachers.

In the last sixteen years many American independent Baptist missionaries came to Romania and started working alongside Union Baptist pastors. Most of them came to the conclusion that they do not share the same doctrinal views as Romanian Baptists, who claim they believe in the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture but publish and promote foreign authors who deny this sound teaching. They also understand that many Baptists do not believe in the eternal security of the believer; that they proclaim baptismal regeneration; and that they are ecumenical, repu-

Continued on page 38

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Chaplain News

The apostle Paul knew by experience that truth expressed by James, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16). In 1 Thessalonians, Paul urged his readers to "pray without ceasing" and, more specifically, asked, "Brethren, pray for us" (vv. 17, 25).

Below is a list of all Chaplains endorsed by the FBFI Commission on Chaplains. All are in critical places of ministry and need the prayers of God's people. Several of the military chaplains are deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Please include all of the FBFI Chaplains and their families as a regular part of your prayer ministry.

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Army National Guard

Chaplain (2LT) John Lockhart
Chaplain (1LT) Chris Melvin

Navy

Chaplain (LT) Dan Hall
Chaplain (LT) Robert Johnson
Chaplain (LT) Tavis Long
Chaplain (LT) Daniel Owens
Chaplain (ENS) Robert Spivey

Air Force

Chaplain (Maj.) George Youstra Jr.

Reserve Chaplains

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Navy

Chaplain (Capt.) Wayne Bley

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Chaplain (Capt.) Daryl Jeffers
Chaplain (LTC) Daniel Perry

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diating separation. And there was the problem of Union control, which overruled local church autonomy. If we add the materialistic lifestyle that permeates the churches, we may summarize thus: apathy, compromise, and apostasy.

This is why we need independent Fundamental Baptist churches in Romania!

In His grace, God has not left Himself without witness. Today in Romania, not only are American missionaries planting independent Baptist churches, but there are Romanian pastors doing the same.

The Independent Movement in Romania

In this context, approximately one hundred people participated in the first Conference of Independent Fundamental Baptists, an event hosted by Camp of Joy Briheni⁵ in July 2005. Dr. John Vaughn and Dr. Brian Green were the guest speakers. Among our Romanian brothers we had guests from Poland, Hungary, and Moldova. The messages and the fellowship made that event the highlight of our year. Soon after the conference, a number of brothers whom we did not know contacted us and expressed their desire to attend a future conference, should we organize another. Thus, by the grace of our Lord, the second conference took place in July 2006. Dr. Fred Moritz and Dr. Wayne Thompson spoke to approximately 130 participants.

The impact of these conferences is multiple: First, there is the impact of the preaching of the Word and fellowship with believers of like faith. We must also mention the

encouragement of pastors and members of local churches and new partnerships for the cause of Christ.

The independent Baptist movement is growing in the Beius area, where I live. In 1990 I had the privilege of studying in one of the first Bible institutes in Romania, started through the ministry of Gabriel Rivera, who today is the Director of Berean Independent Baptist Bible College. This ministry is possible through the partnership of Faith Baptist Church in Fredericksburg, Virginia, where Dr. Don Forrester is pastor. The college was started three years ago with four students, but at present thirty-five people attend classes. American missionaries and Romanian pastors are laboring together to equip the next generation of independent Fundamental Baptist preachers and teachers.

There is such a great need for sound doctrine in my country! Please pray for the planting of independent Fundamental Baptist churches in the major cities of Romania. Also, please pray for men and women who are willing to fight for their Biblical convictions in a world deeply submerged in darkness.

¹Beius is in the western part of Transylvania, Romania, 60 km south of Oradea.

²Dr. Alexa Popovici, *The History of the Anabaptists in Romania* (Romanian Baptist Church of Chicago, 1976), 20.

³Ibid., 15.

⁴Ibid., 34.

⁵See <http://www.tabarabucuriei.com/>.

Peter Beltechi is the pastor of Independent Baptist Church in Beius, Romania.

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Behind the Lines

Gordon Dickson

Behind Joseph's Lines

Each new month brings more bad news. The newspapers are full of the lurid sins of ministers and leaders. One of the most important questions of our day looms before us: *How should one maintain a good testimony in this sensual, seductive society?* To answer that question, we can turn to one of the heroes of the faith. His victory is recorded in Genesis 39. When confronted with an open invitation to sexual immorality, verse 8 records, "he refused." In this *Behind the Lines* column, let's investigate what was behind those lines.

As a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,"¹ the Scripture reveals Joseph's methods and motives. We really need to know which attitudes were behind these actions. Scripture gives us "instruction in righteousness,"² with human examples of God's amazing grace. Joseph refused, but what did he do to reinforce this refusal? What was behind his lines of defense?

The temptation was very real. The boss's wife wanted to seduce and control Joseph. Ruled by lust—a form of "covetousness which is idolatry"³—this woman chose to exalt herself. Her offer to this young man was visual (v. 7) and verbal (vv. 7, 10). Surging to reveal itself as idolatrous control, her temptation became vehement (v. 12) and ultimately venomous (vv. 17, 18). But Joseph refused and kept right on refusing. How did this young man do so? How could any one of us stand alone in such a fight? What is behind our lines to help us?

Most will remember that Joseph declared, "How then can I do this

great wickedness, and sin against God?" This statement of theology—put into practice—was at the heart of his refusal. But there is more. Note the ways in which God's abundant grace enabled Joseph to triumph over evil.

1. Focus on Your Responsibility

In Genesis 39:8, we learn that Joseph refused her by describing his master and his own responsibility to him. This faithful servant reminded the unfaithful spouse of the way things ought to be. Instead of taking advantage of his boss's vulnerability,

Joseph focused on his own responsibility. This is part of a worshipful, evangelical work ethic found throughout the Scriptures.⁴ Work is a gift from God to help us glorify the Lord instead of our lusts. Even if your workplace is dominated by lustful people, you can honor God by concentrating on your responsibilities. Get this work ethic behind your lines.

2. Focus on Reality

Mrs. Potiphar was ruled by fantasy—the idolatry of her own heart.⁵ How should you confront such a person? Her lust, having conquered her, searched for yet another victim. Note the recurring language in such passages as Mark 9:42–47 to see how unrestrained lust looks for helpless victims. Joseph responded to her fantasies with reality, "because thou art his wife" (v. 9). Joseph would not allow his heart to make lords out of his lusts. He focused on the reality of the situation. Put reality behind your lines, or your fantasies will rule.

3. Focus on Accountability

What should you do when you think you are all alone? Remember

how Joseph reinforced his refusal: he reminded himself that he was never alone. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" That sensual, seductive society could easily have molded Joseph's thinking. But Joseph was transformed by his cultivation of the knowledge of God. By looking at life through the Lord's eyes, Joseph saw the proposal for what it really was—"great wickedness." Beholding the Lord is an essential reinforcement behind your lines.

4. Focus on Routine Righteousness

Genesis 39:10 is instructive: "And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her." Joseph had to routinely refuse the advances she made. Her goal was apparently to break Joseph down over time. But she didn't see what Joseph had behind his lines. Perhaps she told him that she "just wanted to be friends." But Joseph would not listen to her, would not lie with her, and would not linger near her. This is exactly the kind of "routine righteousness" that we need to keep us from falling.

How should one maintain a good testimony in this sensual, seductive society? Refuse the temptation and reinforce your refusal the way Joseph did.

Gordon Dickson is the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio, and a contributing editor for *FrontLine* magazine.

¹ Hebrews 4:12.

² 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

³ Colossians 3:5.

⁴ Cf. Ephesians 6:5–9; Colossians 3:22–25.

⁵ Ezekiel 14:3; note the phrase, "these men have set up their idols in their heart."

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