

AMID TRIALS AND CONFLICTS • JOB-LIKE SUFFERING: WHAT'S THE POINT? • MORE SCIENTISTS ARE FINDING GOD

FrontLine

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- 13 **Timothy Valentine**, Cross Lanes Bible Church, Charleston, WV
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Mail Bag

Last issue on "culture" [January/February 1999] was excellent!
Mr. & Mrs. George Detwiler
Collingswood, NJ

I just read Dave Doran's article on legalism ["Are Fundamentalists Legalists?" Part 1, March/April 1999]. I am in the campus ministry here in West Virginia and have been teaching through Galatians this year. The article was the best treatment of the subject I have read. I read Swindoll and MacArthur and was tending to follow their lead on the issue of legalism. . . . Dr. Doran destroyed Swindoll's whole point of his book. He hit the subject right where it needed [to be] hit. Thank you for having this article.

Pastor Bob Meredith
Morgantown, WV

Are you sure about the authorship of the article "Pharisees and Fundamentalists" in your March/April *Frontline*? It sure sounds like something from Charles R. Swindoll.


Pastor Allen Harman
Pulaski, VA

[Ed. note: A typographical error in the above article may have contributed to some misunderstanding. On page 10, the first sentence under the bold heading "Pharisees and Tradition" should have read "oral Law," not "Moral Law." The context explained the author's intent, but we apologize to our readers for any misunderstanding caused by the error.]

We want to hear from you!

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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.



I wanted to thank you for your excellent articles in *Frontline* magazine. They are very relevant for culture and ministry, and covered very credibly. I particularly enjoyed the articles in the March/April edition "Are Fundamentalists Legalists?" by David Doran and "Pharisees and Fundamentalists" by Layton Talbert. Since every fundamental, Biblical separatist in our day is likely included in these "thieves of grace" categories by non-fundamentalists, it is a blessing to see an accurate assessment of the issue.

Pastor Rick Rogers
Milwaukee, WI

What a blessing *Frontline* is to me as well as to many committed, balanced Bible believers! Thanks for the work and the fight. I am often embarrassed for some of the people who make erroneous and unstudied statements in

Mail Bag.

. . . It appears to me that *Frontline's* exposés are exactly what the Lord would want sincere saints to issue.


Mitch Sidles
Fort Collins, CO

I appreciated the article by Anita Fordyce concerning families who eat together ["Ladies' Circle," March/April 1999]. She is absolutely right. My own family would have wonderful times conversing around the dinner table when my children were younger. Dinner on the weekdays was the only meal we had together. . . . Now my sons are graduating from Maranatha Baptist Bible College and are both getting married this summer. We continue to have meals together when we can, but now we include our future daughters-in-law. Thank you for your great magazine.

Ken Butler Sr.
Watertown, WI

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The Sons of Liberty

The American Revolution secured freedom for the Colonies. But for as long as 57 years afterwards, another battle was raging for the freedom of our churches from government entanglement. This struggle involved some of the best-known figures in our country's history, as well as many men known only to the few who have searched out their stories. It involved the imprisonment of over 50 Baptist preachers and laymen who refused to be licensed and thus controlled by the state. The struggle cost many their health and others their freedom and their families. All who resisted suffered indignities and harassment. But in the end, they obtained for us complete religious freedom and much, much more.

The liberties gained were guaranteed. They became a part of our nation's law and our great heritage. A memorial was erected to these Baptist preachers who were imprisoned, these "apostles of religious liberty."

History tells us that from 1607 to 1786, the church-state was firmly entrenched in Virginia. Few "dissenters" were permitted. The state offered licenses to non-Episcopalian preachers who agreed to submit to a mandatory code of special certification procedures. Several groups, such as the Quakers and the Congregationalists, and most notably the Baptists, tried for years to have this system eliminated. But it was the Baptist preachers of Virginia who, in their quest for religious freedom (having already suffered for years in England), simply would not work under a system which would in any way subject them to an entanglement between church and state. They had a higher mandate: They were called by

God to preach, license or no license. They preached without license. They saw many saved and many baptized. They taught individual liberty of conscience in matters of doctrine, faith, and practice. Because of their stand, they were thrown in jail. They did not believe they were wrong to resist the church-controlled state government. As they were brought before the magistrates, they often quoted from Acts 4:19-20, "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

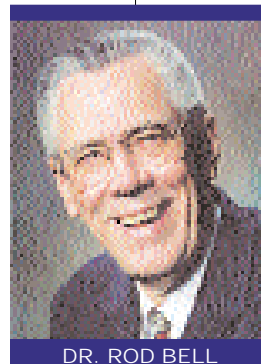
These early Baptist leaders are forgotten men in history, though they paved the way for religious liberty. Such a man was Roger Williams (1603-1683), whose writings apparently influenced men like Thomas Jefferson. Williams established the first truly free colony in America at Providence, Rhode Island. Another trailblazer of religious freedom was Isaac Backus (1724-1806), who engaged in a campaign of educating churches and legislators regarding the need for freedom from state involvement in the churches.

These were men who were willing to forgo their freedom for a time so that today we might enjoy freedom as a matter of principle. They were willing to go to jail rather than submit their conscience to an unscriptural mandate. They gained the attention of such statesmen as Patrick Henry, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington. History records that Henry and

Madison actually defended some of these preachers in court.

Had it not been for the courage of these men and their willingness to suffer, we might still be hopelessly entangled in the legislation of "option" rather than enjoying the "free exercise"—complete freedom of religion, speech, and the press. Court records reveal where and when people were imprisoned because of their religious convictions. According to county records in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on June 4, 1768, Lewis Craig, John Waller, James Chiles, James Reed, and William Mash were arrested for preaching and allegedly disturbing the peace. Reed and Mash were from another area and complied with the magistrate's offer for release by promising not to preach in Spotsylvania County for a year and a day. Craig, Waller, and Chiles, however, refused to make such a promise and were kept in jail for 43 days.

In Culpeper, Virginia, on November 15, 1769, James Ireland, having been warned that he would be arrested if he kept another preaching engagement, recalled, "I sat down and counted the cost. Freedom or confinement? Liberty or prison? Having ventured all upon Christ, I ventured to suffer all for Him." He preached his schedule and was arrested while preaching. He was subjected to considerable harassment, including attempted poisoning, breathing sulfur fumes, and threats of explosions, in what has been described as the worst case of persecution during this period of history in Virginia. In spite of all this, Ireland



DR. ROD BELL

preached through the bars and wrote letters headed "From my palace in Culpeper." James Ireland was in jail almost six months. Because his health was permanently injured, he was never able to have the active ministry he could have had. A Baptist church now rests on the exact spot where Ireland's jail cell was located.

Some 20 or 30 records show that Baptists were persecuted and jailed for preaching without the permission of the church-controlled state. Approximately 50 are on record (that we know of) who suffered in jail and various other ways because of their convictions. They were willing to pay the price for their religious freedom.

Statesmen including Patrick Henry, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson were diametrically opposed to the restriction of Baptists or anyone else for their religious belief. Jefferson and Madison were directly responsible for structuring the principles of religious freedom in the Constitutions of both Virginia and the United States. Largely forgotten, however, is the Baptist influence that played a part in these developments.

Thomas Jefferson, for example, was probably influenced to some degree by the writings of Roger Williams. He certainly witnessed practical, democratic procedures and philosophy from his frequent visits to a Baptist congregation near his home in Monticello. Many letters are available in which he expressed to Baptist churches and associations his gratitude for their counsel and support.

John Leland (1754-1841), a Baptist preacher in Orange County, Virginia, (the area represented by James Madison) was the foremost Baptist preacher in Virginia. His published writings strongly influenced the cause of religious liberty. Many historians believe that Leland's papers, articulating the Baptist position on the church-state situation, influenced Jefferson's sonnet in the *Virginia Gazette* (December 1776), a forerunner of Jefferson's Statute of Religious Freedom, passed in the Virginia legis-

lature on January 16, 1786.

Probably the most memorable accomplishment of Leland came at a critical point in the adoption of the proposed United States Constitution. Virginia was on the verge of refusing to ratify it because it contained no guarantee of religious liberty. James Madison, primary author of the Constitution, faced much opposition in an election to the Virginia legislature's convention from Orange County. James Ireland himself would have opposed Madison, and Ireland controlled the majority of votes as spokesman for the opposition. Madison realized how precarious his own position was and met Leland in


an oak grove six miles outside of Orange (Virginia) in the spring of 1788 to discuss matters. Leland convinced Madison of the importance of an amendment guaranteeing religious freedom. Madison promised to push through such an amendment and received in return a promise by Leland to support him.

Madison subsequently won the election, Virginia ratified the Constitution, and Madison was instrumental in the passage of the Bill of Rights in 1789. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States fulfilled Madison's commitment to Leland. A fine memorial marker now stands near the spot on Highway 20 where Leland and Madison held their historic meeting.

What a price has been paid, and what a debt we owe to men who have been forgotten in history, for the freedom we enjoy because "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." (First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States). Similarly, "No man shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened [burdened] in his body or goods, or shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or beliefs" (Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty, 1786).

These are just a few of the forgotten facts from the history of our Baptist forefathers in Virginia.


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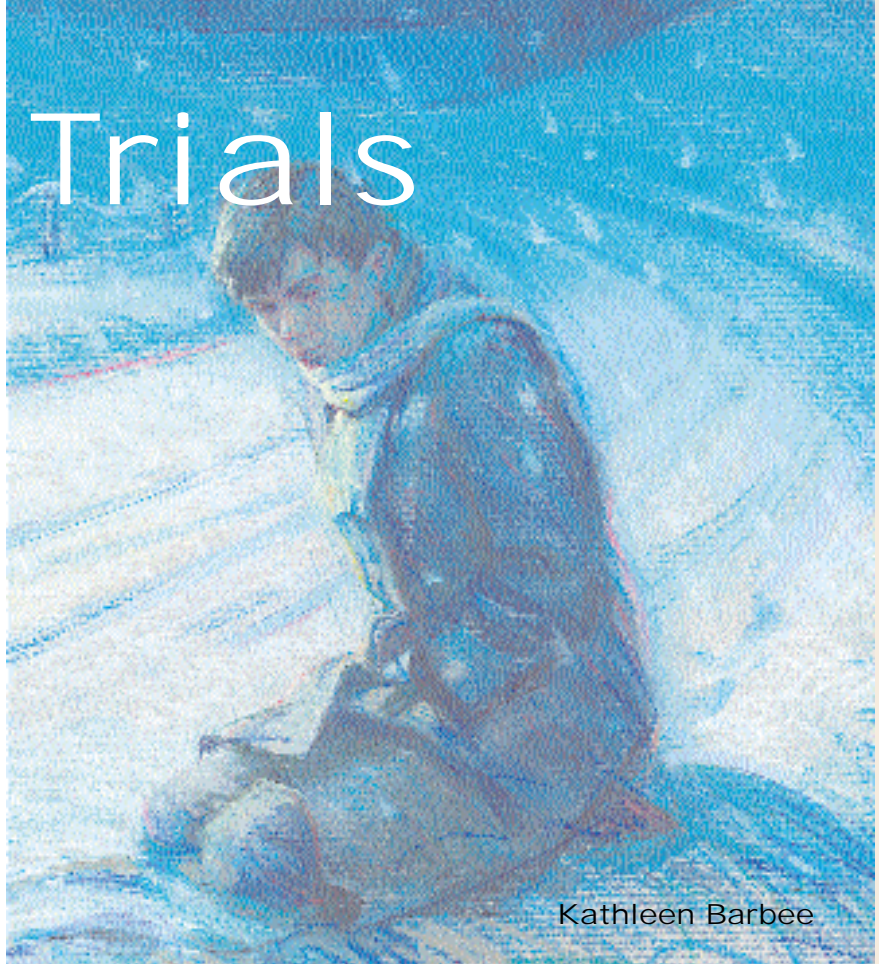
Amid Trials and Earthly Conflicts

It is interesting to watch people from diverse cultural, economic, educational, political, and social levels respond to threatening situations. Their responses, oddly enough, are very similar. Often trials and conflicts aid in bonding those who simultaneously experience such circumstances.

Christians must be especially careful during times of trial not to let their guards down to the subtle wiles of the Devil. We must bear in mind that Satan has no mercy or pity on us when hardships assail; on the contrary, during those times he becomes more vicious in attempting to defeat us. Therefore, we must gird our minds. We must not respond like the world. We must "put on the whole armour of God that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," "withstand in the evil day" (Eph. 6:11, 13), and remember that our "help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:2).

Casual observation of the responses of the world to difficult circumstances brings about two areas of concern and one solution regarding the Christian's response to hardships.

First concern: It seems that in recent years Christians increasingly respond to difficult circumstances and trials in much the same way as the world. During hard times many Christians turn to alcohol, ambition, complaining, denial, drugs, lust, withdrawal, worry, and a host of other fleshly excesses or extremes. These sinful responses reveal that many modern Christians are not resting in the Lord and His Word and lend insight into the prayerless lives of



Kathleen Barbee

those who profess to know the Lord. Before a failure in action (sinful response) comes a failure in prayer. No prayer, no power (James 4:2; John 16:24); and where there is no power there is no victory.

The Lord has told us we will have difficult times: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). However, He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5; cf. Josh. 1:5) and has promised to help us. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1; cf. Ps. 50:15). God in His Word and through His Spirit supplies us with sufficient grace to meet all of life's trying circumstances.

Second concern: Amid trials and conflicts Christians must be careful not to allow circumstances to give birth to relationships forbidden by the Lord. Often when hard times strike we have a defensive tendency to cling to those around us. This is not to say that we should not turn to godly companions (e.g., pastors, parents, spouses) for needed support and help. However, saints ought always to guard against cling-

ing to the world. We have a direct admonition from our Lord in 2 Corinthians 6:17 to "come out from among them and be . . . separate." One of the clearest examples during which this command is violated today is seen in the increasing and overwhelming number of Christians who seek help through "Christian" psychologists and psychiatrists. There is probably no other area in which the contemporary church has been influenced more. We have been force-fed a diet of watered-down humanism when it comes to dealing with the inner man.

Christians should not take advice from the world or those who, under the guise of Christianity, use the world's means and methods to offer us help. It is acceptable for Christians to get advice from the unsaved about certain issues (e.g., the mechanical condition of a car, the value of a house to be purchased, medical advice); however, Christians should not consult the world about matters which are of a spiritual or moral nature, "for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"

(1 Cor. 3:19). "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Ps. 1:1).

The solution: As Christians, we should make it a regular practice to consult the Scriptures for guidance and help in times of need. We must learn to interpret our world through the Word of God. The Scriptures are our map, and in them the Lord has graciously unfolded the way we are to take during our earthly pilgrimage. How should the Christian respond during hard times? The Biblical response to hardship includes seven components.

Reading. It is important that Christians search the Bible daily. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to us, calling us to daring faith, holy living, and spiritual conquest. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness. . . . And take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:14, 17).

Prayer. When hard times strike, we can petition God, our Father. We can ask Him to help us in and through rough times. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jer. 33:3). Conflicts can sometimes be averted by prayer (cf. Jer. 26:19).

Confession. Sometimes we have conflicts as a consequence of our own disobedience to the Lord. When this is the case, it is necessary to confess any known sin in order to restore fellowship with the Lord (1 John 1:9). This necessary step prepares us spiritually and positionally to approach the Lord with our concerns.

Counsel. Seek advice from a godly, mature individual whose life is marked by identification with fundamental Christianity and demonstration of the authority of Scripture.

Obedience. Determine to obey the Word of God (Ps.

119:9). Do right regardless of your outward circumstances. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Fasting. Sometimes we should fast when we are facing trials, temptations, or conflicts. Abstinence from food is a spiritual exercise of self-denial. It indicates a total submission to the will of God. Fasting can help us gain the strength needed to overcome the wiles of the Devil (Luke 4:1ff; cf. Mark 9:29; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27). This Spirit-directed exercise should always be coupled with prayer.

Thanksgiving. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18). Use the problem to your spiritual advantage. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

As the return of Christ approaches, Christians will face greater and greater trials and conflicts from the world. During these days of impending persecution it is crucial that we respond in a way that glorifies the Lord, for trials of faith are productive only if we respond to them properly. Difficulties may assail a believer, but they have the potential to identify and banish from our lives those impurities that impair growth and service.

In suffering, the child of God becomes a partaker of Christ's suffering. Christians, therefore, ought not be astonished about fiery trials and earthly conflicts. Joy in the life of the Christian does not come as a result of external conditions but as a result of confidence in the Lord.

Kathleen Barbee, MRE, is an Administrative Assistant at Duke University Medical Center and is an active member of Calvary Baptist Church in Carrboro, North Carolina.

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The story of Job is the stuff of martyrdom. Job did not die as a martyr, but lived as one. He suffered to vindicate (unwittingly) not only the integrity of his own faith in God, but the integrity of God Himself.

Satan's charge was twofold: (1) Job's faith in and relationship to God was insincere because it was motivated only by God's compensation—a blessings-for-worship arrangement; therefore (2) God Himself was guilty of complicity in this sham because He cooperated by making the payoff. It was, Satan impugns, a convenient arrangement that looked good to the casual observer but which is corrupt and fraudulent, shallow and empty.

Satan incriminated both the best of men and, at the same time, God Himself, and proposed a very simple test to prove his allegation. Simply remove all the "compensation," and Job's true motivation would be seen very quickly; without the payoff, Job would surely curse God and abandon his pretentious relationship with Him. This test would simultaneously destroy the credibility of God's character; for being God, He would have known what was truly motivating Job and would, therefore, have been guilty of attempting to foist this despicable charade on a watching world (both human and angelic). God would be shown to be a mean, petty, devious deity so worship-hungry that He has to con men into a pretense of fearing Him by a crass *quid pro quo* bargain.

Everything Job suffered, then, was to teach all subsequent readers, and all the angelic "sons of God" looking on (Job 1:6, 2:1),* the wisdom and justice, the freedom and sovereignty, the benevolence and supreme desirability of God. The depth and tenacity of Job's faith in God, with no Bible to encourage it, is both astounding and shaming to us. We are so often troubled by the slightest seeming incongruities between what we believe and what we experience that we ignore the wealth of assurance we have in our Bibles regarding God and His ways. What truths does the story of Job offer to comfort and sustain us to persevere in the face of experiences that seem to contradict what we thought we knew about God's character and purposes?

In order to put all of Job's experiences in proper perspective, we must first rightly answer this question: Who "did" this to Job—Satan or God? Job 42:11 underscores one of the bedrock truths of the entire story. Everything that Job suffered was "the evil [adversity] that *the Lord had brought upon him*." Nobody throughout the book even questioned whether God was the one doing all this to Job; that was taken for granted. Job himself understood this (Job 1:21, 2:10, 12:9). In fact, God personally and unequivocally affirms the same truth (Job 2:3). All the fancy theological circumlocutions we devise cannot erase the plainest of words out of God's own mouth: "thou [Satan] movedst me [God] against him [Job], to destroy him without cause [undeservedly]." Was it Satan or God? The

answer is yes. But ultimately, it was God. He says so.

God's Sovereignty

This is the book's first great comfort intended to sustain us in the worst and most inexplicable of trials: God is *always* the One in control of your circumstances. *All* of them. If He is not in control, He is not God. God Himself claims absolute and ultimate responsibility for all that befalls you. You may suffer financial loss, bereavement of loved ones, or serious illness. You may even be the victim of the sinful actions of others. Job suffered all of these. Heap on top of all that the accusations and misunderstanding of his friends, the desertion of family and, worst of all, the unresponsive silence of God.

Job-like Suffering: What's the Point?

Layton Talbert



In the worst that can ever befall you, your comfort from this book is that you are never abandoned to the fickle hand of man, nor to the cruel clutches of Satan. You are in God's hand. He alone holds the scepter. He alone grants permission for whatever He does not directly send. But when He sends what even the Bible calls "evil" ("bad" things in a non-moral sense, like calamity), or when he permits us to suffer as victims of the evil deeds of others (as Job, Joseph, and Jesus all did), doesn't that raise questions about another attribute? Granted, He is sovereign, but is He really good?

God's Benevolence

This is the book's second great comfort to sustain us in the midst of devastating circumstances. God is *always* good and benevolent, in *all* He sends or allows. If He is not good, He is not God. This is where Job's confidence began to falter under the relentless, logical (but erroneous) conclusions and accusations of his friends, who insisted that these kinds of bad things happen only to bad people.

Job never questioned God's sovereign control over his life, nor God's freedom to do whatever He chooses. But he wanted to know *why* God was doing *this* to *him*. Isn't that usually our question? The verbosity of Job's friends only painfully underscored the silence of God. His

In whatever trial you face, you can find your solace and strength in His sovereignty over all your ways, His goodness in all He sends or allows, and His sure and ultimate reward.

friends' arguments finally forced Job into a logical corner, evidenced by his saying, in effect, "If what you say is true, that God does this kind of thing only to wicked people, then know this—God has wronged me and ruthlessly turned against me" (19:2–12). Since he had no doubts that God was free and sovereign, and since he did not understand the reason for his sufferings, Job was left questioning God's goodness—and, indeed, His justice—in what He allowed. That is the very issue on which God later rebukes Job most pointedly (40:8).

We are creatures of sight. When what we *know* (by faith) doesn't match what we *see*, we tend to gauge reality on the basis of what we see. But the repeated testimony of God Himself is that He is not only sovereign and free to do as He pleases, but also always good in all that He sends or allows.

God Himself belabors this point in His response to Job. Haven't you ever read all of God's focus in chapters 38–39 on the minute aspects of His creation and wondered, "What does this have to do with Job's problems? How does this 'answer' (38:1) Job's questions?" God is making a subtle but tender point in talking about the details of His creatures (38:39–39:30). He sounds as if He has such intimate knowledge of their nature and their needs. Why? Because He does! That's the point! If He takes such careful and personal note of when wild mountain goats calve (39:1) and provides food for young and helpless ravens (38:41), don't you think He is intimately aware and kind and compassionate toward you in your need? Are not you—the only creature He fashioned in His own image—of infinitely more value to God than goats or ravens—or sparrows (Matt. 10:29–31)? We may not always see the signs of God's goodness in our immediate circumstances, but what we see is not all there is. And what we experience in this life is not the end of the story.

God's Reward

That leads us to the book's third great comfort to sustain the suffering saint. God *will reward* the one who perseveres. True, Job had no clue as to why he was suffering; but neither did he have any hint of the blessing that was coming at the end of the tunnel. Part of the reason God preserved for us the story of Job was to give to us that hint, that sustaining comfort in trial that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

God's earthly blessings on Job were a tangible expression, visible to all, of God's approval and spiritual blessings on him. Just as "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning," we are assured in Scripture that God will bless our latter end infinitely more than our beginning, beyond all our powers of imagination (1 Cor. 2:9). "To him that overcometh" the Scripture promises

rich reward and an enduring inheritance. God has bound Himself with an oath, and His rewarding of Job was merely a pale and earthly shadow of what awaits in heaven. Therefore we do not lose heart. For our light and momentary pressures produce for us an incomparable and eternal weight of glory. So we focus not on the things that we can see, but on the things we cannot see; because the things we can see are only temporary, but the things we cannot see are unending (2 Cor. 4:16–18).

Conclusion

It is often rightly observed that Job did not "deserve" what happened to him. Even the Lord Himself admits that Job's sufferings were "without cause" (2:3). But it is equally true that Job did not deserve all the blessing and goodness God heaped upon him for so long in the first place (1:1–5). Nor do we. Job profoundly understood that truth (1:21, 2:10). That God's daily goodness and grace to us is "without cause" is a humble reminder that He is free to do as He wills with what He has given in the first place, whether it be possessions or relationships or health or breath itself (12:10).

Granted, this is all easy enough to peck out in theory on a keyboard. But it is right theory. And right response to troubling circumstances begins with right theory. Biblical actions (and reactions) begin with Biblical thinking.

A careful interpretive rendering of a familiar verse ties together all these truths in a remarkably gratifying and confirmatory way: "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings—that the Lord is full of compassion, and merciful" (James 5:11, paraphrase). Job's "perseverance," and ours, is rooted in a settled persuasion of God's *sovereignty* over all we experience (they are "the Lord's dealings"), God's *goodness* in all He allows ("the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful"), and God's *reward* after all He graces us to persevere ("the outcome").

In whatever trial you face, you can find your solace and strength in His sovereignty over all your ways, His goodness in all He sends or allows, and His sure and ultimate reward.

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Endnote

*Job 1:6 and 2:1 indicate that the entire interchange between God and Satan took place before a live, celestial audience whom God was determined to teach things about Himself. Several other passages indicate that God is concerned to teach truths about Himself not only to man but to angels (1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:12).



Reasons for Disabilities

A Biblical Explanation

Why did God allow this disability to happen?" "Why does God allow people to endure severe physical and emotional pain?" These are common questions that nonbelievers and Christians alike ask after learning, for example, that someone has been diagnosed with cancer, paralysis, depression, or a chronic illness. Christians sometimes think that God's love for His followers includes a "protection blanket" that prevents Christians from experiencing all forms of personal pain. Although God's love for us is unconditional and eternal, becoming part of God's kingdom is not an instant ticket to an earthly heaven of perfect health and freedom from disease.

Through hearing other people's testimonies of overcoming illnesses or learning of God's protection in a serious accident, Christians can easily draw the wrong conclusion—that God must protect all Christians from experiencing pain and acquiring disabilities. "If God is such a loving God—which He is—how can He allow me or an innocent child to endure emotional and/or physical pain as a result of having a disability?" Several verses of Scripture relate to the causes and purposes of illnesses and diseases.

Although the book of Genesis does not give examples of people with disabilities, the primary cause of disabilities and illnesses is found in this book. Adam and Eve were the first people to disobey God. They rebelled against God by partaking of the forbidden fruit, which marked the beginning of sin in the world. Before the fall of man, there was no sin. In Genesis 1, the phrase "it was good" repeatedly expresses the beauty and perfection of God's creation. But the consequence of Adam and Eve's sin was that all creation would be affected negatively. Women would experience sorrow and pain in bearing children (3:16), and we learn "cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (3:17). In other words, God stated that all of creation, including animals, plant life, and, yes, humans, would reap the consequences of sin in the world.

As a result of sin, people suffer physical and emotion-

al pain. Every day, babies are born with obvious abnormalities, older children are diagnosed as having learning disabilities or seizure disorders, and active adults who are living a godly life receive the unexpected news from their doctor that they have a terminal illness. The natural human reaction to these circumstances is often one of despair, grief, bitterness, and hopelessness. A middle-aged man who has been diagnosed with cancer might respond in anger and bitterness, knowing that he most likely will not live long enough to be promoted in the company he works for or to see his children graduate from college. He might ask, "How could God do this to me and my family?" And the married couple who finds out shortly after the delivery that their child has a severe handicap might ask God, "Why did God allow our baby to be born blind? We didn't do anything to deserve a child with a disability. We did everything right during the pregnancy. How could this happen?" These are natural questions and reactions that have a clear Biblical answer.

In John 9 Jesus encountered a man who was born blind. His disciples asked Him, "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (v. 2). Jesus gave a very clear answer. This reasoning can be applied to anybody with a disability, whether it be a disability from birth or one that is acquired later in life: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (v. 3). Later in chapter 9, Jesus gathered clay from the ground and anointed the blind man's eyes and healed the man. Who would have guessed that the blind man would one day see? The neighbors in the community were astounded. The "blind" man's response to being asked how he acquired his sight can be summed up in one word: Jesus. He gave God the glory. This leads to the primary purpose of God's allowing disabilities to occur: disabilities enable people to better glorify God. God can work miracles through people with disabilities and can bring others to a saving knowledge of Him as a result of healing the ill. While sin—that is, human sin, not necessarily personal

God Uses the Handicapped

Bill Maher

Acts 3 records an amazing story about a lame man who was well-known to the people who came to the temple. He survived by begging beside the temple gate. Peter and John were going to the temple to pray, but God had something else for them to do. When the lame man asked Peter and John for help, he got more than he expected.

Led by the Spirit of God, Peter was allowed to heal this man. The man jumped for joy, giving God the glory. One could scarcely blame him, for he had been lame from birth. God had allowed the man to be born lame so that his healing could demonstrate the power of God. This miracle got the people's attention and opened the door for the gospel message. Peter preached, and more than 5000 people were added to the church.

In Acts 14 God used another lame man to get the Gentiles' attention. Verse 8 mentions that he was "a cripple from his mother's womb." This time Paul was used by the Lord to heal this man. As a result, many Gentiles were saved. God used the handicapped to reach the multitudes.

Of course, not all the handicapped were healed. These miracles of healing were to draw people for one purpose: to show Jesus Christ was God's Son who came to die for man's sins. God still uses the afflicted to reach others. I have seen this demonstrated over and over again in my ministry.

One example is the Vaughn family. Dr. John Vaughn has pastored Faith Baptist Church for many years. In 1978 a house fire

crippled his wife and daughter. Out of this seeming tragedy the Lord has given the Vaughns numerous opportunities to demonstrate the grace of God working in their lives. A Christian school for handicapped children is another result of the fire, and today Hidden Treasure Christian School has educated hundreds of mentally and physically handicapped and is building a new building on the church property.

Another example is Dr. Peter Maruyama. I met him at a missions conference where we were both preaching. He invited me to be with him in Japan in May 1999 to help him start a mission work to reach the afflicted in Asia. I believe God will bring many Asians to Christ through this ministry to the handicapped. God is still using the afflicted to reach other people who have seen what God can do in their lives.

Now what about you? Try reaching the handicapped as Peter and Paul did in the book of Acts. Obey Jesus' command in Luke 14:13-14 to reach "the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind," and you will see God's blessing and power manifested in and through "the weak things of this world" (1 Cor. 1:26-31) for His own glory.

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sin—is the spiritual *cause* of all disabilities, the spiritual *purpose* of disabilities is to glorify God.

After a Christian realizes the cause and purpose of disabilities, they are easier to accept. When one understands the simple truth that disabilities are for the glorification of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, any guilt or blame that resulted from having a disability soon dissipates and is replaced by peace that only God can provide. No longer is the disability the fault of the father or the mother or the family history. God created every human being for a reason. God is in control of *all* circumstances and *nothing* surprises God, not even the birth of a handicapped baby. We can trust in Him for all of our needs, and we can know that He holds the future. Even when disease leads us to despair and our physical and emotional pain is beyond words, we can place our trust in Him because we know that He knows the future. By reading the Bible daily, the brokenhearted are comforted, and the unfavorable circumstances are easier to bear. Psalm 119:50 says, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." The word *quicken* means *to make alive, to endue with life*. In other words, in our affliction, reading the Word and trusting God will give us physical and spiritual strength during times of suffering and can also lead us to a more productive life, not merely in spite of but *through* our human frailties.

Does God use modern medicine to heal the sick? Absolutely! God can work through any means to bring glory and honor to His name. Jesus rubbed clay on the blind man's eyes; the blind man gained his sight as a result of Jesus' power to heal. Reading this example of healing in the Bible, we automatically think that the healing occurred through the power of God. Did Jesus use a product in the environment to heal the blindness? Yes, He used clay. Was it the clay that did the actual healing? The power of the healing came from God. Jesus used the clay as an instrument to heal a human frailty. Likewise, God may use modern medicine, technology, and human

knowledge to heal people with diseases. God is in control of everything on this earth, and He has a purpose for every medical discovery. God can work through any circumstance to bring glory and honor to Himself.

Not every person with a medical disease will be cured, but God has a purpose for every person's life. To hold bitterness about the presence of a disability in one's life is to doubt God. God's ways are not our ways (Is. 55:8). God's plans are not always our original plans. God's plans become our plans as God reveals them to us and learn to accept them. Be thankful that some occurrences in life are beyond our control. We serve an omnipresent, omniscient God who is in control of all circumstances, even the emotional and physical obstacles that come with having a disability.

Amy Crane is a member of the faculty at Hidden Treasure Christian School in Greenville, South Carolina.

Other references related to disease and suffering

1 Peter 4:16

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.

is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Philippians 1:29

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

Romans 8:17

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

John 11:4

This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

Matthew 8:16-17

When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

2 Timothy 1:12

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

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When God Weeps: Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty.

Joni Eareckson Tada and Steve Estes.
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
255 pp.

Painfully hammering out theology in the real world of flesh-and-blood experience lends a ring of authenticity to the final product. Tada and Estes have produced just such a theology that grapples with human suffering. The authors recount their firsthand experience of and exposure to more real-world agony—and the questions it inevitably raises—than most readers are ever likely to encounter. One of those questions is the relation of suffering to God's providence—a topic the authors handle soundly and Biblically.

For all its focus on suffering, the book is not a victim-oriented pity party. Nor does it stand in the long line of Biblically anemic, sappy self-help books. It balances a tenderhearted bedside manner with the tough-minded therapy of God's Word. As with the Book of Job, the real subject of the book is not suffering, but God.

Estes puts our suffering into perspective by first turning our attention to the suffering that God (in Christ) has endured personally. Part of God's purpose for every one of His children, he argues (citing an array of Scripture, 57ff.), includes suffering. The question is not *if* we will suffer, but when and how and to what extent. In a fallen world, total insulation from suffering is a fantasy.

Estes assembles forceful Biblical arguments for God's providential control over all events great and small, natural and miraculous, accidental and contrived, sinful and innocent. For those who balk at the idea of God's all-encompassing control, Estes forces the issue: "Think about the alternative." The alternatives to God's all-inclusive providence are neither satisfying nor

Biblical—an unrestrained Devil (so much for sovereignty), a God who is taken by surprise at some of our experiences (so much for omniscience), or a God who is sometimes simply unable to do anything about them (so much for omnipotence).

Tada turns the direction of the discussion to the question on everybody's mind: "Why?" The pressing question of why we suffer, however, is secondary to the more pertinent investigation of Who is responsible and in control. "Why?" is, at its roots, a "me-oriented" question. Still, it is a natural and instinctive question, and she explores some Biblical answers—answers clearly forged in the furnace of her own pursuit of God amid the painful flames of personal suffering. Her answers are thoughtful and Biblically satisfying.

But Christianity can become as hollow and lifeless as any false religion if it becomes removed from *Christ*. In the end, Tada confides, "good answers aren't enough" because "the problem of suffering is not about some *thing*, but *Someone*. It follows that the answer must not be some *thing*, but *Someone*." The book really is less about suffering than about God. It is difficult to fault that kind of emphasis.

Tada's prescription to sufferers is consistently God-oriented and insistently Bible-centered—no psychological fluff here. Tada recommends turning not to the psychologists but to the psalmists as the most satisfying and Biblical way to vent and grapple with very real feelings.

Other skills for overcoming (not merely "coping" with) suffering include "waiting on the Lord": "Choosing to wait on God takes you beyond the immediate problems, the painful circumstances, and gently eases you into the presence of the

Lord" (158). Another is learning contentment in the midst of our circumstances, rather than seeking escape from them. Like Paul (Phil. 4:12), we *learn* contentment by adjusting our longings to match our God-ordained situation (173–74). Faith is the deliberate choice to believe what God says in His Word, and to think and choose and act accordingly—all sights and sounds and reasonings and feelings to the contrary notwithstanding.

The work is marred in places by a casual style that gets in the way of a genuinely majestic message.* Nevertheless, the substance of the book's thought outweighs such weaknesses. *When God Weeps* deserves a wide reading among pastors and missionaries, physicians and nurses, and especially among those struggling with suffering—including unbelievers. Allusions to specific kinds of suffering are so diverse that *anyone* can find his peculiar circumstance fin-

gered somewhere in its pages, instantly connecting them to the spirit and message of the book. It forces those of us who have, as yet, suffered little to confront the reality of suffering around us. It cajoles us to cultivate a more thoughtful empathy toward others. And it calls all

readers to avert our myopic preoccupation with ourselves and our circumstances to the presence and purposes of a sovereign and loving God in our midst.

—Layton Talbert

It balances a tenderhearted bedside manner with the tough-minded therapy of God's Word.

Endnote

*Chapter One ends with a phrase which, however sincerely intended, will be offensive to many readers. It is, happily, uncharacteristic of the book's spirit and language and hopefully will not dissuade the reader from pursuing the otherwise excellent message of the book.

God Is My Promise Keeper

Hugh F. Pyle

It is great to know that we have a promise-keeping God! "He has never broken any promise spoken, He will keep His promise to me." God has granted to us "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet. 1:4). The believer can exult with Solomon, "There hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised" (1 Kings 8:56). The Christian can take heart from the example of Abraham, who "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:20-22). God is no different today. He is our divine Promise Keeper.

His Promise of Salvation

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise," Paul assured the Galatian believers (4:28). God has bound Himself by solemn promises to give eternal life to those who believe on Him. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life" (John 5:24). "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12). "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). This is "the common salvation" (Jude 3) available to all who will trust "the captain of [our] salvation" (Heb. 2:10). Nothing else makes sense without this. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Tragedies thrust a sword of sorrow deep into the heart of the unbeliever, driving him to seek psychiatric help to cope. A possessor of the promise of salvation, though heartbroken, can smile through tears and with simple faith lean his weight upon the Word of our divine Promise Keeper to sustain him. The secure promise of a secure salvation makes the difference.

His Promise of Security

God promises that those who have salvation are eternally secure: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). John 5:24 concludes with a promise that the believer "shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." He later drives the truth home by promising, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

Those who receive Him are granted the divine authority to become "the sons of God" (John 1:12). Can we, through our human frailty, counter that divine authority and lose our sonship? Can the child born (John 3:3) become unborn?

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee . . . Isaiah 26:3

Can He who "is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12) misplace my salvation? Change His mind? Lose His own unsoiled reputation by breaking that promise? "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). Was Jude mistaken when he announced that Christ "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (v. 24)? No, He will keep His promises for our eternal security.

His Promise of Safety

"Safe am I, safe am I, in the hollow of His hand." We can sing that because God has promised, "Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Prov. 1:33). David exclaimed, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Ps. 4:8). In short, "safety is of the Lord" (Prov. 21:31).

Yet, are not believers subject to tragedy, sorrow and calamity? Do we not hold funerals for saved people, or visit them upon beds of illness? Are Christians immune? Have not God's people sometimes suffered martyrdom? Then how were they safe?

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29). God does, indeed, sometimes permit His own dear children to suffer, and He does not always explain why. But as the hymn says, "we'll understand it better by and by." Sometimes we are "chosen in the furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10) for a divine purpose. In the meantime, we must be content with

Jesus' words to Peter: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7).

Remember, too, that when a Christian dies (even tragically) that it "is gain" (Phil. 1:21). The sinner who dies "loses" his life (and his soul), but the Christian who dies has gained immeasurably: "To depart, and to be with Christ is far better" (Phil. 1:23)!

"With me thou shalt be in safe-guard," David told a trembling Abiathar when he was in exile. Today we are far safer with great David's greater Son than sinners are without Him. Pray for your safety. Pray about everything. Commit your way unto the Lord. Then when we have taken every sensible precaution, our times are in His hands. When my wife and I start out for meetings in the motor home we remind ourselves that "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed" (Lam. 3:22). The rest is up to Him. "Safety is of the Lord."

His Promise of Serenity

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. 26:3). Perfect peace! Complete serenity! What blessed calm, as the unruffled saint learns to "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him"!

During World War II people were urged to build underground air raid shelters. In a testimony meeting a sweet, smiling widow testified, "The 91st Psalm is my air raid shelter!" Meanwhile, "he giveth his beloved sleep" (Ps. 127:2). That's serenity!

His Promise of Sustenance

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). But remember, it says "all your need" not "all you want." When we need supplies we first talk to our Heavenly Father. The two coach batteries for our motor home were old and giving us trouble. While our home was hooked up at a church, I prayed about how to get some new ones. It is not easy when you are traveling on a tight time schedule and do not know the reputable dealers in a given location. "You know Me," the Lord seemed to say. I walked down to the church's bus garage just as a battery truck pulled in.

The driver was a saved man who just "happened" to have the batteries I needed, and at a good price too. Once more a Philippians 4:19 promise had been kept.


His Promise of the Second Coming

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself," the Lord promised (John 14:3). We can count on Him to keep all His promises. What, then, ought to be our response to this promise? "Abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. . . . And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 2:28; 3:3). "The time is short" (1 Cor. 7:29) for us to win souls, build saints, and prepare ourselves for the Judgment Seat, when we will finally meet our divine Promise Keeper face to face.

Dr. Hugh F. Pyle is an evangelist residing in Panama City, Florida.

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More Scientists Are Finding God

Stephen Caesar

Until recently, it was considered unscientific to believe in God. Science, it was thought, provided all the answers to the universe, making religion unnecessary. The only people who persisted in their religious beliefs were those who were, it was supposed, too ignorant or too closed-minded to accept science as the Provider of All the Answers. Now, however, attitudes are changing. Thanks to recent scientific breakthroughs, more and more scientists are realizing that the universe is the product of God's design rather than the result of a grand accident.

The mainstream press—never one to give religion a boost—has been refreshingly forthcoming about this phenomenon. In 1993, the *Boston Globe* reported in a front-page article, “From Cambridge to California, a growing number of scientists are becoming more open to theological considerations, and the result has been a flurry of books, interviews, essays, symposia and conferences on the subject in the last year. Although the most sober-thinking among them are loath to call it a trend, some scientists acknowledge this drift into religious thought, a drift prompted, they say, by recent advances in biology, particle physics and especially cosmology.”¹

Last summer, a front-cover article in *Newsweek* entitled “Science Finds God” opened with this statement: “The more deeply scientists see into the secrets of the universe, you’d expect, the more God would fade away from their hearts and minds.”² However, the article continued, “Big-bang cosmology . . . once read as leaving no room for a Creator, now implies to some scientists that there is a design and purpose behind the universe. . . . And chaos theory . . . is being interpreted as opening a door for God to act in the world.”³ Physics, “the very science that ‘killed’ God is, in the eyes of believers, restoring faith. Physicists have stumbled on signs that the cosmos is custom-made for life and consciousness.”⁴

More recently, the *New Republic* featured a (once again) front-cover article, “Science Sees the Light.” According to writer Gregg Easterbrook, the scientific community is jettisoning the concept of a purposeless, meaningless, Godless universe in favor of one that has meaning, purpose, direction—and possibly a Creator: “The interplay of science and religion, seemingly a dead issue a decade ago, has made a comeback.” Now, “science is trending away from dispirited views of a merciless cosmos toward a new vision of creation as poignantly favorable to life.”⁵

Scientists themselves have publicly declared that there is a growing alliance between science and religion. Astrophysicist Owen Gingerich of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Massachusetts observed, “It

does seem to me there’s been a great [surge] of interests in these sorts of things in the last 10 years. . . . I am very enthusiastic to share with people what I see are features about the nature of the universe that make for self-conscious existence.”⁶ Ursula Goodenough, a geneticist at Washington University in St. Louis and president of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, remarked, “Discoveries in biology in the last 30 years present a whole new world view, a whole new stage on which to think about origin and creation.”⁷

Increasingly, top scientists are abandoning their atheistic or agnostic attitudes and embracing belief in God. Among them is Allan Sandage, an astronomer who was, in his own words, “almost a practicing atheist as a boy.” However, the more he probed the secrets of the universe, the more he came to realize that God must exist. At the age of 50, he became a believer. “It was my science,” he says, “that drove me to the conclusion that the world is much more complicated than can be explained by science. It is only through the supernatural that I can understand the mystery of existence.”⁸

John Polkinghorne is another scientist whose studies led him to faith in God. A distinguished physicist at Cambridge University, Polkinghorne became an Anglican priest in 1982. As with Sandage, Polkinghorne could not escape the conclusion that the amazing order of the universe points to a Creator: “When you realize that the laws of nature must be incredibly finely tuned to produce the universe we see, that conspires to plant the idea that the universe did not just happen, but that there must be a purpose behind it.”⁹ “For me,” he added, “there is a mind and a purpose behind the universe.”¹⁰

Similarly, Robert John Russell was a physicist whose research led him so unmistakably to God that he became a theologian and in 1981 founded the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences at the graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. For him, the recent advances in physics point to the existence of God: “Quantum mechanics allows us to think of special divine action,” he declared.¹¹

Other accomplished, respected, and even decorated scientists agree. Charles Townes, who won the Nobel Prize in 1964 for his co-discovery of the principles of the laser, stated: “Many [scientists] have a feeling that somehow intelligence must have been involved in the laws of the universe.”¹² He further remarked, “As a religious person, I strongly sense . . . the presence and actions of a creative being far beyond myself and yet always personal and close by.”¹³ S. Jocelyn Bell Burnell, famous for her

discovery of pulsars, is an astronomer at England's Open University as well as a practicing Quaker. "Would I do science differently if I weren't a Quaker?" she asks. "I don't think so."¹⁴

Cancer biologist and Talmudic scholar Carl Feit of New York's Yeshiva University notes that man's ability to comprehend the mechanics of the universe "seems to be telling us that something about human consciousness is harmonious with the mind of God."¹⁵ Joel Primack, an astrophysicist at the University of California, Santa Cruz, remarked that "practicing science has a spiritual goal."¹⁶ Elsewhere he stated that, as a practicing Jew, "I can't think of any real conflict between Jewish traditions and modern science. Many of our psalms also say that the grandeur of the universe bears witness to the glory of God. So as a cosmologist who studies the grandeur of the universe in order to try to figure out what it is made of, how it got started, and how it evolved into its present form, I feel that I am right in the Jewish tradition."¹⁷

Francis Collins holds both a Ph.D. and a medical degree and is best known for heading the huge government program called the Human Genome Project (which is trying to decipher the entire human genetic structure). When he first became a scientist, he rejected the faith of his youth. By the time he was 27, he re-embraced his belief in God. "When something new is revealed about the human genome," he wrote, "I experience a realization that humanity now knows something only God knew before. . . . I don't believe God is threatened by scientific investigation. On the contrary, I presume that God is gratified by our curiosity."¹⁸ Physicist Eric Chaisson, director of the Wright Center in Science and Education at Tufts University, agrees with Dr. Collins's basic premise that science and religion need not be mutually antagonistic: "There's too much condescension and arrogance in science. We're trained to be pretentious. But there needs to be a better balance [between science and religion], sharing as well as discovering, and recognizing that we're not the only ones striving to discover who we

are and where we came from."¹⁹

Physicist F. Russell Stannard of the Open University even goes so far as to demonstrate how quantum physics helps to elucidate the Biblical doctrine that Christ is both fully God and fully man. Early in the 20th century, scientists learned that electrons were both fully particles and fully waves; somehow, they can be completely both at the same time with no logical self-contradiction. This can be compared to the dual nature of Christ: "He was fully both," Prof. Stannard states emphatically.²⁰

For too long science has been regarded, and wielded, as a weapon to destroy faith. Now, thanks to the astonishing advances that have been made in physics, astronomy, and biology, some scientists are finally conceding what people of faith have known all along—that the very nature of the universe serves as a visible and comprehensible testimony to the handiwork, and thus existence, of God.

Stephen Caesar is an author specializing in the scientific veracity of Christianity and the Bible. He is currently pursuing his master's degree in anthropology/archaeology at Harvard University.

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The 1999–2000 directory of the membership of the FBF will be available in July. The directory cost is \$8 for members and \$12 for non-members.

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Banner Ads Available on the *Frontline* Web Pages

Thanks to Mrs. Betty Mitchell, who has spent many hours scanning articles, more than 300 articles from past issues of *Frontline* have now been posted at the FBF web site (www.f-b-f.org), making it a valuable resource for all Fundamentalists. The FBF pages have also been redesigned to make them easier to use.

During the months of April and May, the FBF web site received more than 35,000 "hits," with the majority of them coming on the *Frontline* pages. Now you can take advantage of this web site traffic to promote your product or service. Low-cost banner ads are now available on the *Frontline* web pages. For information on pricing and specifications, contact the *Frontline* office at 800-376-6856 or at FBFLINE@aol.com.

Mid-Atlantic Meeting Report

The following report comes from Philip B. Golden Sr., pastor of Bible Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and a member of the Cooperating Board of the FBF:

"'Nourished in a Time of Famine' was the theme of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Meetings of the FBF held at the Calvary Independent Baptist Church in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, March 8-9, 1999. Pastor Tom Coleman and his people did an excellent job hosting the event.

"The participants were treated to Biblical nourishment in these days of spiritual famine by the message of these pastors: John C. Vaughn, Taylors, South Carolina; Tim Jordan, Lansdale, Pennsylvania; Jim Baker, Kettering, Ohio; Chesford Carr,

Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania; Carlos Galvan, Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania; Wade Kuhlewind, Connellsville, Pennsylvania.

"There was good attendance, and everyone enjoyed the fellowship. One man was called to preach."

New FBF Directory Available



The 1999-2000 FBF Directory, with complete contact information for nearly 1500 members, is now available. For the first time, the directory includes e-mail addresses. The new directory also contains a complete index to enhance its usefulness. Directories will be available at most FBF meetings. The cost of the directory is \$8 for FBF members and \$12 for non-members. If ordering by mail, please include \$1 per copy to help cover postage charges. Send your order with payment to the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship, 500 West Lee Road, Taylors SC 29687.

Errata

Dr. Jerry Cramer, author of "The Fall of Modernism" [May/June 1999], was identified as associate pastor of Church of the Open Door in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Dr. Cramer, however, is now pastor of Boulevard Bible Church in New Port Richey, Florida.

Upcoming FBF Meetings

July 27-29

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Hamilton Acres Baptist Church
138 Farewell Ave.
Fairbanks, AK 99701

October 4-5

Northeast Region

Trinity Baptist Church
80 Clinton Street
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 225-3999

October 11-15

Caribbean Region

Calvary Baptist Tabernacle
Box 3390
Carolina, Puerto Rico 00984
(787) 769-0055

November 1-2

Northern California

Heritage Baptist Church
3200 Heidorn Ranch Rd.
Antioch, CA 94509
(925) 757-5242

November 4-5

Southern California

Fundamental Baptist Church
1111 N. Ash St.
Escondido, CA 92907
(760) 743-1600

November 8-9

Southwest Region

Grace Baptist Church
2200 Sullivan Ave.
Albuquerque, NM 87401
(505) 325-7802

November 8-10

Midwest Region

Bethel Baptist Church
200 N. Roselle Rd.
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(847) 885-3230

If you know of FBF meetings scheduled in the year 2000, please contact us so we can announce them in an upcoming issue and post them on the FBF web site.

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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

"The Odious Name"—
Puritan

A small, stubby boy climbed his way up the winding stairs of an old country manse. It was a cheery, bright afternoon, and most of the boys in this quaint English village of Stambourne had run outside to play long before now. This boy loved playing too, but even on sunny days he was sometimes drawn almost irresistibly up the stairs to a little chamber that opened off of one of the bedrooms. There was a window in the room, but this one was blacked over, leaving the cozy little nook gray and slightly musty. To the boy, however, the room was a gold mine. It contained books.

Some of them were enormous. With an effort he took one down to spread it out on the floor in the doorway where the sunlight would illumine the pages. Turning a page he paused over the picture on its backside. A crowd of people surrounded two figures chained to a pole of some sort. Wood was stacked up around them. It was on fire. The young boy knit his brow. His grandfather had told him who these people were and why that robed man nearby was burning them. They were martyrs, and the priest was burning them for writing and reading books like the very ones in this room. He squinted hard at the picture and pursed his lips. Seeing those burning people lifting up their hands to heaven made him want to read their books.

The boy stood up and ran his eyes over another crowded shelf until they lighted upon one more worn than the others. There it was—the one he loved best. Eagerly he took it down and turned its pages to find the pictures. Here was one of a man running across an open field with a big pack on his back and a Bible in

his hands. Here was another of the same man clinging to a cross at the top of a hill. The big pack that had been on his back was rolling down toward a dark opening in the side of the hill. And here was still another of the man and someone else chained up in a dungeon. He turned quickly to the end of the book. Here was his favorite. The man was struggling through a river to a beautiful city on the other side. There were angels beckoning him to hurry. Some were blowing trumpets. The man looked happy.

"Charles!" His grandmother's voice from somewhere below startled him. With a sigh he closed the books, replaced them carefully on the shelves, and turned out into the bedroom to make his way to the hall. "Here!" he called back. "I'm up here with the books!"

That Charles Haddon Spurgeon was drawn to books even as a boy comes as no surprise to those who have read his sermons. He once challenged students enrolled in the pastors college he founded, that a man must read if he is to be read. Spurgeon is still read—probably more so than any preacher since the Apostles—and his sermons reveal that he himself read voraciously. At his death in 1892 he possessed some 12,000 volumes. They crammed every available space in both the study and sprawling library of his London home.

But the book room in which Spurgeon took special delight he affectionately called "the den." Much smaller than the others, it held his favorite works. Here, seated in a leather-upholstered armchair where the shelving came together in a corner, Mr. Spurgeon was surrounded by the same authors (and perhaps some of the very same volumes) which he had loved as a child—the Puritans. Of them he wrote,

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

Even the old editions of their works, with their margins and old-fashioned notes, are precious to me. It is easy to tell a real Puritan book even by its shape and by the appearance of the type. I confess

Inside

Bring . . . the Books—Key books for the pastor's study 5
Straight Cuts—An exegetical study 6
Windows—Themed sermon illustrations 7

that I harbour a prejudice against nearly all new editions, and cultivate a preference for the originals, even though they wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, or are shut up in the hardest of boards. It made my eyes water, a short time ago, to see a number of these old books in the new Manse. . . . Out of that darkened room I fetched those old authors when I was yet a youth, and never was I happier than when in their company. Out of the present contempt into which Puritanism has fallen, many brave hearts and true will fetch it, by the help of God, ere many years have passed (C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography*, I).

Let's Fetch the Puritans

It's been more than a hundred years since Spurgeon wrote those almost prophetic words. Since then, reading the Puritans fell into disuse. But the Puritans are once again being "fetched out." In fact, it is likely that more people are reading them today than at any time since their own. Certainly their writings are more accessible now than even when first printed. Several publishers (Soli Deo Gloria and The Banner of Truth Trust, in particular) are reissuing scores of Puritan titles that, in some cases, have not been in print for centuries. But who were these old authors whose resurrected writings are receiving such a renewed hearing?

The Puritan spirit is arguably more closely mirrored in Fundamentalism than in any other contemporary movement.

Last issue's column attempted to define Puritanism in three ways: nationally (they were Englishmen), chronologically (they lived roughly 75–100 years before and after the translating of our King James Bible), and denominationally (they represented diverse groups within the Church of England agitating for various forms of church polity). It is the last issue, the denominational, that I now need to finish exploring. Let me begin with a question.

Was Bunyan A Puritan?

If Puritanism was a movement for reform within the Church of England, is it proper to call men Puritans who voluntarily separated from that national body before the Ejection of 1662? Men who did so generally joined themselves with little independent groups of believers who tended to be congregational in their polity. Some of these were the earliest English Baptists. Is it correct to label such men—a John Bunyan or a Benjamin Keach—as Puritans?

"Why does this even matter?" someone asks. Well,

when I suggested at a recent pastors' conference that Bunyan the Baptist could be called a Puritan, someone objected with a loud "No!" It evidently mattered to him. I think I know the denominational concerns that prompted his protest, and I'm not eager to engage them. But there are at least two reasons that I raise this question of whether separatist Baptists were Puritans.

The first is that men who object to labeling early English Baptists as Puritans also tend to dismiss Puritan literature, often for no other reason than that it wasn't produced by men of their own denominational persuasion. It will be to Baptists' regretful loss, however, if our narrow denominational definition of Puritanism prejudices us against profiting from its rich devotional writers.

The pulpit and lifestyle emphases of most fundamental Baptists are very close contemporary parallels to those which animated English Puritanism. Our concerns for Biblical authority, the centrality of preaching, the exaltation of Christ, pure congregations, and godly lifestyle were precisely theirs. They preached powerfully about these issues for the better part of two centuries. And now their preaching is, for the first time in modern history, available to us and to our people for the reinforcement of our pulpits. What a tragedy it would be to fail to see this as God's gracious provision for our generation, simply because some of these men did not see everything our way denominationally. *This was the same mistake many of the Puritans themselves made.* They often denounced one another bitterly over lesser matters when, in fact, their ministries could have gloriously confirmed and bolstered one another.

Richard Baxter saw this danger and pled with leaders of all parties to rally around their agreement on fundamental points much larger than denominational concerns.

Is the distance so great, that Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Independent might not be well agreed? Were they but heartily willing and forward for peace, they might. I know they might. I have spoken with some moderate men of all the parties, and I perceive, by their concessions, it were an easy work. Were men's hearts but sensible of the Church's case, and unfeignedly touched with love to one another, and did they but heartily set themselves to seek it, the settling of a safe and happy peace were an easy work. If we could not in every point agree, we might easily narrow our differences, and hold communion upon our agreement in the main (*The Reformed Pastor*, 160).

Bunyan, the separatist Baptist, agreed with Baxter, drawing a distinction between those truths which he called necessary to the "being" of the churches (that is, to their possessing the very essence and life of Christianity), and those which, though true, are not vital.

All churches must agree and unite in, as those things which, when wanting, will destroy their being. . . . And here I would not be mistaken, as

though I held there were nothing else for Christians to practice, . . . for I very well know that Christ requires many other things of us, after we are members of his body. . . . But yet these are such things as relate to the well-being and not the being of churches. . . . Consider then how pernicious a thing it is to make every doctrine, though true, the bound of communion; this is that which destroys unity, and by this rule all men must be perfect before they can be at peace (*An Exhortation to Peace and Unity*).

He went on to ask,

Shall the papists agree and unite to carry on their interest . . . and shall not those that call themselves reformed churches unite to carry on the common interest of Christ in the world, notwithstanding some petty and disputable differences that are among them?

So let's heed the admonitions of Baxter and Bunyan. Let's not write off a man of *our same spirit*, then or now, simply because of his denominational convictions. In this critical hour in the Church's history, we need each other.

This brings us to the second reason I raise the question of whether separatist Baptists like Bunyan are properly classified as Puritans. I raise it because it forces an examination of the real essence of Puritanism. My contention is that the real essence of Puritanism was not denominational but philosophical, and that it was this essence that causes us now, 300 years after the demise of the movement, to see these men of differing denominations as *one in spirit*. That spirit, I believe, is the spirit of Fundamentalism.

The Puritan Spirit

The best definers of an old word are those who used it. In this case, it may come as a surprise that Richard Baxter, John Owen, and others whom we regularly call Puritans did not necessarily refer to themselves as such. I doubt that any of them ever extended their hand and introduced themselves with, "Greetings, I'm a Puritan." The term was not even coined by them in the first place. Those who used it first and most persistently were their critics.

Richard Baxter, for instance, recalled in his memoir that when he was a boy there were only three or four good preachers in his neighborhood, but that anyone who went to hear them "was made the derision of the vulgar rabble under the odious name of a Puritan." This "odious name" was also given to his father for no other reason than that he preferred to keep his family in the home for the reading of Scripture on Lord's Day afternoons, rather than turning them loose to dance around the village maypole. An English writer of this same era, Richard Brathwaite (1588–1673), employed the word for people who practiced keeping the Lord's Day holy when he tittered,

To Banbury came I, O profane one!

Where I saw a Puritane-one
Hanging of his cat on Monday
For killing of a mouse on Sunday.

Thomas Macaulay, the English historian, was still parroting the same kind of slander 200 years later. "The Puritan hated bear baiting," he wrote, "not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators."

These citations illustrate that the term *Puritan* was not necessarily a precise definition for someone of a particular denominational or doctrinal persuasion, but a handy broad brush with which to tar anyone who was conscientious about his Christian affairs. Henry Parker, author of a 1641 pamphlet titled *A Discourse Concerning Puritans* (subtitled, *A vindication of those who unjustly suffer by the mistake, abuse, and misapplication of that name*), confirms this conclusion.

Those whom we ordinarily call Puritans are men of strict life, and precise opinion, which cannot be hated for anything but their singularity in zeale and piety. . . . [But] they which are the Devils chiefe Artificers in abusing this word, when they please can so stretch and extend the same that scarce any civill honest Protestant which is hearty and true to his Religion can avoid the aspersion of it. . . . [The] most ordinary badge of Puritans is their more religious and conscionable conversation [i.e., manner of life].

William Bradford, governor of Plymouth Plantation, provides additional confirmation: "And to cast contempt the more upon the sincere servants of God, they opprobriously and most injuriously gave unto and imposed upon them that name of Puritans" (*Of Plymouth Plantation*).

If you had asked an onlooker, then, what marked the Puritanism he knew, it seems that he would have described it as much in terms of lifestyle as anything else. It is in that lifestyle that I am hoping to interest us. I believe it is that lifestyle, even more than the civil and church concerns which distinguished 17th-century English Puritanism, which is the true essence of the spirit of Puritanism.

John Gere detailed that lifestyle in a six-page pamphlet published in 1646 titled *The Character of an Old English Puritan, or Non-Conformist*.

He accounted religion an engagement to duty, that the best Christians should be the best husbands, best wives, best parents, best children, best masters, best servants, best magistrates, best subjects, that the doctrine of God might be adorned, not blasphemed. His family he endeavors to make a church, both in regard of persons and exercises, admitting none into it but such as feared God; and labouring that those that were borne in it, might be born again unto God. He blessed his family morning and evening by the word and prayer and took care to

perform those ordinances in the best season. He brought up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and commanded his servants to keep the way of the Lord. He set up discipline in his family, as he desired it in the church. . . .

Puritanism, then, according to both its critics and its leaders, was much more an entire lifestyle than it was a definable denominational movement. Baptists like John Bunyan, Congregationalists like Thomas Goodwin and Jeremiah Burroughes, and separatists like the *Mayflower* Pilgrims shared that lifestyle. It is this *spirit* of Puritanism that we need to keep alive within Fundamentalism, and I, though a convinced Baptist, am looking for fuel to feed it wherever I can find it. Then, as now, you can find good kindling in the example and writings of men of differing denominational persuasions.

That brings us to a final critical philosophical question, both about English Puritanism and about contemporary evangelicalism. Let me introduce it by returning momentarily to the Puritans.

The one thing that the Puritan spirit did not do was compromise interminably.

Puritanism as a movement was ejected from the national church in 1662 for nonconformity. In that year some 2,000 Church of England ministers were officially put out of their pulpits and deprived of their financial arrangements because their convictions prevented their conforming any further with what they viewed to be further compromises within the church. Regardless of their views on church polity, they were all agreed that larger issues now demanded their nonconformity to official church positions, despite the uncomfortable consequences.

Here is the issue in a nutshell. Is it legitimate to say that those men were still Puritans who remained in the church even after the ejection? In other words, could there have been such a thing as a *conforming* Puritan after 1662? Or would such a conforming minister be, *de facto*, a non-Puritan? Here is an example.

William Gurnall, minister of the largest church in West Suffolk for 35 years, conformed to the Act of Uniformity in 1662 (although his own father-in-law, Mr. Thomas Mott, did not). Yet his classic on Ephesians 6:10–20, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, was hailed by Spurgeon (a separatist if ever there was one) as “peerless and priceless.” It was, in Spurgeon’s judgment,



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“the best thought breeder in our library.” But if you read the nearly 1,200 pages of two-column print that is *The Christian in Complete Armour* (and I’ve personally met only one reader tenacious enough to do so—congratulations to him!) are you reading the work of a Puritan?


What do you call a man like Gurnall who, when push really came to shove, conformed on doctrinal issues more central than denominational questions? Do you still call him a Puritan? More importantly, is he a model for contemporary ministry? Perhaps he has authored doctrinally sound books that are genuinely helpful. Does that compensate for his conformity to a compromising denomination? A contemporary Church of England clergyman like J. I. Packer would like to think so. And so would many others who remain stoutly entrenched within apostate denominations because they see themselves as contemporary Puritans whose calling is gently and gradually to reform those bodies.

To me, it is deeply disturbing to hear men like Packer described as “the last of the Puritans,” or even as “a kind of Puritan.” Admittedly, such men sometimes write genuinely helpful books. Like Packer, they may even be authorities on the very subject under discussion—English Puritanism. But my contention would be that they themselves are no Puritans as long as they lack the fundamental *spirit* of Puritan nonconformity.

The *spirit* of Puritanism inevitably resulted in the *separatism* of those who left the established Church, or in the agitation for reform which brought about the ejection of 1662. The *one* thing that the Puritan spirit did *not* do was compromise interminably.

I am not defending the position of those who stayed in until 1662. They should have separated Scripturally much earlier. Spurgeon himself, a lover of their literature, faulted them for their failure at this very point (see the preface to *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1864). But separation was not a well-defined doctrine then, as it is now, and a certain amount of allowance must be made for their ignorance. But even they did not stay within a hopelessly compromised situation indefinitely. Like J. Gresham Machen, who was suspended from the ministry in the Presbyterian Church in 1935, they at least protested and resisted until the church, as it were, *separated them* from itself.

The Puritan spirit is arguably more closely mirrored in Fundamentalism than in any other contemporary movement. We, like those immovable men of three centuries ago, are determined to promote a lifestyle approved by God. To us, as to them, preaching the Word is central to church life. And ours, like theirs, is a movement whose spirit crosses denominational lines but which inevitably separates from any denomination’s compromise of fundamental, scriptural truths.

Now Puritan literature is available to strengthen Fundamentalism. Its authors have emerged from the past because their preaching is timeless. So I would like to encourage us to follow Spurgeon’s example and “fetch the Puritans.” 

Bring . . . the Books

Books on Books

Often people tell me about one of their recent book purchases. My heart sinks when I see a second-rate book, a deficient commentary or theological dictionary, or even worse, a volume tooting the horn of liberal theology. They have already penned their name in it and are so proud of it, but they do not realize that the promising and inviting title will, alas, be of little real help them. Now they are stuck with it. Never purchase a book without some idea of what you are buying. Remember, “the best books are cheap at any price.” A book at a bargain price is not worth it if it is not helpful.

The serious expository preacher will, through the years, build a library that contains the classics, addresses various disciplines of study in detail, accurately instructs his head, and warmly blesses his heart. To build a valuable and helpful library, the expository preacher should acquire and consult a few key books that are bibliographic in nature and that authoritatively review or recommend the classic works.

How many volumes should the expositor's library include? That is difficult to answer. It seems to me that I am about 2000 volumes short of what I would like to have. But then, I've been about 2,000 volumes short for the last 20 years, even though I have added extensively to my collection during that time. If the volumes are carefully chosen, one could build a fair library of about 2,000 volumes; a good library would demand about 4,000 volumes, and an extensive library would number significantly more. Blessed is the church that sees the value of including a generous book allowance as part of its pastor's annual compensation. The right tools enrich both the pastor and the message and greatly facilitate the sermon preparation.

Perhaps the best book on books is a two-volume work, Cyril Barber's *The Minister's Library*. I appreciate several features of his work and have recommended this book many times to preachers wanting help in building their library. Following Barber's system, which he explains early in the book, I was able to catalogue my entire library. With everything on the computer, all the important bibliographical material is quickly at my fingertips. If you have not yet started, catalogue your books without delay so they will always be easily obtainable.

The Minister's Library includes an annotated bibliography of each work. These brief descriptions of the book can be very helpful. Occasionally I write them in the front cover of the book so I always know a few details of what I am reading. The annotations sometimes promise more than the book delivers, but they are, after all, Barber's opinion; nevertheless, they are especially useful in determining which book out of several possibilities might be the best purchase. Barber helpfully singles out classic works or “must-have” books with an asterisk, and he has a system to mark the liberal works as well. He

also includes the Dewey Decimal number and author's cutter number with each book. This information eases the pain of trying to determine where in my library this book should be shelved.


Barber has divided his work into several well organized and familiar categories: Reference works, Old Testament, New Testament, Doctrinal Theology, Devotional Literature, Pastoral Theology, Missions and Evangelism, Church History, etc. His first volume includes works up until 1974, and volume two covers more recently published works up to 1985. Hopefully another volume will be published soon as a further update.

Perhaps the most familiar bibliography published is Spurgeon's *Commenting and Commentaries*. His strength is his wit and his grasp of the old works. This would be a gold mine for you if you were treasure hunting for out-of-print books. You will enjoy reading his brief remarks and gain additional respect for the grasp Spurgeon had on the literature of his day.

One of my favorites is Stewart Custer's *Tools for Preaching and Teaching the Bible*. My first-edition copy betrays its extensive use. Recently revised, updated, and expanded, this book offers an authoritative word on the fundamental works—in a wide variety of areas—that should sit on the bookshelves of every pastor and Bible student.

This column is intended to drive the pastor back to his study. “One can usually tell the quality of a preacher's work,” observed A. T. Robertson, “by looking at the books in his library.” Spurgeon suggested a good strategy for library-building: “If a man can purchase but very few books, my first advice to him would be, let him purchase the very best. If he cannot spend much, let him spend well. . . . The next rule I shall lay down is, master those books you have. Read them thoroughly. Bathe in them until they saturate you.”

Finally, for those who imagine they have little need for the works of others, Spurgeon remarked:

Of course, you are not such wiseacres as to think or say that you can expound the Scripture without assistance from the works of divine and learned men who have labored before you in the field of exposition. . . . It seems odd that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what He has revealed to others. 

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

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Nearly every preacher has his favorite definition of preaching. A thoroughly Biblical one comes from the phrase “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). Taken literally, the expression might be explained as “heralding what God has already said.”

Although “what God has already said” is not an exact translation of *logos* (the Greek term translated “word”), a “word,” nevertheless, is nothing but “the thing which someone has said.” The Bible, then, is nothing but the fixed inscriptions of the words that God has *already* said. In other words, preaching does not involve creating words but reciting them. They already exist. They stand written in certain grammatical relationships to one another. They need only to be repeated in preached form just as they stand written.

Preaching form is “heralding.” Gerhard Friedrich explained the role of “herald” to which God is referring.

It is demanded that they deliver their message as it is given to them. The essential point about the report which they give is that it does not originate with them. . . . Heralds adopt the mind of those who commission them, and act with the plenipotentiary authority of their masters. . . . The good herald does not become involved in lengthy negotiations but returns at once when he has delivered his message. In rare cases he may be empowered to decide on his own. But in general he is simply an executive instrument. Being only the mouth of his master, he must not falsify the message entrusted to him by additions of his own. He must deliver it exactly as given to him. In the assembly and in court he is the voice of the chairman, and in other aspects of his work as well he must keep strictly to the words and orders of his master (Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, III, 687–688).

This quotation is not only worth some meditation, but probably some memorization. It cogently expresses what God wants every minister to do. He is to herald, without subtraction, substitution, or addition, the exact words that God has said. But to do this demands that the preacher exercise the preliminary role of an exegete before he ever enters the pulpit.

In his classic work on preaching, *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology*, W.G.T. Shedd defines “exegesis” as the “leading forth into the light of a clear perception . . . an idea that is shut up in human language.” The minister who is most successful at this, he further explains, is the one who reads the Bible “just as it reads, and expounds it just as it stands.”

Shedd is talking about the careful, accurate, painstaking study of Scripture that enables a preacher to discover both what God is saying in a text as well as *the way in which* God is saying it. God’s texts have their

own inherent themes, outlines (revealed in their grammar), and progressions. Careful preliminary exegesis to discover these inherent facts soaks the preacher’s own soul in the very spirit of the Scriptures.

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

He who has imbibed it from the close and penetrating study of the words, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and sections of the sacred volume, puts the seal of the Eternal Spirit upon everything that he writes and everything that he utters.

This is what every preacher desires for his ministry—that nearly indefinable but unmistakable evidence that the Spirit of God is speaking through his preaching. It is the kind of experience related by Paul when he recalled that the Thessalonians had received his preaching “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). What gives that evidence to a man’s preaching? It is his resolute determination to preach just what God says just as He has said it.

That cannot be done without deliberately seeking the mind of the Spirit of God, who is “not only the true Author of the written Word, but also its supreme and true Expositor” (H.C.G. Moule, *Veni Creator*). Joun Owen adds that “for a man solemnly to undertake the interpretation of any portion of Scripture without invocation of God, to be taught and instructed by His Spirit, is a high provocation of Him, nor shall I expect the discovery of truth from anyone who thus proudly engages in a work so much above his ability” (*Pneumatology*). But such preaching also labors to declare God’s message in the Holy Spirit’s own terms, for “the Spirit rides most triumphantly in His own chariot.”

In his *Memoir* of Robert Murray McCheyne, Andrew Bonar testified to the reverent efforts of his friend to expound the Scriptures in this fashion.

It was his wish to arrive nearer at the primitive mode of expounding the scripture in his sermons. . . . He endeavoured at all times to preach the mind of the Spirit in a passage; for he feared that to do otherwise would be to grieve the Spirit who had written it. Interpretation was thus a solemn matter to him.

Do we ever think in those terms—that we might grieve the Spirit who wrote these words if we shirk the labor required to discover our texts’ own inherent themes, outlines, and progressions to their conclusions? This is a labor-intensive, time-consuming, unspeakably holy task. But it alone instills the preacher with the confidence and authority necessary to “herald what God has already said.”

—Mark Minnick

Windows

The Bible has much to say to believers about the little things of life that so many Christians take for granted. Many assume that as long as attention is paid to the important issues, smaller things can be neglected with little consequence. Yet the Scriptures are replete with exhortations regarding even the smallest and simplest issues of Christian living. A cup of cold water can merit eternal recognition (Matt. 10:42). Twice in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), the Lord emphasized that faithfulness over few things or small matters brings increased responsibility and greater reward. One servant was cast into outer darkness for neglecting the little the master had given him to do. What an important lesson for the believer to learn—that God is concerned about even the smallest of matters. While the talent was a valuable sum of money in the eyes of the servant, it was a small matter for a man as wealthy as the master in the parable, judging from his comments about being “faithful in a few things.” For the Christian, even the smallest details are important if they are a part of our duty to God.

Small Things Out of Place Can Have Serious Consequences

Small things out of place in life can have serious consequences. Despite our living in a world that operates on the basis of cause and effect, few imagine that small causes could produce such great effects.

On November 5, 1997, Virgin Atlantic Flight 024 prepared to land at Heathrow Airport in London with 32-year-old copilot Andrew Morley at the controls. Lowering the wheels, Morley noted that only three of four gear lights turned green. Eleven hours earlier as captain Tim Barnby took off from Los Angeles, he had noted that the wheels took longer than normal to return to their in-flight position. But the instrument panel had indicated that everything was normal.

After several attempts to lower the wheels, the pilots assumed that the gear was down and the light was malfunctioning. As the plane descended to an altitude of 750 feet, cockpit alarms went off. Morley pushed down on the throttle and took the plane to a higher altitude. Because the pilots could not see the landing gear, they decided to fly low over the control tower so that the air traffic people could assess the landing gear status. The tower radioed that the left wheels had not lowered, nor was the door even open.

A third pilot, Craig Matheson, went into the avionics compartment and attempted to lower the wheels by flipping circuit breakers. Nothing changed. The plane would have to land without the left wheels lowered.

The airport prepared for a crash landing. Barnby, who

Small Things Make a Big Difference

had assumed the controls, would have to land while keeping the left wing elevated, using only the right wheels, or the plane would disintegrate. Ninety-eight passengers and 16 crew members were depending on him to land the plane safely. The 2.5-mile runway was lined with emergency response vehicles as the pilot brought down the troubled aircraft. Amazingly, no one was seriously injured during the mishap.

After the crash, investigators found that a four-inch metal pin from the left brake system had come loose during takeoff and lodged in such a way as to keep the wheel doors from opening. An almost insignificantly small piece of metal crippled a 150-ton airliner, threatening the lives of 114 people on board! Small things can make a big difference! (*Reader's Digest*, March 1999)

Small Things Matter Where Sin Is Involved

Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote, “A little thorn may cause much suffering. A little cloud may hide the sun. Little foxes spoil the vines; and little sins do mischief to the tender heart. These little sins burrow in the soul, and make it so full of that which is hateful to Christ, that he will hold no comfortable fellowship and communion with us. A great sin cannot destroy a Christian, but a little sin can make him miserable. Jesus will not walk with his people unless they drive out every known sin” (Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, May 30).

Small things matter not only in issues of sinful living; small things matter in issues of righteousness as well.

James 3:5 presents a powerful illustration of this principle: “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” The tongue can inflict great harm with little effort, similar to the effects of fire. In 1871 Chicago was a bustling urban area on the shores of Lake Michigan. On Sunday, October 8, 1871, the city nearly burned to the ground. Fanned by 25-mile-per-hour winds, the fire spread north through the Windy City and consumed over 2,100 acres—and about one-third of the city’s property value (\$200 million, though insurance covered only \$44 million). After raging for more than 30 hours, the fire left 300 dead and 100,000 homeless.

Surely, some might think, such a massive fire was

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

Charles Spurgeon

started by some large explosion. In fact, the fire started about 8:45 P.M. at 137 De Koven Street, in the barn of Patrick O'Leary. Contrary to popular myth, it was not a cow that kicked the lantern, but an inebriated Mr. O'Leary himself who accidentally knocked it over. An incredible loss of life and property was all brought about by the sinful living of one man. (Information from www.acusd.edu/~dpuffer/chicago.html.)

Lightning sparked several small fires in historic Yellowstone National Park in June 1988. At the time, the National Park Service had a "natural burn" policy which allowed such fires to burn themselves out as a part of the forestry cycle to stimulate new growth. Previously, the worst fire in the Park had consumed 25,000 acres; all the experts believed that these fires would be no different. But by July 14, the small blazes turned into "raging firestorms" due to unseasonably dry conditions and the presence of high winds. By the end of July, some 200,000 acres had been consumed. Nevertheless, experts still believed that rain would soon come and cool off the situation.

For the Christian, even the smallest details are important if they are a part of our duty to God.

No rain arrived until September 11. By then, the fires had destroyed over 800,000 acres in and around the Park. More than 9,500 men, including the military personnel, were battling the conflagration. The fires cost taxpayers more than \$120 million and were not completely extinguished until November when the snow came. While many of the fires were started by lightning, the worst at North Fork is believed to have been started in Idaho by a woodcutter. (Information gathered from www.idahonews.com/huntfish/CHAP1.HTM.)

Sin, whether of the tongue or of any other member, is like wildfire. If tolerated by adopting a "natural burn" policy in the life, it will soon consume the whole person and produce devastating, long-term effects not only for oneself but for others as well.

Small Things Matter Where Faith Is Involved

Small things matter not only in issues of sinful living; small things matter in issues of righteousness as well. George Müller (1805–1898) is known as the man of a million-and-a-half answered prayers. Müller illustrates the Biblical truth that if one is faithful in a few small matters, God will make him ruler over many things.

Müller learned a valuable lesson on prayer when he opened his very first orphanage in 1836. He had prayed over every detail of the burden that God had

given him. He sought God for a suitable location to establish the orphanage, for £1000 in advance to secure the building for one year, and for the personnel to care for the children. He prayed about everything he thought he needed to open his first home for the destitute children that filled the streets of England. Yet on the day when he was to take applications for the girls his first home could house, not one child came forward. All of his efforts seemed in vain. In his diary on May 18, 1836, Müller recorded: "There was, however, one point I never prayed about, namely, that the Lord would send children; for I naturally took it for granted that there would be plenty of applications. . . . This circumstance now led me to lie low before my God in prayer the whole of the evening . . . and examine my heart once more as to all the motives concerning it . . . that His glory was my chief aim. . . . I could then ask him heartily to send applications." The next day, the applications came! (*The Diary of George Müller: Selected Extracts*, ed. A. Rendle Short, 52)

Müller learned an invaluable lesson on the importance of prayer for everything, small and great. Years later, as several German brethren prepared to make their way on a foreign mission, Müller noted that the cabman loaded some of the luggage in the hind boot (trunk) of the cab. Müller carefully counted the seventeen bags. Upon arrival at the wharf, the dishonest cabman unloaded most of the baggage but attempted to depart with the bags in the boot. Müller's keen observation saved the luggage from thievery. Later he wrote in his journal, "such a circumstance should teach one to make the very smallest affairs a subject of prayer, as, for instance, that all the luggage might be safely taken out of the fly" (quoted in A. T. Pierson's *George Müller of Bristol*, 173). No wonder that by the end of his life, Müller had recorded in his journals the amazing sum of 1,453,513 pounds, 13 shillings and 3 pence—all supplied in answer to prayer without ever petitioning anyone but God for help. He eventually opened five orphanages and cared for 10,024 destitute children between 1836 and his death in 1898!

Conclusion

Small things cannot be neglected in any area of life. Small things make a great difference in a cause-and-effect world. Small things matter in the believer's daily life and walk. Even the smallest of sins can spread like fire and consume the whole person and damage others as well. And for the faithful Christian, not even the smallest matters lie beyond the care and concern of God who works "all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11). May the Lord help us to reflect soberly on the searching reminder of Christ: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10). ☞

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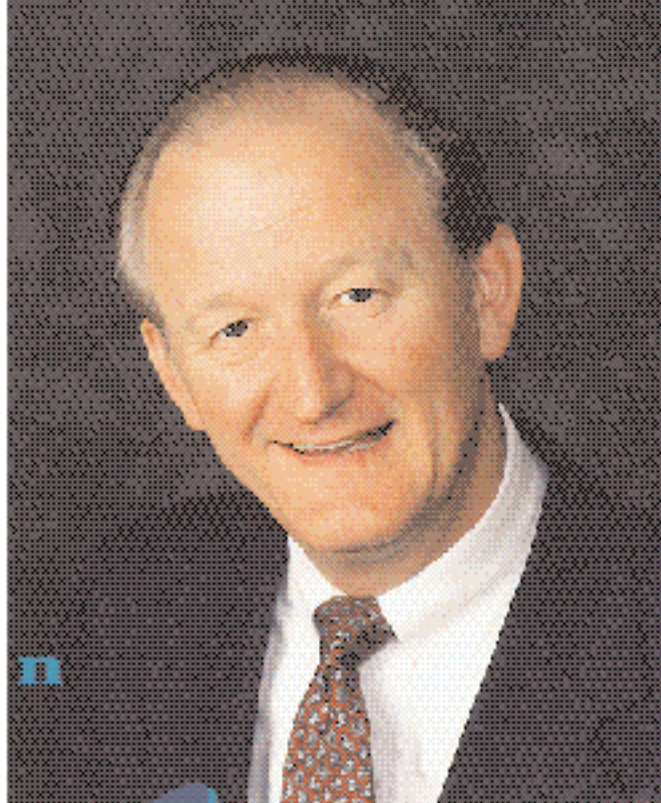
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Under the Apple Tree

Martha Mazzaferro

My parents taught me about the Lord from the beginning of my life. I accepted Jesus as my Savior at the age of six when I knelt at my bedside. I was very excited about the Lord and wanted everyone around me to know Him.

When I became a teenager, the wilderness years of wandering began. There were times when I found a refuge in that wilderness, especially during the summer months when I went to a Christian camp. I would come home purposing in my heart to put off the old nature.

There was a tree in an old apple orchard in the pasture behind our house. It had a branch that hung low, and I could sit on it and even swing gently back and forth. Many times I would go out there and talk to the Lord, begging Him to help me be true. This orchard became a refuge to me in the wilderness life of the world round about me.

I met a young man at the age of 17 and brought him out to my place under the apple tree. We were married, and within a few months we moved into the house next door to my parents. My wandering in the world's wilderness continued, and the apple orchard continued to be a comforting place to go and talk with the Lord. I now think of it as a place where He made me "to lie down in green pastures."

It wasn't until age of 40 that I yielded my body "a living sacrifice . . . unto God." Had He been leading me these 40 years in the wilderness to humble me and prove me, to know what was in my heart (Deut. 8:2)? I began to study His Word day and night. His words became bittersweet: bitter, as they showed me the sin within my heart; sweet, as I dwelt on His promises, His wonderful presence and fellowship. The more I came to know Him, the more my love for Him grew. The next 13 years were spent in the refuge of my Lord and Savior, in His Word and His work. The visits to the orchard stopped. He was true (He is true) to His promise never to leave nor forsake me. Through the many trials that came, I always knew His presence surrounded me. I even have the extra blessing of being able to read in the Bible, "Now Jesus loved

Martha." This so often warmed my heart.

We moved from the place I had lived for 42 years so we could care for our two widowed mothers. After nearly two years, my mom died at the age of 92. The testings came, and I began to yearn for the refuge under the apple tree that I had had as a girl. I started to feel as if I were again entering a wilderness experience.

Thankfully one lesson I have learned is to stay close to Him in prayer no matter how I feel. I pleaded with the Lord to draw me close and hide me under His shadow. He wondrously answered me with His Word. He reminded me of Song of Solomon 8:5; "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" How my heart soared with this thought. I took out my concordance,

my word study books, and a commentary to help the thought processes flow.

What a sweet truth I found. The next line of the verse says, "I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth." Song of Solomon 2:3 says, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." As the apple tree, so is my beloved.

Wonder of wonders, Christ is likened to an apple tree! He is my Apple Tree. When I sit under His shadow, I will be filled with delight, and I will "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Ps. 107:9).

He raised me up under the Apple Tree—not the apple tree found in the orchard of my old home but under Jesus my Savior. There my mother brought me forth with her sweet life and words that taught me about Jesus Christ.

Thank You, Father. I will stay under the Apple Tree.

Martha Mazzaferro is a freelance writer residing in Chester, Massachusetts.



The Virtue of Balance

Dr. Timothy Jordan

Balance is defined as “stability produced by even distribution of weight on each side of the vertical axis,” “equipoise between contrasting, opposing, or interacting elements,” or “an aesthetically pleasing integration of elements,” according to *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*. However, a definition that will probably make more sense to Christians is found in Solomon’s instruction to his son in Proverbs 4:23–27; “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.”

In these verses Solomon urges his son to keep his heart, to guard carefully the seat of his emotions and will, because out of it are the issues of life. He was to fix his attention on the singular correct goal and pursue the straight path to it. Influences that would turn him aside or were to be rejected. He was to ponder, literally to make even or straight, his path. Obstacles, whether hills or holes, were to be confronted. They were never to become an excuse to turn aside from the assigned path. All steps, all choices were to be in harmony with that straight, right path. Any deviation to the right or the left was evil.

Balance is that spiritual straightness and stability that resists all influences to turn or deviate from the right path. It is the characteristic of righteousness that refuses to be allured, intimidated, or bullied into diverting from the assigned course. It resists reducing or exaggerating the truth, recognizing that error or excess in either direction, for any reason, remains error and excess.

It is important to remember that *balance is a godly virtue*. It is clearly displayed in the nature of God Himself. God is absolutely perfect in holiness, while at the same time He is love. He is pure and just in His judgment, yet “his mercy endureth for ever” (Ps. 136:1). God’s law reveals this virtue, calling for separation from the heathen, yet commanding Jews to love strangers, remembering they were strangers in Egypt. It is said of Christ that He was “separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26), yet He welcomed their company and ate with them (Lk. 5:30–32, 15:2). His sacrificial death on Calvary’s cross is perhaps the clearest and most dramatic example of balance between God’s hatred for sin and compassion for the sinner. Balance is godly.

A careful study of Scripture reveals that *balance is a required virtue*. God requires it in the lives and ministries of each of His servants. Certainly the different Old Testament passages calling us to walk straight without

deviating to either extreme indicate this, such as the Proverbs 4 passage. Similarly, the New Testament contains many clear directives requiring balance in life and ministry. Our pulpits should display both sound Biblical exegesis and enthusiastic public presentation. Preaching should reprove and rebuke sin, but also edify and encourage the saints (2 Tim. 4:14). Christ called for balance in regard to external and internal righteousness in Matthew 23:23. We must avoid the legalism that defines righteousness as compliance with a list of “insider” rules, but we must also avoid relaxing our moral standards and personal holiness (Gal. 5:13). We must love and seek to regain an erring brother but also denounce doctrinal or moral error and compromise (2 Thess. 3:14–15; Gal. 6:1). We must be separated without being isolated, strong without becoming arrogant or insensitive (1 Cor. 9:22; 1 Thess. 5:14).

God requires that we refuse to remove the ancient landmarks He has set, but remain willing to relinquish any and all traditions of men that would keep us from growing in grace. We must tenaciously hold to doctrine and practice based on the accurate exegesis of Scripture, while patiently, courageously identifying and replacing traditional teachings and practices that actually hinder the work of God (Mark 7:9, 13). We must remain militant in our defense of the truth, but our militance—our courageous confrontation of error—must extend far beyond a few select doctrines or issues. We must be just as aggressive in confronting the lack of spiritual integrity in our private life, the lack of love in our families, the lack of reality and vitality in our devotional life, the lack of Christlike interaction with our lost and dying world. We must remain militant in our stance against doctrinal compromise, but no less militant against the hidden sins of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, carefully hidden in our past or behind “whited walls.”

We must refuse to allow our shepherding to become lopsided or one-dimensional. Peter describes our pastoral responsibility (1 Pet. 5:14) as being multifaceted, a ministry of feeding, leading, correcting, caring for God’s sheep. He challenges us to take the leadership, but never the lordship, over the flock belonging to God. We must refuse to focus on one or two favorite aspects of ministry, but give ourselves to fulfill our whole ministry and to declare the whole counsel of God. God requires such balance. His sheep desperately need such balance.

There is also a sense in which *balance is a dangerous virtue*. The ministry characterized by balance is never enough for one extreme and always too much for the other. It will often feel the pressure and criticism from

both extremes at the same time to deviate from the straight path. This may explain why it seems that many men and ministries are falling all over each other in their attempt to position themselves where no one else is more right or more strict than they are. At least at the extreme they can only be criticized on one front.

Balance is not maintained by submitting to consensus of opinions. Nor is it maintained by seeking to posture oneself an equal distance from two extremes. Balance is charting a straight course based on an accurate understanding of the unchanging Word. It will often be misunderstood and misrepresented. Straightness and consistency with the Word often produce apparent inconsistencies in a crooked and changing world. For instance, Christ appeared to be compromising in His association with sinners, but was not. John the Baptist seemed strangely isolated, a radical conservative extremist, but was in fact in perfect concert with Christ. It is obvious that our perfect, immutable God can be misunderstood and misrepresented as both hating sinners on one hand, yet favoring sinners on the other. Cutting a straight line in a crooked and changing environment will occasionally make you appear to be closer to one extreme at one time, then closer to the other in a different situation. The same ministry and minister may be viewed as a legalist and libertine

Balance is charting a straight course based on an accurate under- standing of the unchanging Word.

at the same time.

Further examination of this subject reveals that *balance is a quiet virtue*. In a society that glorifies extremes and makes heroes out of the most radical, balance is not only overlooked, but often considered undesirable. One-dimensional ministries that are the best, the greatest, the biggest, the newest in one or two specific areas draw great attention and praise. The ministry or minister who seeks to emphasize all of the Biblical responsibilities of ministry is

often unnoticed and undervalued. Balance may escape the commendation of men, but it never escapes the commendation of God.

Finally, it must be understood that *balance is an attainable virtue*. That is not to say anyone will achieve perfect balance, but real and lasting progress can be made to achieve greater balance in life and ministry. If we keep our eyes on one unchanging, immovable focus, Jesus Christ; if we strive to become *only* what He wants us to be and *all* that He want us to be, we will live and minister with greater balance. Our lives and ministries must be controlled by *only* the Word and by *all* of the Word.

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The medium is the message. —Marshall McLuhan

A fully equipped duke costs as much to keep up as two dreadnoughts; and dukes are just as great a terror and they last longer.

—David Lloyd George

The music of the gospel leads us home.

—F. W. Faber

The bodies of those that made such a noise and tumult when alive, when dead, lie as quiet among the graves of their neighbors as any others.

—Jonathan Edwards

No government can be long secure without a formidable opposition.

—Benjamin Disraeli

There are strings . . . in the human heart that had better not be vibrated.

—Charles Dickens

Manners maketh man.

—William of Wykeham

Dead-bed repentance is burning the candle of life in the service of the devil, then blowing the snuff in the face of heaven.

—Lorenzo Dow

If you were someone else, could you stand yourself?

—Unknown

Truth does not blush.

—Tertullian

Revenge is the pure delight of little minds.

—Juvenal

The purpose of revival is to make God, not men, famous.

—Richard Owen Roberts

If Jesus Christ is God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

—C. T. Studd

No man ever became wise by chance.

—Seneca

Never mistake remorse for repentance; remorse simply puts a man in hell while he is on earth.

—Oswald Chambers

Morality does not make a Christian, yet no man can be a Christian without it.

—Daniel Wilson

In his will is our peace.

—Dante Alighieri

Knowledge by suffering entereth.

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.

—Edmund Burke

There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight.

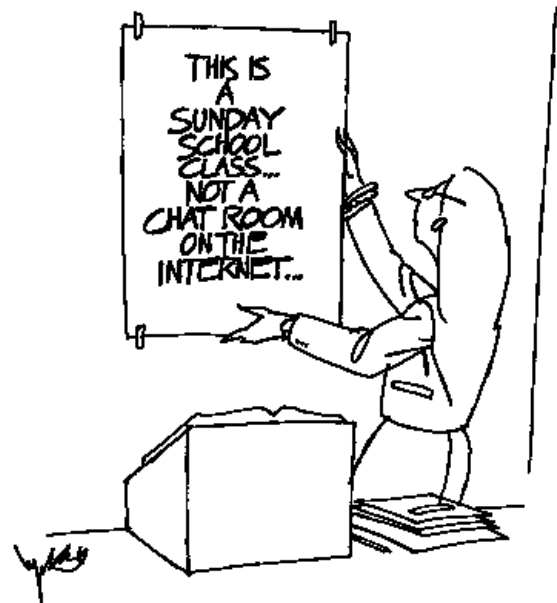
—Woodrow Wilson

No pain, no palm; no thorns, no throne; no gall, no glory; no cross, no crown.

—William Penn

To live above with saints we love, that will be glory. To live below with saints we know, that's another story.

—Unknown



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

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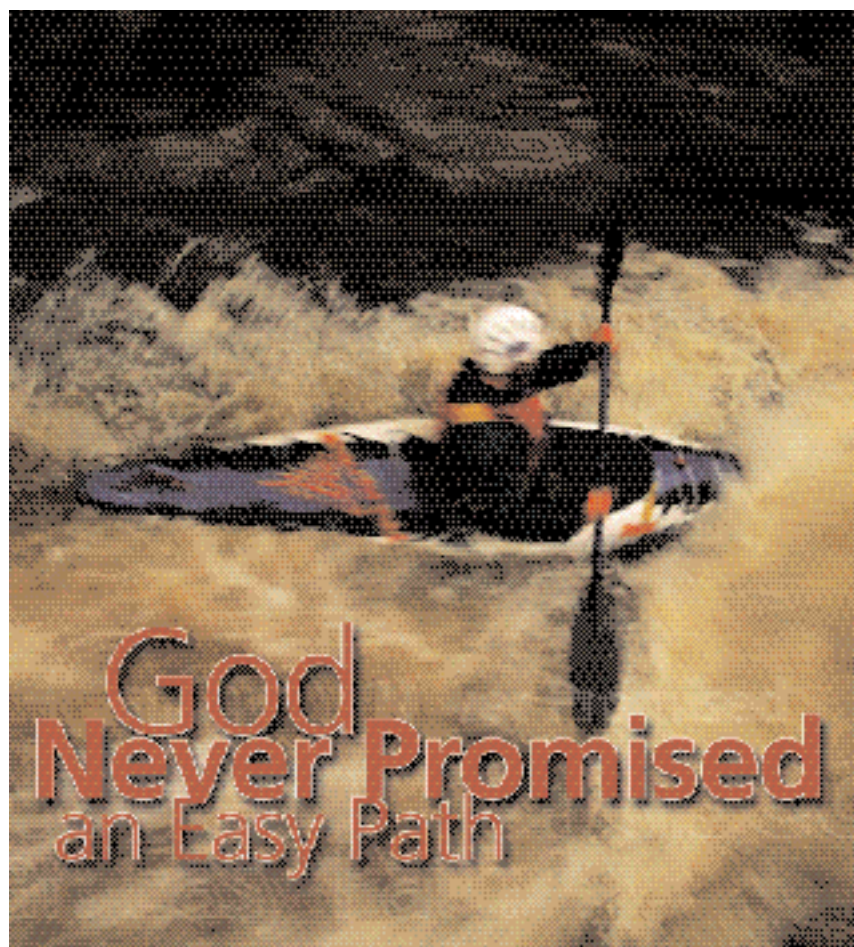
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Seeking God's Face

Phil Shuler

We are told in God's Word that no man has ever seen God and lived. Moses probably came the closest. Though shielded in the cleft of a rock as God passed by, he later appeared to his people with his face aglow from God's presence. Moses would not have lived to lead the children of Israel to the Promised Land had he seen God's face. We know that Paul, on the Damascus road, saw but a faint portion of the glory of God, and it blinded him. So when we are told in 2 Chronicles 7:14 that we are to seek His face, we grasp for the meaning.

The more I have studied this phrase, the more I think it means to seek His way, or direction, or pleasure. Christ, in His model prayer to the disciples, instructed them to pray to the Father, "Thy will be done." In the garden, as He sweat drops of blood, He begged God to take the cup of sin from Him, but ended with "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). I believe our text cries out that God's way is the perfect way, and that man should seek it out and walk in it.

Many years ago my brother, Jack, called me to tell me that he had led a young man to Christ who was trained under John Charles Thomas. The man had been an alcoholic, but Jack wanted him to have a chance to serve God. He asked me to use him in my meetings. I was without a music man, so I took this man on. This young man was sensational! What a voice!

During our sixth month together, his father had a very serious stroke. I found out that his father could not move or speak; he could only blink his eyes. My singer asked me to pray that God would keep his father alive. He didn't ask that God might heal him; just keep him alive. I shocked him by saying that I would not. He asked why, so I explained to him that God's will was to be considered in this matter, and that we should never demand anything of God. The man became very angry with me.

That night, and for the next week, we heard this man raising his voice to God, demanding that He keep his father alive. He would pound the wall with his fist, yelling at the top of his voice: "I insist that you keep Dad alive!" Well, He did. He kept him alive, not able to move, not able to talk, for 11 years. It took my singer out of the ministry, drove him back to the bottle, and caused his wife to leave him because of the pressure. The last time I heard about my friend was some years ago when I was told that he was back to the old life. "Seek my face. . . ." Brethren, don't ever demand anything of God! He knows what is best for us, and He

knows it before we ever go to prayer.

The promise in verse 15 is conditional upon the demands of verse 14: "If my people . . . shall . . . seek my face." He will attend to our prayers, He will heal our land if we will seek His will and then do it. Nothing is really accomplished in the Christian life without this formula. I would urge pastors to meditate on this text when they schedule the next revival for their church. If a pastor wants a teaching revival, then a short meeting might go well. But if he wants a revival meeting that deals with sin, attacks the source of such sin, and shakes the lethargic church member into an upright position, he should give the evangelist the time it takes to see conviction settle in from his preaching. He should seek God's will and incorporate His desires. I know from my own experience that it is extremely discouraging to see conviction build in a meeting, and then have to close it. The evangelist wants to leave each church he serves better than when he came. We know that this is God's will for the evangelist. Pastors, let's seek God's will in this matter.

Dr. Phil Shuler is an evangelist residing in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Since 1946 he has served churches throughout America and in many foreign lands.

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In her 210-year history (931–722 B.C.), the northern kingdom of Israel went through 20 kings representing 9 different dynasties (ruling families). To a man, Israel's monarchs were morally corrupt and spiritually defective. Yet God centered His most dramatic and intense prophetic activity on the wayward northern kingdom, until her recalcitrance was incurable and her doom sealed. (Note: Each name with an asterisk marks the head of a new dynasty.)

JEROBOAM* (22 yrs; 931–910) 1 Kings 11–14

Vaulted into leadership with gracious promises from God (11:26–40), Jeroboam's introduction of deviant worship into Israel colored all future generations. (See 1 Ki. 15:26, 34; 16:2, 19, 26, 31; 22:52; 2Ki. 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:22). He ignored repeated revelation from God, till the Lord determined to cut off both his family (14:7–11) and Israel (14:14–16). In the end, "the Lord struck him" (2 Chron. 13:20).

SUMMARY: *Refusal to believe God's Word breeds a deviant worship.*

NADAB (2 yrs; 910–909) 1 Kings 15:25–28, 31

Jeroboam's son receives 5 verses. His moral/spiritual legacy is predictable (15:26). He was assassinated by one of his own commanders, Baasha. (of the tribe of Issachar).

SUMMARY: *Like father, like son.*

BAASHA* (24 yrs; 909–886) 1 Kings 15:32–16:7

Baasha was held accountable for his own murderous actions, though they were predicted and permitted by God for Jeroboam's judgment. What he did for personal and ambitious reasons, God providentially permitted for spiritual reasons. In a kind of prophetic/poetic justice, Baasha became the object of the same doom pronounced upon Jeroboam (16:1–7). Baasha's dynasty (like Jeroboam's) lasted only 2 generations.

SUMMARY: *Providence does not negate personal responsibility.*

ELAH (2 yrs; 886–885) 1 Kings 16:8–10, 13–14

That prophetic/poetic justice played out further in Elah's rise and fall. Like Nadab, Elah reigned only 2 years, is given only 5 verses, and was assassinated by a trusted lieutenant, Zimri—who proceeded to exterminate the entire line of Baasha (just as Baasha had done to Jeroboam's line).

SUMMARY: *Prophetic/poetic justice played out.*

ZIMRI* (7 days; 885) 1 Kings 16:9–20

Zimri assassinated the drunken King Elah and exterminated his predecessors' posterity. Word of Zimri's coup reached the army, who elected Omri king and followed him to Tirzah to establish his reign. When he saw that Omri's forces had taken the city, Zimri burned down the palace over himself.

SUMMARY: *A short act, but he brought the house down.*

TIBNI* (3–4 yrs; 885–882) 1 Kings 16:21–22

Another leader surfaced with significant support among the people; 3–4 years of divided rule and civil war ensued before Tibni was slain and Omri obtained sole rule.

OMRI* (12 yrs; 885–874) 1 Kings 16:23–28

Omri's influence reached farther than his 6 verses suggest. He moved the capital from Tirzah to Samaria. Politically, Omri's reign was a pivotal one for Israel, establishing it as a key power in the region. Ties with Phoenecia led to the marriage of his son, Ahab, to the Tyrian princess, Jezebel. His spiritual legacy set a new low for Israel (16:25; cf. Mic. 6:16).

SUMMARY: *"Worse than all before," he opened the door to Baal worship and instituted the far-reaching "statutes of Omri" (Mic. 6:16).*

AHAB (22 yrs; 874–853) 1 Kings 16:29–22:40

No other king of Israel is more notorious, occupies more space in the Biblical record, or had any more lasting, devastating impact on Israel's spiritual decline. Ahab is king for 6 chapters; but he appears only as the nemesis, and his reign the backdrop, for God's activity through Elijah. All the stories of Ahab and Jezebel only highlight the reliability of "the word of the Lord." Repeatedly showed himself to be a man of power without character, dominated by the stronger Jezebel.

SUMMARY: *Even worse! Power without character, remorse without repentance; Ahab sold himself to do evil (21:20, 25).*

AHAZIAH (2 yrs; 853–852) 1 Kings 22:51–53; 2 Kings 1:1–18

This son of Ahab walked in the ways of both parents. The only story from Ahaziah's reign (his accidental fall and consequent death) deliberately juxtaposes "thus saith the Lord" (1:4, 6) and "thus saith the king" (1:9, 11). Who has the last word? Note 1:13–17. Ahaziah was succeeded by his brother, J(eh)oram.

SUMMARY: *Falling in the footsteps of his parents. (Or, "Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!")*

JORAM (12 yrs; 852–841) 2 Kings 3:1–27, 5:1–8, 6:8–8:6, 9:14–26

If Joram is the unnamed king throughout the ministry of Elisha (2 Kings 3–9), he witnessed an enormous amount of divine activity and communication. Joram appears in 6 scenes: war with Moab (3:1–27); visit of Naaman (5:18ff.); capture of a Syrian band (6:8–23); Syrian siege of Samaria (6:24–7:20); tale of the Shunammite woman (8:1–6); and his own assassination (9:14–26). Joram removed his father's Baal-image—a courageous act, since his mother, Jezebel (the real instigator of Baal worship), was still alive and well. The text repeatedly drops hints which are unique among the kings of Israel and seem to indicate Joram was among the better of the bad kings of Israel: he (1) was not as bad as his parents (3:2), (2) referred to Elisha with respect (6:21), (3) began to acknowledge Yahweh's hand

THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL'S MONARCHY

Part 3—The Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12–2 Kings 17)

in events (6:27, 33), (4) displayed sincere repentance (6:30), and (5) manifested genuine interest in Elisha's ministry (8:4).

SUMMARY: *The nameless king during Elisha's ministry; became one of the better of the bad kings of Israel.*

JEHU* (28 yrs; 841–814) 2 Kings 9:1–10:36

God's anointing and commissioning of Jehu included a charge to eradicate the house of Ahab. Jehu conspired to assassinate Joram (recovering in Jezreel from battle wounds). Conveniently, King Ahaziah of Judah (a maternal grandson of Ahab and Jezebel) was visiting the convalescing Joram. Jehu assassinated both simultaneously (fulfilling "the word of the Lord," 9:25–26), then executed Jezebel, queen mother of Israel (whose manner of death also fulfilled "the word of the Lord"). Jehu's purge was political (10:1–17) and religious (10:18–28), eradicating all Baal worshippers and turning their temple into a public latrine. Jehu's actions were a positive step, but not a reformation. Israel remained mired in Jeroboam's deviant religious institutions. A political/moral/religious purge is only as good as the heart behind it; Jehu's was clearly defective. Still, Jehu is the only northern king commended by God, Who promised that his dynasty would last to the fourth generation. It did. Jehu's was the longest dynasty in Israel (841–753).

SUMMARY: *Scourge of God against the house of Ahab and the worship of Baal; an effective but still spiritually defective instrument (2 K. 10:28–31).*

JEHOAHAZ (17 yrs; 814–798) 2 Kings 13:1–9

Jehoahaz's general spiritual character matched his predecessors' (13:2). Yet, the next verse is a surprising departure from the norm; he besought Yahweh to deliver them from their enemies and, amazingly, He did (13:3–5). Nevertheless, Israel repaid God's goodness with continued unfaithfulness.

SUMMARY: *Surprised by grace; the Lord is besought, but still not sought (2 K. 13:4–6).*

JEHOASH (16 yrs; 798–782) 2 Kings 13:10–25, 14:8–16

Despite the unbroken pattern of sin on the part of Jehoash and the people (13:11), God privileged him with Elisha's last prophetic promise (13:14–19). The Lord remained gracious to them because of "His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, neither cast he them from his presence as yet" (13:23).

SUMMARY: *Elisha's last king. Grace upon grace; God, in covenant loyalty, still would not destroy them . . . yet.*

JEROBOAM II (41 yrs; 793–753) 2 Kings 14:23–29

Reigned during Jonah's ministry (14:25). God again blessed Israel out of pure grace and compassion (14:25–27). Called "the greatest of all the kings of northern Israel," Jeroboam II restored the northern kingdom to its Davidic/Solomonic proportions. This sudden and prolific prosperity led to indulgent

excesses condemned by God through the prophet Amos (Amos 6:4–8; 7:9–17).

SUMMARY: *The king of Jonah and Amos rewards God-given prosperity with impudence; the end is in sight.*

ZECHARIAH (6 months; 753) 2 Kings 15:8–12

Zechariah was publicly assassinated (15:10–12) in keeping with Amos' prophecy (Amos 7:9). His assassination by Shallum plunges Israel into a political tailspin; 4 of her last 6 kings were assassinated (cf. Hos. 8:4). Zechariah's account ends with another reminder of the unfailing fulfillment of "the word of the Lord."

SUMMARY: *A quick end to the dynasty of Jehu.*

SHALLUM* (1 month; 752) 2 Kings 13:13–15

The account is almost grimly humorous. Shallum reigned a *whole month*—not even long enough to record that he "did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the sins of Jeroboam . . . !" Assassinated by Menahem.

SUMMARY: *The one-month king; what goes around comes around.*

MENAHM* (10 yrs; 752–742) 2 Kings 15:16–22

The brief account underscores Menahem's ruthless cruelty (15:16–17) and shrewd, tyrannical politics, taxing the people at a confiscatory rate (15:19–20) in order to bribe Assyria into letting him stay in power.

SUMMARY: *An assassin who ruled cruelly "by hook or by crook."*

PEKAHIAH (2 yrs; 742–740) 2 Kings 15:23–26

SUMMARY: *Just one more evil king.*

PEKAH* (20 yrs; 752–732) 2 Kings 15:27–31

Pekah assassinated Pekahiah (establishing his sole reign in 740) and declared Israel's independence from Assyria. Isaiah 7 records a divinely foiled plot between Pekah and Rezin of Syria to overthrow Ahaz, king of Judah. Again, what goes around comes around; Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea.

SUMMARY: *The tail end of Israel's smoking firebrand; the fire is almost out.*

HOSHEA* (9 yrs; 732–722) 2 Kings 17:1–4

Hoshea's reign was one final glimmer before Israel's light was snuffed out (17:2). He began as Assyria's puppet king (17:3); not a very obedient puppet, he was imprisoned (17:4). Samaria was besieged 3 years and finally taken in 722.

SUMMARY: *Too little too late; one brief glimmer before the lights go out.*

The remainder of 2 Kings 17 recounts the spiritual reasons for the fall of Israel. Throughout 1 & 2 Kings, the prophets' messages and their historical fulfillments give repeated testimony to the absolute reliability of "the word of the LORD."

The Gospel Message Applied

Marion E. Fast

Some time ago I noticed in a religious periodical the statistics on church membership in our country. It showed that there are more church members than at any other time in our nation's history. It surprised me to learn that there were more numerically and by percentage as well.

But the newspaper that same day reported the U.S. crime rate had increased some 70 percent over the past 30 years. Those two sets of statistics presented a strange paradox. If the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and churches are the primary means whereby the gospel is preached, why has the crime rate increased rather than decreased?

There are several reasons for this. In the first place, we must not confuse church membership with salvation. Just because a person spends a good deal of time in a garage does not mean that he is a mechanic. Thousands of churches that once preached the gospel of salvation now preach a social gospel. Their increase in membership adds names to the church rolls, but there is no corresponding change in lives.

Another reason for the rise in membership is fear. Somehow they feel that they ought to have some kind of "connection with God" just in case they may need Him in a hurry. Often they join a church because it soothes their conscience. They mistake church membership with being rightly related to God.

The increase in crime statistics reflects, among other things, the laxness in our homes and churches. Discipline and respect for authority have disappeared from multiplied thousands of homes in our nation. Someone has said, "The modern

home is a place where everything is run by switches except the children." But the church cannot evade its responsibility, and every Bible-believing church in a community ought to make an impact on the actions of the community in which God has placed it.

A man once sneeringly said, "Well, I guess the old-fashioned gospel has lost its power, for while today thousands are professing Christ, nothing much is happening as a result." While I would certainly disagree with that statement, even if it were true it would not be the fault of the gospel. The old gospel message still works!

There are thousands of individuals who make a profession without any possession. Oh, they may come forward at an invitation in church, they may sign a decision card, join the church, and do all sorts of religious things—but that is not salvation. It is not enough to give mental assent to certain teachings. If these lessons are truly received by faith, there will be a practical application in the life of the individual. There are many who say, "Lord, Lord," who have never had the blood applied. But this is not the fault of the gospel. The gospel has lost none of its power. It's the same power of God unto salvation today that it has always been. The fault lies with the hearts of an evil people who refuse to obey.

A preacher and an unconverted soap manufacturer once met on the street. The soap maker was always

poking fun at the church and the Bible. As they walked along, the soap maker said, "The gospel that you preach is supposed to change a person's life, isn't it? Well, the gospel you preach can't be very good because there are certainly a lot of wicked people around."

Just then they passed little boys busily making mud pies. They were dirty from head to foot. The preacher pointed at the boys and said, "Well, I guess your soap can't be very good either, because there is still a lot of dirt in the world."

The soap maker quickly replied, "Oh, but soap only cleans when it is actually applied."

The preacher smiled and said, "And that is true of the gospel. It has lost none of its power. It is still as strong and effective as ever, but it

only works where it is applied."

Men may quote the Bible, but their lives may not back up what they say. They need a practical application of the Word of God in their lives.

Friend, we need to apply the Word of God daily to our own lives and not just to the lives of our next-door neighbor. The old gospel message still works when it is applied.

Men may quote the Bible, but their lives may not back up what they say. They need a practical application of the Word of God in their lives.

Dr. Marion Fast, formerly the pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Longmont, Colorado, now serves as National Representative for the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship. He is available for meetings and can be reached by writing to him at 1426 Pratt Street, Longmont, Colorado 80501, or by calling (303) 776-7029.

New Baptist Fellowship Formed

The Baptist Heritage Fellowship for World Evangelism was announced in the May 1, 1999, issue of *The Baptist Vision*, published by Temple Baptist Church and Crown College in Powell, Tennessee.

The "Conservative" SBC

Since the recent "conservative takeover" of the Southern Baptist Convention, at the state and local level little has changed. Some state colleges are filled with heresy. For example, R. Kirby Godsey, the president of Mercer University in Georgia since 1979, published a book in 1996 entitled *When We Talk about God . . . Let's Be Honest*, which denies, reinterprets, or questions practically every doctrine of the Christian faith. Godsey says that "the notion that God is the all powerful, the high and mighty principal of heaven and earth should be laid aside." Though there have been attempts since 1987 to have Godsey step down, they have been unsuccessful. This suggests that large numbers of people in the SBC are at least sympathetic with heresy and unbelief. (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, 4/3/99)

Charismatic SBC Missionaries

Charles Carroll, SBC missionary to Singapore, was dismissed by the Southern Baptist International

Mission Board in 1995 because of his charismatic activities. Carroll testifies that many Baptists living overseas are already charismatic, but most remain "in the closet" for fear of being fired. ("Baptist Missionaries in the Closet," *Charisma*, March 1999)

The Education Monopoly

Our government employs thousands of bureaucrats to track down and break up monopolies on the grounds that monopolies stifle competition and thereby produce bad products at high prices. Doesn't it strike anyone as strange that the same government protects its own monopoly in education? And stranger still, that nearly everyone accepts this state of affairs as normal—as something that has always been and must always be? (*Imprimis*, February 1999)

Home Schooled Students Excel

The largest study ever conducted on home schooling in the United States, released March 23, shows that in the drive for scholastic excellence, the typical home school student does exceptionally well at every grade level. "Young home school students test one grade level ahead of their counterparts in public and private schools. As they progress, the study shows that home schoolers pull further away from the pack, typically testing four grade

levels above the national average by the eighth grade," said Michael Farris, founder and president of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 3/30/99)

Bigger Problems than Kosovo

The predominantly Christian population of southern Sudan is subject to torture, rape, and starvation for its refusal to convert to Islam. Christian children are routinely sold into slavery. Muslims who dare to convert to Christianity are faced with the death penalty. In the last 15 years, Sudan's death toll of more than 1.9 million is far greater than Rwanda's (800,000), Bosnia's (300,000), and Kosovo's (1,000) combined. (*Imprimis*, March 1999)

Howard Stern's Perversion

Radio "shock jock" Howard Stern made crude sexual remarks about teenagers at Columbine High School immediately after the shootings, enraging many parents and listeners in the Denver area. The remarks were brought to the attention of the American Family Association (AFA), which called for a boycott of the program's advertisers until the station took the program off the air. KXPX-FM general manager Bob Visotcky apologized on air to the radio station's listeners for Stern's comments about the Littleton tragedy,

but then defended Stern in more general terms.

"Howard Stern is very new to the Denver community, and we sincerely hope that you do not judge Howard on one or two inappropriate comments." This was not good enough for AFA, which posted audio clips of Stern's remarks on the AFA web site (www.afa.net) in addition to disseminating information on the show's advertisers. When advertisers began to drop their sponsorship of Stern's program, media giant CBS got involved, threatening to sue AFA for copyright infringement for posting the audio clips. AFA president Don Wildmon responded to CBS: "So that there will be no misunderstanding, I will make my answer short. Sue." "In my opinion," Wildmon said, "Stern is sick and CBS is sick for paying him to make such sick statements. We have no intention of withdrawing the comments and invite people to access our web site and listen to them so they understand this sickness. That CBS would sue us for providing Stern's comments show the depth of depravity to which CBS has sunk." AFA also defends its legal right to rebroadcast Stern's comments.

Pornographer Speaks at Catholic University

Larry Flynt spoke recently on First Amendment rights at Georgetown University. About 150 students protested the Flynt appearance and also the firing of four campus

NOTABLE QUOTES

ministers, including both full-time Protestant chaplains who serve the school's 2,000 Protestant students. Part-time Protestant ministers will be employed instead, but a full-time Muslim chaplain will be added. Two rabbis will remain in place. (*World*, 5/15/99)

Marriage Redefined in Canada

Canada's Supreme Court ruled May 20 that Ontario's legal definition of a spouse as someone of the opposite sex is unconstitutional. The Court said the province has six months to amend its Family Law Act to recognize same-sex couples. (*Daily Brief*, 5/21/99)

SBC President Speaks at Cedarville College

On April 7 Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention, gave a chapel message and spoke to the board of trustees at Cedarville College. (*Baptist Bulletin*, June 1999)

God Filled Teeth with Gold?

Several attendees at a conference in March at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship said that gold fillings miraculously appeared in their mouths. John Arnott, pastor of the church, says the unusual phenomenon is occurring all over the world. (*Charisma*, June 1999)

Harvard Divinity Dean Resigns

Harvard University asked for Ronald F. Thiemann's resignation last fall for "conduct unbecoming a dean" after pornography was found on his computer. Thiemann was dean of the Divinity School

When the vocabulary of "left" and "right" has run its tired course, we are left with that old standby, "fundamentalist"—a word dredged up from the American past, despite dubious provenance. What "fundamentalist" means when applied to Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, or Muslims is hard to understand. Using the term is a sign of intellectual laziness. If what believers believe does not easily fall into an Enlightenment category, then it is assumed to be "irrational." Thus, "fundamentalist" is now merely shorthand for "religious fanatic"—for someone who is to be categorized rather than heard, observed rather than comprehended, dismissed rather than respected.—Dr. Paul Marshall, Senior Fellow at Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom, adjunct professor at the Free University of Amsterdam, author, and one of the world's leading authorities on religious persecution

My trade of journalism is sodden these days with practitioners who seem incapable of admiring others or anything.—Roger Rosenblatt, veteran of the *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Life*, and the *New York Times Magazine*

Whenever I make a comment these days criticizing Bill Clinton, someone inevitably asks, "Aren't you casting stones?" It shows how far we have fallen that calling upon the President of the United States to account for charges of adultery, lying to the public, perjury, and obstruction of justice is regarded as akin to stoning. . . . Without being "judgmental," Americans would never have put an end to slavery, outlawed child labor, emancipated women, or ushered in the civil rights movement. Nor would we have prevailed against Nazism and communism, or known how to explain our opposition.—William J. Bennett, former secretary of the Department of Education and author of *The Book of Virtues*

Vice is a monster of such frightful mien, as, to be hated, needs but to be seen; yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, we first endure, then pity, then embrace.—Alexander Pope, in his *Essay on Man*

Let it be remembered that the heretics were refuted by the scholars, and much more by the scholars than by the martyrs. By dying for a conviction a man proves only that he is sincere, not that he is right.—Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536)

for almost 13 years. (*Christian News*, 5/24/99)

Gambling and Homelessness

Seventy percent of clients surveyed at the nation's rescue missions believe easy access to gambling makes it hard for them to put their lives back together, and 18 percent said gambling was a cause of their homelessness. Those were among the findings of a nationwide survey of more than 1,100 rescue mission clients by the International Union of Gospel Missions, based in North Kansas City, Missouri. The survey also found 37 percent of the men and women surveyed continue to gamble occasionally or play the lottery despite their homeless status. (*Fundamental Baptist Information Service*, 5/25/99)

One in Three Adults Is Unchurched

Although America is awash in new churches being launched, and the media continue to report on the growing impact of megachurches, a new nationwide survey shows that the number of unchurched adults is also on the rise. A study by the Barna Research Group indicates that almost one-third of the nation's adults (31 percent) can be deemed unchurched—a proportion that represents 60 to 65 million unchurched adults. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 5/24/99)

ACLU Sues U.S. Government

The ACLU filed a class-action lawsuit to end government sponsorship of the Boy Scouts. Since the group excludes atheists, the ACLU says it violates the separation of church and state. Scott Air

Force Base and the Chicago Public Schools were named in the suit because they sponsor troops. (*World*, 4/24/99)

President Proclaims "Gay and Lesbian Pride Month"

"I, William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 1999 as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month," said a White House news release issued on June 11. "I encourage all Americans to observe this month with appropriate program, ceremonies, and activities that celebrate our diversity, and to remember throughout the year the gay and lesbian American whose many and varied contributions have enriched our national life." The president went on to boast about his work to secure favors for homosexuals. Ominously, the president also said that part of his program to achieve "tolerance" were instructions to the "Departments of Justice and Education [to] work in partnership with educational and other private sector organizations to reach out to students and teach them that our diversity is a gift."

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

British House of Commons Lowers the "Age of Consent"

There is a daring principle held by those who reject the morality of the Bible that a nation can be morally sound without obedience to God's commandments. That principle is directly hostile to the experience of all nations. That morality can exist without conformity to God's law is destitute of both proof and probability. The phenomenon of morals without religion has never been witnessed in any nation in the past and will not be witnessed in the future," thundered Dr. Ian Paisley during a January 25, 1999, debate in the British House of Commons, of which he is a member. The debate was over lowering the "age of consent" for homosexual activity from 18 to 16 years of age. Homosexuality is already "legal and protected" in Britain.

Dr. Paisley went on: "Those who want to destroy standards and lower safeguards can easily apply the label of morality to their principles, but when they advocate those principles, their real objective is to get rid of morality and religion. This nation has a soul and a conscience, but it has no eternity. Every person in this Chamber has a soul and a conscience and every person has eternity to face. We shall all give account of ourselves to almighty God at the end of the day, but nations are judged in time

for their policies, their moralities, their violence, and their crimes.

"What of the great nations of the past—the dominant nations that led the world, controlled destinies, and became the great empires? What of Babylon? What of Persia? What of the Greek kingdom? What of the great Roman empire? What destroyed them? One has only to read the history books to realize the debris that they left because they gave themselves over to the very things that pervert society and take it down a road that has only ruin at its end. The House very well knows that there is no history book that does not record the ruin of nations because of their departure from morality, truth, and righteousness. Judgment will come in time, but it would be far better for us, as legislators, to try to avert such judgment coming upon the nation.

"When the Home Secretary opened the debate, he referred to Europe. What Europe does today, the House will have to do tomorrow. There is no doubt about that. We can see that Europe is moving fast towards lowering that age of consent. Already, in Denmark, the age of consent is 15; in Finland, it is 15; in France, it is 15; in Italy, it is 14 to 16; in Spain, it is 12; and in Sweden, it is 15. Does the House really think that it will stand against the force of legislation from Europe on this matter?

"We in Northern Ireland know what happened to our laws. It is

perfectly clear that in Northern Ireland, for once, all the parties agreed that the age of consent should not be lowered, but it will come under the axe. [Interruption.] I do not know why anyone would laugh when we consider that one nation in Europe has lowered the age of consent to 12. That nation should hide its head in shame.

"... I know that there are many religious arguments in this matter. In such a debate, it is usually said that the Bible may make strong statements in the Old Testament but not in the New Testament. That, of course, demonstrates ignorance of the New Testament, which is equally strong in its denunciation of what the Bible states is not normal practice, but abnormal practice and perversion. We need to face up to that if we are to be honest about the matter. This is a solemn subject because it affects our children and our children's children.

"The House would do better not to follow those who agitate that we should lower the age of consent because even they must admit that public opinion is not with them. We should safeguard our children and our future. We can do so only by sticking to the principles of true morality, which are found in the Ten Commandments of God's Word."

Despite Dr. Paisley's eloquent defense of Biblical morality, the House of Commons passed the measure to lower the age of consent.

Partakers of Christ's Sufferings

Around 80 years ago the term "Fundamentalism" was coined to distinguish true, Bible-believing Christianity from the perversion that was replacing it in the major denominations. Darwinian evolutionary theory and German rationalist theology were eroding belief in absolute truth and replacing it with relativism. By the 1920s the damage was so extensive that those who refused to discard doctrine for "enlightened" thinking had to distinguish themselves from it.

Moral relativism is now the foundation of the major denominations and most so-called "evangelical" churches. A common cultural conclusion is that Christ preached only unity and brotherhood and that preaching separation is, therefore, not truly Christian. The September 1997 issue of *Ecumenical Trends* stated, "The theological core of Fundamentalism is incompatible with Christianity." The attack continued, "Fundamentalist literalism appears to be an alternative stance, or, in traditional terms, a heretical option. . . . It appears that Fundamentalism is now branching off from Christianity to constitute still another separate religion."

Such drivel could just be ignored, but as we ignore it we had better make sure our message and methods are indeed compatible with Christianity. Perhaps a few questions are in order.

Do you believe the Bible says what it means and means what it says? Do you say what you mean and mean what you say? Does that make you a Fundamentalist? Perhaps the question should be asked, "Are you a moral relativist, or are you a Fundamentalist?" Even if the answer is an unhesitating, "I am a Fundamentalist," do you struggle

with a fascination with the apparent success of the New Evangelicals? Are you a Fundamentalist who resents or rejoices in his Fundamentalism? Are you, like many who have grown up in a Fundamentalism they have not fully embraced, envious of the evangelical down the street who seems to have so much "liberty" while you labor under the "rules?" Perhaps a little history is in order.

Evangelicalism, which used to be called "New Evangelicalism," is often praised for its practical approach to this wicked society—a society which exists largely because of the compromise of its rescuers. Do they deserve accolades for trying to salvage a society they authorized? The problem began in the 1940s when these lonely out-

casts from the pulpits and university platforms of modernism invented an unscriptural method to reclaim the spotlight. True to the positive approach of the psychology they so readily embraced, they chose to present a non-offensive gospel—the "good news" without the bad news that makes it good. And their friends call us the innovators!

By the '50s, there were few bold voices among them willing to speak out against the new musical genre preparing the way for the Sexual Revolution. "Rock and roll," its early promoters tell us, "was a euphemism for the sex act." Our soldiers went to war in Vietnam to this discord that broke down the barriers of restraint at home, that gave us the drug culture of the '70s, the hedonism of the '80s, and the New Age of the '90s.

The children of humanism are now in charge. Having dismissed God as passé, they created a spiritual vacuum now filled by the theology of Hollywood. How did this happen? It happened when the power of the gospel was replaced with pragmatism. "Trust Jesus" the earnest soul spray paints on the bridge abutment. Does he? Considered a Fundamentalist, no doubt, his "vandalism evangelism" is the essence of compromise. Long before "evangelicalism" took credit for confronting this society, it cradled it. The results are what we see.

The Christian who honestly represents Christ walks the path to the cross. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. . . . Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:18, 20).

This issue of *Frontline* presents teaching and testimony on suffering. Those who suffer for standing true to Christ are in good company indeed. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified" (1 Pet. 4:12–14).

The ecumenists challenge our Christian credentials. The evangelicals are ashamed of us. But Christ is coming. Things will get worse before they get better—but they will get better!

The Christian who honestly represents Christ walks the path to the cross.



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN

What's on the Web

Bob Whitmore

The sites we are reviewing this month all have huge amounts of information available on them. The first two, Goshen Christian Search Engine and Directory [www.goshen.net] and Cross Search [www.crosssearch.com], function as search engines for various Christian topics. Cross Search contains 24 categories ranging from Apologetics to Youth Resources, and each entry contains extensive listings. Goshen is an even more extensive site with current news of interest to Christians and many products for sale. Both sites allow you to enter your own web site under one of the many categories, and both seem to contain conservative, evangelical information. As always, exercise discernment in using the resources at these or any other sites.

The two sites also have extensive lists of links. Exploring links can be rewarding or frustrating. Sometimes you can find good information on linked sites, but you can also waste a lot of time following links to useless sites, which list even more links. You may follow so many links that you forget your starting point! (Or am I the only one who has ever done that?)

For those of you interested in the Bible text debate, the Encyclopedia of New Testament Textual Criticism [www.skypoint.com/~waltzmn] is for you. Conceived by Rich Elliott of Simon Greenleaf University, "the Encyclopedia attempts to cover all aspects of New Testament Textual Criticism in an orderly and fair fashion." Articles are listed under alphabetical topics with cross-references, and there is probably more information here than most of us have time to read. As for fairness, it will depend on your own views on the debate.

If you, like me, love traditional hymns but are among the musically challenged to whom the little black notes in the hymnbook mean absolute-

ly nothing, you'll enjoy *The Cyber Hymnal* [www.tch.simplenet.com]. Assuming your computer is sound-capable, you can listen to (and thereby learn!) the tunes of more than 1,600 hymns and gospel songs. Knowledgeable musicians will also enjoy this site, for among its content are lyrics, songwriter biographies with photos, MIDI files, and scores you can download. Songs are listed under titles, people, and tunes. One of the links on the site is to the P. P. Bliss Home Page [www.gbmg-umc.org/churches/DesertFoothillsAZ/PPB-LISS], which has information on the P. P. Bliss Gospel Songwriters Museum in Rome, Pennsylvania, mentioned in "A Hymn History Holiday" in the May/June 1999 issue of *Frontline*.

The last site we'll explore is the Christian Classics Ethereal Library [http://ccel.wheaton.edu/]. This site contains a staggering amount of public domain literature, such as the writings of the early church fathers, "the most important writings from the first 800 years of the church." If that isn't enough, you'll also find works by Richard Baxter, John Owen, Calvin's commentaries, works by Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, and others too numerous to list. More modern-day works by E. M. Bound, F. B. Meyer, and Andrew Murray are here too. Want more? How about Philip Schaff's eight-volume *History of the Christian Church*? Or Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*? You'll also find fiction by various authors, as well as music by John Wesley, Isaac Watts, William Cowper, and others. The list of entries on this site is eight pages long!

If you don't want to tie up your phone line long enough to explore the works on this extensive site, you can get most of it on CD-ROM for \$29 plus shipping.

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In God's Hands

Vickie Johnson

In June 1993, Matt and Jennifer Kamphouse stood before God and vowed to love each other “for better or worse, in sickness and health, in poverty and wealth.” They had no idea how soon that holy oath would be tested. They dreamed of happy years to come and a home filled with the bustle and laughter of children. They were aware there might be some difficulty in conceiving children because Jennifer had a health condition that often hindered conception. They knew medical advances in infertility treatment would likely increase their chances of conceiving children, but unforeseen hurdles stood in the path of their dream.

In 1996 Matt was diagnosed with cancer. The physical toll of cancer treatment on young patients’ bodies often robs them of their ability to become parents, and with this reality the dream of children for the Kamphouse family began to fade. God graciously spared Matt’s life. One year later, in August 1997, Jennifer learned that she was pregnant and that the baby was due May 5, 1998—five days before Mother’s Day.

Several weeks later Matt and Jennifer learned the extent of their blessing when the doctor informed them that Jennifer was expecting quadruplets! Sadly, Jennifer suffered a miscarriage and lost one of the babies during her first trimester of pregnancy. After the miscarriage there were no other first-trimester complications, and God even spared her from the dreaded morning sickness typical of early pregnancy.

Sixteen days into the new year and 16 weeks prematurely, Matt and Jennifer welcomed Victoria Joy—the first of three small miracles to enter their lives in 1998. Victoria arrived in critical condition. Weighing barely more than a pound, she was unable to breathe on her own and lacked the pink skin color of a healthy newborn. Doctors rushed little Victoria to the neonatal intensive care unit and worked frantically to save her life while Jennifer, confined to bed, received multiple doses of medications designed to fight off labor and keep Victoria’s two sisters in the womb. Each day the labor could be prevented increased their chances for survival.

“I was groggy because of all the medicine, but I remember asking the doctor, ‘How is she?’ He said she had 30 minutes to live,” recalled Jennifer, “and he asked me if I wanted pictures of her. At that point I fell apart.”

Matt, trying to comfort his wife, gently reminded her that the baby’s life was in God’s hands. An attending nurse, overhearing his comment, lashed out angrily: “That is not what she needs to hear right now!” The emotions of the moment caused Jennifer’s labor to intensify, and concern grew for the life of the two unborn babies. Jennifer had to be completely sedated.

After receiving the news of her new granddaughter’s

condition, Matt’s mother contacted their pastor, and he called church members to begin a prayer chain. Hundreds of friends and family and fellow believers from their hometown of Decatur, Alabama, to Puerto Rico, where Jennifer’s parents serve as missionaries, prayed for Victoria.

Within 30 minutes the unbelievable happened—the little baby not expected to live began breathing on her own! A nurse rushed to Jennifer’s room and shouted to Matt and the doctor, “Something happened. She’s breathing!” And the nurse who earlier scolded Matt told him, “It

was just like somebody breathed life into her!” Victoria, whose name means “victorious spirit,” made the record books at Huntsville Hospital that day. She is the smallest baby ever born there to survive.

Her survival has not been without struggle. In the NICU, Victoria had a ventilator to help her tiny lungs breathe, and small wires and electrodes connected her body to machines that monitored her vital signs. Because she was so small, Matt and Jennifer could not hold her. When she was only a few days old, Matt watched her in her incubator and stroked her tiny body, barely 11 inches long, and held her small, helpless hand. He wondered if his wedding ring would fit over her wrist. Taking the ring off his finger, Matt gently placed it over Victoria’s hand. Reacting to the cold metal, Victoria jerked her arm away, and the ring slid down her arm, stopping at her shoulder. A long, difficult road lay ahead for this tiny miracle.

Eleven days following Victoria’s birth, Jessica Marie and Kristina Caris arrived. They both weighed only a few ounces over two pounds, but their condition, though critical, was not life-threatening. Kristina and Jessica, like Victoria, also required ventilators to help them breathe.

All three Kamphouse girls developed infections. Victoria developed a lung infection at one point, causing her lungs to collapse. When Kristina was seven days old, she developed an infection in her bloodstream. Despite a complete blood transfusion, her body could not recover. Her lungs hemorrhaged, causing internal bleeding that the doctors were unable to stop. Kristina died in her mother’s arms at eight days of age.

“When Kristina died, we did ask ‘Why?’ I may never know in this life why she died, and I won’t question God’s divine decision, but I’ll probably wonder why all my life,” Jennifer said. “Why did He take Kristina? Why did He let Victoria live? Someday I’ll know why.”

Several days after Kristina’s death, Matt and Jennifer prayed for God to spare Jessica. At two weeks of age she developed an infection in her left eye—the same kind of infection found in Victoria’s lungs and Kristina’s blood



stream—and almost lost her vision. At the time of Jessica's infection there were only 17 other documented cases in the United States, and statistics indicated that most patients lost their entire eye. Jessica, however, did not. Though her left eye is now completely covered with scar tissue, a future lens and cornea replacement should completely restore vision.

On April 1, 1998, Jessica Kamphouse came home. Two-and-a-half months later her sister Victoria joined her. Victoria was released from the hospital with an apnea monitor, an oxygen tube, and round-the-clock nursing care. When the doctor released her, he said she'd probably be back within a week. Two months later, in early August, Victoria caught a common cold and returned to the hospital for one night of observation as a precautionary measure. There have been some frightening moments since she has been home, but Matt and Jennifer are adequately trained to deal with her breathing difficulties.

"Victoria came home on a Sunday, and my father was preaching at our church," Jennifer explained. "We had the girls' dedication service that night, and while dad was preaching Victoria stopped breathing."

While many parents consider the bottles, diapers, and pacifiers crammed into diaper bags to be lifesavers, Matt and Jennifer carry a real life-saving device—a resuscitation device commonly referred to as a "bag." Whenever Victoria stops breathing, Matt and Jennifer "bag" her. "We call it her 'episodes,'" Jennifer jokes, referring to Victoria's apnea.

But apnea is not a laughing matter. Little Victoria will be connected to an apnea monitor until she is two years old. She no longer uses an oxygen tube during the day, but she does wear one while sleeping at night, and Matt and Jennifer still carry an oxygen tank wherever they go.

The girls are growing well now. Victoria and Jessica, still small for their age, continue to amaze doctors. (At six months Victoria weighed little more than the average newborn—8 pounds, 5 ounces—and Jessica weighed almost 11 pounds.) "None of the doctors expected Victoria to do as well as she has done," says her proud mother.

"She will have developmental setbacks, but her prognosis is good."

Matt and Jennifer's trial and suffering have enabled them to share their experience with other parents who have lost babies. They share the truth expressed by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Matt and Jennifer still dream of having more children. When asked if they would go through the same difficulties again, they answer "yes" without hesitation. Matt and Jennifer are praying for another miracle . . . or two . . . or three.

Vickie Johnson is a freelance writer living in Huntsville, Alabama. Jennifer Kamphouse is the daughter of Dr. Johnny Daniels, missionary to Puerto Rico and FBF board member.

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