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Volume 6 · Number 4

The Christian and the

Arts

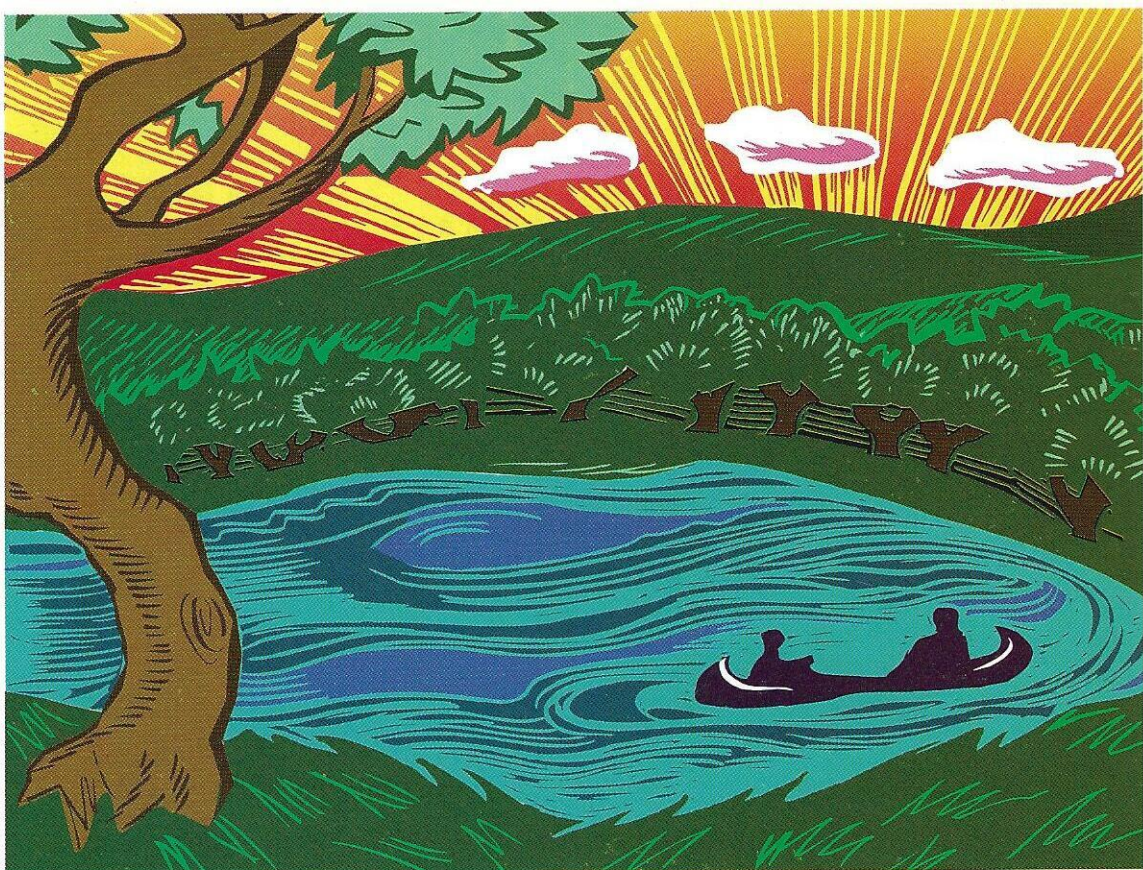
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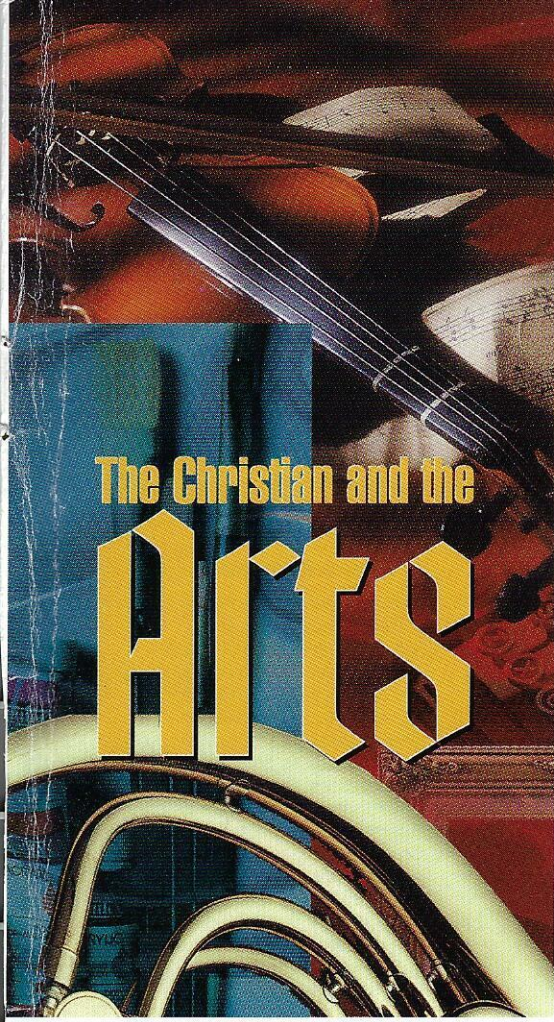
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RE: "Dressing Down for Church"
by Pastor David Tessmann

Bravo! . . . for this little article in the magazine. My (our) GOD is Great!! I look forward to wearing my suit and tie to church. How sad that many even in Fundamental circles feel that the LORD deserves only the casual in clothing.

It would not hurt to hear a message from time to time about the importance of dress (in general and in the church). I would rather be in a very small group that is present to honor GOD in sacred music and "Sunday best" than in a larger casual atmosphere any day.

Please know that I appreciate you printing this article. Do let Pastor Tessmann know also.

*Ken Sidorewich
Williamstown, NJ*

.....

I appreciate the magazine. I appreciate being able to put in the hands of our people a publication which is at the same time Biblical and scholarly, warm

and devotional, practical and informative. Thanks for all your hard work to that end.

*James Talbert
Missionary Church Planter
in Calgary, Alberta, Canada*

.....

I wish to commend you for the excellent magazine *Frontline* has been through the years. I wanted to let you know how much it has helped me develop many of the convictions I hold as precious and dear. What a rich source of blessing this tremendous publication has been. It was such a source of inspiration to me that I decided to apply for membership in the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship. The positions and doctrines explained and taught through *Frontline* helped me see the direction and goals of the FBF as what I needed to hold and support as well. Thank you so much for that.

*Pastor Gary Freel
Berean Baptist Church
Boone, Iowa*

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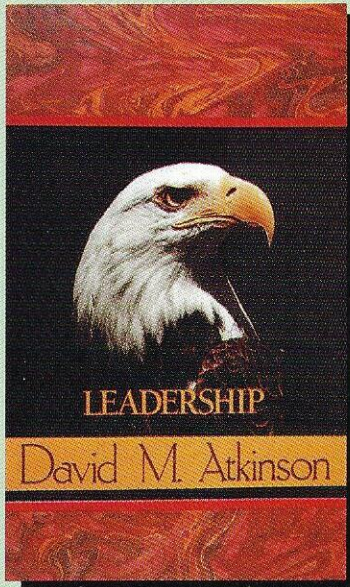
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The Churchless Christian

According to Gallup's latest poll, fifty million Americans claim to be born-again, evangelical Christians. Yet church attendance has fallen to an all-time low, and it seems as if the wave of faithfulness and commitment that once flowed through our churches has dissipated into an ocean of unconcern. Many times a pastor feels like the Lord felt when He healed the ten lepers but only one returned: "Were there not ten cleansed [healed]? but where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17).

Many churches experience their lowest attendance at their midweek prayer meetings. Visitation efforts are nearly nonexistent. Sunday night services, which used to be red-hot evangelistic meetings, are attended by the faithful few—let alone the unsaved. The mentalities of "ecclesiastical hitchhikers" and "beach bums" have infected church membership.

A hitchhiker's actions and attitudes say: "You buy the car, make the payments, fill the tank, pay the insurance, and I'll ride with you—until you have an accident. Then you are on your own, and I'll probably sue!" Likewise multitudes of the fifty million born-again Christians say, "You do all the work, pay all the bills, and I'll come along for the ride. But if things do not go smoothly, I'll criticize, complain or bail out. I am always looking for a free ride."

A beach bum lives off the beach—no responsibilities or commitments. He is always looking for what he can get out of it. "What can I get off the beach today?" he schemes. The "beach bum" Christian expresses himself as "I go to" or "I attend"; never, "I belong to" or "my church family is." He argues, "I like to worship God in the wide-open spaces. Don't fence me in." He does not ask, "What can I give?" or "Where can I serve?" This type of Christian will wander from place to place with no loyalty or commitment to Christ and His Church. The beach bum Christian uses the school, the Awana program and the teen camp. But do not expect him to make a commitment to the local church and the Great Commission.

What has produced such a vast number of Christians without accountability or commitment? While I believe there are many reasons, let's consider only three.

First, many of the fifty million "believers" have a counterfeit conversion. They show no fruit of a true born-again believer. I believe Billy Graham's ecumenical evangelism has padded the church rolls with many "decisions" but few

disciples. Too many churches teach a shallow repentance, an easy believism and a humanistic approach to evangelism and soul winning that produce after their kind.

Second, some embrace the wrong concept of the local church. History tells us that an overemphasis on the "invisible Church" (i.e., the Kingdom of God) has produced a disregard for the visible New Testament church—the local assembly. How many times have we heard, "You don't have to go to church to be saved"? However, when you are born of the Spirit, you will love what the Spirit loves. His primary purpose is to call out His Church (Acts 15:14). A born-again believer will desire the fellowship of other born-again believers in the local New Testament church (Heb. 10:23–25).

Third, a widespread disinterest in church doctrine has resulted in a dearth of dedicated believers. In the last thirty to forty years, many churches have focused on buildings, budgets, buses and bodies. These elements may be necessary to reach lost souls for Christ, but winning is just the beginning. Quantity has replaced quality. Many have emphasized the building of monuments instead of the building up of members. Certainly believers need a burden for a lost world. They must win them no matter what the cost. However, churches must properly balance evangelism and discipling. The church is still "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Every generation is born in ignorance of the truth. It is the divine mandate of every church to pass on the truth to its own generation and of every preacher "to declare . . . all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

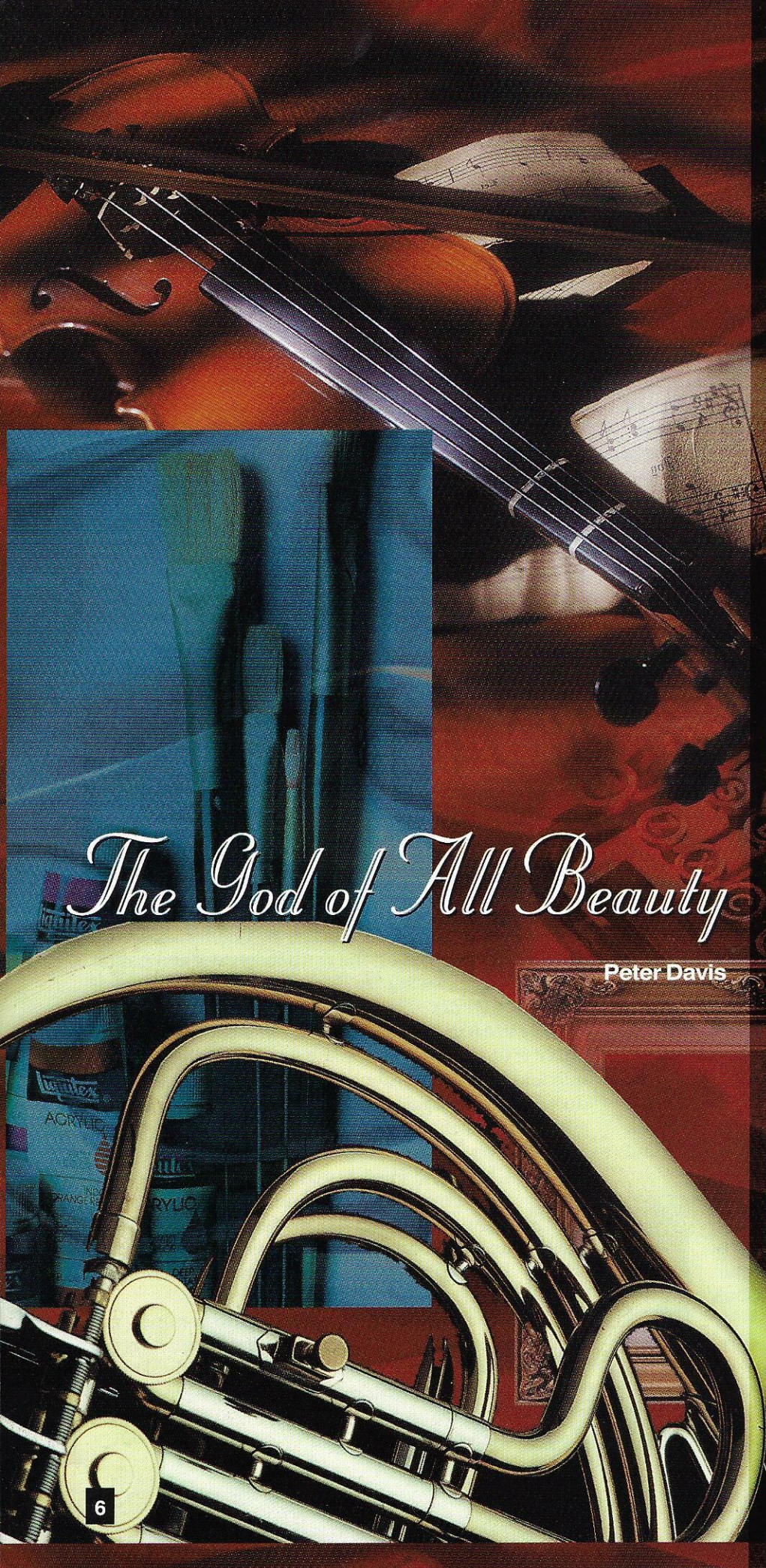
The great task facing Fundamental Baptist churches today is to maintain a proper balance between edification and evangelism, doctrine and duty, creed and conduct. What born-again church members genuinely believe governs their behavior. Teaching and believing correct doctrine concerning our relationship with the Lord Jesus

Christ and His Church will generate commitment, loyalty and faithfulness. We will see born-again Christians who are dedicated to the Lord and His local church. Then we will have a "holy heart-burn" for carrying out the Great Commission.

Born-again Christians whose minds are rooted in sound doctrine and whose hearts are anchored to Calvary's love will be faithful to the Church for whom Christ died. We are not our own; we are bought with a price—the precious blood of Christ.



Rod Bell



The God of All Beauty

Peter Davis

God is the fount of all beauty. He is thus pictured throughout the Scriptures. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty," Isaiah promised Israel, adding that "the LORD of hosts will be . . . for a diadem of beauty" to His people (33:17; 28:5). Relating a vision of God on His throne, John recounts the radiance of precious gems and a resplendent emerald rainbow (Rev. 4:3; cf. Ps. 96:6). Our eternal habitation will be luxuriously adorned (Rev. 21:1—22:2).¹

The Origin of Fine Arts

Creation is the artistic expression of God and the birthplace of the beauty of fine arts. God expressed His delight in beauty through creation—from majestic mountain peaks to delicate butterflies, from sparkling jewels to immense heavens. God took pains to make even functional things, such as trees, "pleasant to the sight" (Gen. 2:9).²

Since man was created in the image of the God of all beauty, it is no surprise that man discovered music and invented musical instruments as early as Genesis 4:20–22. Thus were born the fine arts, which man has pursued through each generation and in every ethnic group ever since. Man's fallenness diminishes what his art could be and often mars what it should be. Nevertheless, the human capacity to appreciate beauty and the human impulse to express creativity and artistry descend from the aesthetic character of God, whose likeness we bear.

The Definition of Fine Arts

By definition, "fine art" is art that aims at beauty of expression as opposed to mere utility of purpose. The fine arts are comprised of music, painting, sculpture, literature and drama that pursue the highest degree of refinement and beauty. As such, "fine" arts are distinct from simpler "folk art" or "popular music." Fine arts focus more on achieving aesthetic ideals than do other cultural expressions. They are an instinctive outgrowth of the image of God in man and are part of His plan for man to exercise dominion over the earth in His image.

Divine Approval of Fine Arts

At the beginning of Israel's history, God's instructions for worship included an inspired blueprint for an artistically impressive tabernacle. If God regarded beauty as an unimportant luxury or distraction, He could have called for a plain white tent and set an early precedent against such frills. He clearly sent the opposite message.

The Lord called for craftsmanship, materials and ornate design of the finest quality of the day. This characteristic extended even to the luxurious fragrance of the incense. He gave Bezaleel and Aholiab a special filling of the Holy Spirit to work with metal, wood and leather (Exod. 31:1-11). The fact that these talents involved a "filling of the Spirit of God" is another striking testimony to His aesthetic nature.

Indications of God's appreciation for beauty continued throughout Israel's history. When the monarchy was established, God called for a large program of music to enhance the worship offered by His people. The addition of music to their worship was so important that God commanded it through several corroborating sources (2 Chron. 29:25; 35:15). In addition, He inspired 150 psalms as poetic/musical settings of praise and expressed His pleasure in musical praise (Ps. 69:31). The Lord Jesus on earth participated in psalm singing, as did all Jewish men (Matt. 26:30). In the final days, when He restores Israel, God Himself will sing over them with joy (Zeph. 3:17). God has also reserved a new song to be sung in Heaven at the commencement of His final victory (Rev. 5:9). These last two references apparently indicate music of divine composition.

The Value of Fine Arts

Since it is God who has established fine arts among us, for what sacred purpose has He done so?

First, the fine arts teach us something about God's nature. Just as the natural world teaches the heathen that a Creator of eternal power and deity must exist (Rom. 1:20), so the beauty and design of fine arts teach us that man's Creator must be a God of beauty and dignity. Just as David pondered God's

artistry in the heavens and exclaimed, "How excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (Ps. 8:1-4; cf. Ps. 19:1-4), so may we be moved by a beautiful symphony and glimpse the majesty of the Creator of music.

Second, the fine arts beautify the truth that God has revealed to man. Did not the beauty of the rainbow enhance the message of God's grace after the Flood? The rainbow's lovely array of color, perfect shape and tenderness of hue highlight the perfections of God's multifaceted mercy and tender compassion. We "adorn" God's truths in musical composition, poetry, drama, artwork and calligraphy in order to give His Word a luxurious dwelling among us (cf. Col. 3:16).

God expressed His
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from majestic
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from sparkling
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heavens.

In the realm of art, for instance, the Lord used Benjamin West's dramatic and fearful painting of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness to draw a person to saving faith in Him. Similarly, great literature and drama can illustrate truth in an arresting way. Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Great Stone Face" strikingly portrays the doctrine of sanctification in 2 Corinthians 3:18. The drama-like structuring of Esther and Job is not accidental. Drama, with its suspenseful interplay of plot and dialogue, can often communicate unstated truths more effectively than direct narration.

Why is it that God inspired one-third of the Old Testament in the form of poetry? The poetic form accentu-

ates the beauty of truth. Good poetry condenses profound ideas in elevated language. If a man is writing down a shopping list, pencil scratchings on a torn piece of paper bag may suffice; but if he is recording something as important as his love for his wife, he wants calligraphy, artwork, artistic expression and beautiful woodwork to frame his message. So God has recorded beautiful truth to His people and has couched it in language so elevated that even the unsaved admire the Bible's literature.

If God has spoken so beautifully to His sinful creatures, can the redeemed ones fail to "make his praise glorious" (Ps. 66:2)? Rather than singing to Him with cheap, hackneyed language, we should praise God as beautifully and profoundly as possible. Our praise should be "exceedingly magnificent" because it is for the Lord (1 Chron. 29:1).

Someone may object, "I see the value of Christian fine arts, but are secular fine arts appropriate for Christians?" The contemplation of things that are "lovely," "virtuous" and worthy of "praise" is a component of a healthy Christian life (Phil. 4:8). Noting that this principle is not limited to spiritual things alone, Bob Jones, Jr., once observed that fine arts "soften a man's rough edges" and "perfect his personality." Cultivating an appreciation for the fine arts adds dignity and refinement to man's life, especially when he acknowledges the Creator as the source of all beauty.

In fact, the Bible records inspired citations from the human arts. Speaking to Saul from Heaven, the Lord Jesus "cited" a proverb common in the literature of the day (Acts 9:5).³ Paul, under inspiration, quoted from the Greek poets Aratus and Cleanthes to relate the gospel to the Athenians (Acts 17:28), from Menander's play *Thais* to warn the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:33) and from the poet Epimenedes to advise Titus (Titus 1:12, 13).

These references verify that believers can find value in the work of gifted unbelievers. Because men possess conscience and retain the image of God, though marred, the arts can reflect valuable insights into human nature and observation of truth. To the degree that men suppress that

conscience and deny that image, to that degree their work loses its value. "As individuals turn further and further from the personal, infinite God, the Giver of gifts, the more dehumanized and twisted will be that which he or she creates."⁴ For this reason, the believer sifts every aspect of human endeavor, including the arts, through the sieve of God's Word—to retain what is virtuous and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8) and to discard the chaff.

Third, the fine arts provide emotional pleasure and enjoyment—a fact so simple and obvious that it might easily be overlooked. In Solomon's hunt for ultimate happiness and satisfaction (Eccles. 2:1–11), he pursued all forms of pleasure (including fine arts, v. 8) as ends in themselves—a quest that he concluded to be "vanity [emptiness] and vexation of spirit [chasing after wind]." Unfortunately, beauty can be twisted into a tool of the tempter, as it was with Eve (Gen. 3:6), David (2 Sam. 11:2) and the proverbial youth (Prov. 7:10, 16; cf. 6:25).

But the abuse and misuse of a God-given gift neither wipes out its divine origin nor prohibits its right use and proper place. In rightly rejecting hedonism for its own sake, Christians should not overcompensate and neglect the natural and legitimate enjoyments of life that God intends for us. Enjoyment in its proper place should move us to love more deeply the God "who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

Conclusion

Historically, the church has valued the fine arts. "I feel strongly," said Martin Luther, "that all the arts, and particularly music, should be placed in the service of Him who has created and given them."⁵ J. S. Bach inscribed on all his works, whether musical compositions or instructional manuals, "to the glory of God alone." The nineteenth century hymnwriter Joseph Addison observed, "A man that has a taste of music, painting or architecture is like one that has another sense, when compared with such as have no relish of those arts."⁶

In the modern religious climate, acquaintance with fine art is also helpful in combatting the more degraded forms of contemporary art (in literature and music, for example),

whether secular or religious. Cultivating an appreciation of artistic refinement moves a person in the right direction and equips him to discern what is truly excellent (cf. Phil. 1:9). We cultivate good taste as we focus on that which uplifts the spirit, encourages the right appetites or enlightens the mind in line with Biblical truth and principle. "The more we acquaint ourselves with that which is truly great and beautiful, the more we will dislike and turn away from that which is shallow and ugly."⁷

As the nature of God is the source of all beauty, the glory of God should be the end of all artistic endeavor and appreciation—"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36).

Endnotes

¹Interestingly, two extraordinary statements seem to suggest that the Lord will incorporate the highest elements of sanctified human culture into the new creation (Rev. 21:24, 26).

²In Job 38:7, God refers to Creation "when the morning stars sang together." This poetic personification of the stars reflects God's aesthetic perspective.

³"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (cf. Acts 26:14). "In the Greek world this was a well-known expression for opposition to deity," observes Richard Longenecker, who then proceeds to cite no less than five examples from pagan Greek writers Euripides, Aeschylus, Pindar and Terence (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9, p. 552).

⁴Jane Stuart Smith in *The Gift of Music* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1987), p. 272.

⁵The church has adopted originally secular compositions by Beethoven, Sibelius, Haydn and Mozart to express some of our most worshipful hymns.

⁶"The arts in a Christian framework are an act of worship, and we should be willing to work on them, striving to make artistic statements worthy of the Lord in whom we believe. . . . If we are not producers of art, we can be those who are enriched and encouraged by the marvel of the gifts our living God has so generously given to men and women" (Smith, pp. 272, 273).

⁷Betty Carlson in *The Gift of Music*, p. xiii.

Peter Davis is the assistant music director at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. He also serves as staff arranger and clinician for SoundForth.

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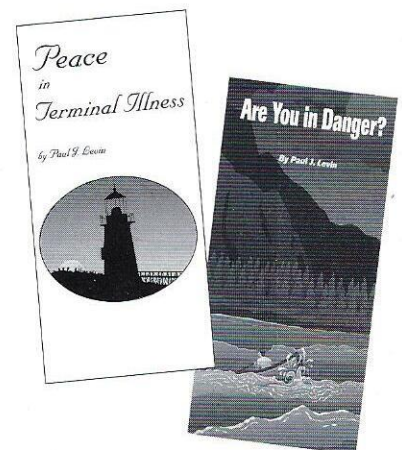
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The word of GOD to all the world

Is fantasy a bane or blessing for our children? With the rise of the New Age movement, this question is one of increasing concern to Christian parents. However, before we can judge the value of fantasy, we must first understand its definition and purpose. In a broad sense, fantasy can be defined as a genre, or type, of literature in which one or more of the following characteristics exist: the setting is a nonexistent or unreal world; the characters are fanciful (i.e., fairies, dragons) or unreal (e.g., personified abstractions, animals or objects); the conflict focuses on physical or scientific principles not yet discovered or contrary to present experience (as in science fiction). The purpose for creating such settings, characters and conflicts may be "merely for the whimsical delight of the reader, or it may be the means used by the author for serious comment on reality" (C. Hugh Holman).

Like any other type of literature, fantasy can be used for either moral or immoral purposes. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, for example, is a noted literary work that uses the elements of fantasy for a moral end. Unfortunately, there are also negative examples, such as those found in the current occult fantasy movement. It is these negative examples that have prompted some to reject the entire fantasy genre. But is such rejection necessary or even wise? The answer is to apply a Biblical standard of evaluation to every story, regardless of genre.

As stated above, the purpose of fantasy may be whimsical (for pleasure) or may be to make a serious comment on reality (for instruction). The second purpose evokes our greatest concern. We want to be sure that the instruction provided is Biblically sound. To make this determination, we must examine the characters, their actions and the ultimate consequences of these actions in the story. We can evaluate these elements by asking questions like the following: (1) Are the sympathetic characters noble? (2) Do the characters' actions encourage the reader to accept virtue and reject vice? (3) Does the resolution of the story reward the good and punish the evil that has been presented in the plot? (4) Has the evil been clearly portrayed as dangerous and repugnant? Regarding any evil or objectionable element presented in a work, there are two other important criteria to consider: (5) Is the representation of evil purposeful or present for its own sake? (6) If the representation of evil is clearly purposeful, is it present to an acceptable degree, or is it more vivid than the purpose warrants? The answers to these questions will enable us to determine whether the instruction provided by the work is consistent with God's Word.*

On the positive side, Rebecca Lukens, author of *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*, points out that high, or pure, fantasy often "appeals to the intellect and

raises thoughtful questions" about the world and our place in it. It is, therefore, particularly effective for broadening a child's perspective and helping him take an objective look at universal problems. Fantasy can provide what we might call "mock encounters" with good and evil. Such encounters when presented in an appropriate way can help us prepare our children to live godly lives in a fallen world.

The character of Edmund in C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* provides a good illustration of this point. At the opening of the story, Edmund is a typical but selfish young boy. This selfishness makes him more vulnerable than his brother and sisters to the flattery and

deception of the White Witch. Only after much hardship and pain (to himself and others) does Edmund learn to see the truth about himself and the evil in Narnia. This recognition, however, makes possible his restoration and allows him to be part of Aslan's ultimate triumph. Through Edmund's experiences children can learn the dangers of self-deception, the illusion of sin's pleasures and the pain that results from pride and rebellion. They can also learn the means whereby one who has fallen may be restored. The instruction provided in the story is Biblically sound. A more

detailed evaluation, using questions like those mentioned earlier, only reinforces this assessment.

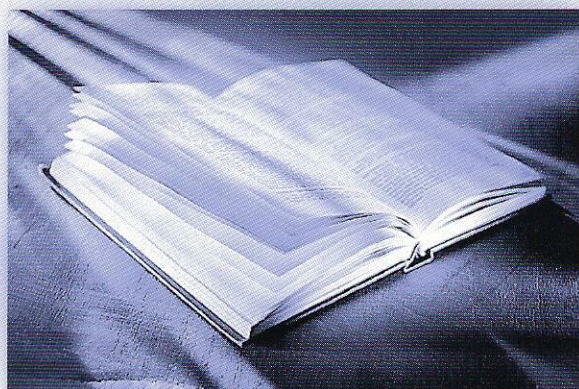
Fantasy—in itself—need not be shunned. Careful evaluation will enable us to discard specific stories that would prove harmful. But we can go a step further. Fantasy can also help children develop valuable literary skills. The sensory images, extended metaphors, personifications, symbols and allusions that fill high fantasy can develop our children's ability to discern the difference between the literal and the figurative use of language. By teaching our children the benefits of reading good fantasy, we can help develop in them an appreciation for and understanding of similar literary elements used in Scripture.

Is fantasy a bane or blessing to our children? The answer depends on our willingness to evaluate each selection and to nurture in our children an appreciation for valuable literary skills.

Endnote

*For more detailed information on Biblical analysis of literature, see the author's *Objectionable Elements: The Biblical Approach* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1990). In addition, the author's *Best Books for Kindergarten through High School* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1994) provides an extensive annotated bibliography of quality literature recommended for each grade group.

By Donna Lynn Hess. Adapted from the *Homeschool Helper* published by Bob Jones University Press. Used by permission.



The Fantasy Myth



Developing Readers: A Christian Imperative

An educational screening committee convened to interview 150 young people, the top three students from every state. The committee's purpose was to award ten of these students full college scholarships. During the interviews, one committee member asked each candidate this question: "Did you, during the past year, read a book that was not assigned? If so, please tell us a little about that book." Only one student out of the 150 was able to comply.* Obviously these students knew how to read, but they lacked the desire to read. Why should this apathy trouble us? Mark Twain put it succinctly when he said, "The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them." If the above illustration is any indication, we must conclude that we are rearing a generation of young people who are, from a practical standpoint, illiterate.

Such trends are of paramount concern to Christian parents. We, of all people, must see to it that our children develop into readers. Why? Because the written word is essential to our beliefs. God chose to reveal Himself through the Scripture. If our children are to survive and thrive spiritually, they must develop an understanding of, and love for, the written word. Without this desire, they will find it difficult or tedious to read their Bibles. They will be unprepared to fellowship with God, to know His mind and to understand His will. What are some practical suggestions to help us begin developing avid readers?

We can start by reading to and with our children. Many studies confirm that children who have been read to in their preschool years are more likely to excel academically and to develop into adults who enjoy reading. However, the pleasure of reading together need not stop once our children enter school. We can enjoy this activity even with our high schoolers by taking time once a week, or perhaps once a month, to share short stories or articles with each other. Such times can be informative and rewarding for both parents and children.

Through the books we choose for our children, we can teach them to discern and appreciate the marks of good literature. C. S. Lewis once remarked, "Any book worth reading at the age of ten should be equally worth reading at the age of sixty." From our children's earliest years, we should be certain to provide them with books that are *morally* and *aesthetically* excellent. Both characteristics are essential. As Christian parents, we recognize the need for choosing books in which the theme is morally sound. But it is just as important to be sure that this theme is artfully ex-

pressed. At first, this point may seem to be an overstatement. However, a work's aesthetic or artistic quality is what makes its theme compelling. A poorly written book, however worthy the theme, will go unheeded. Conversely, a well-written book can make an unworthy theme seem most alluring.

But what exactly do we mean by "well-written"? Good characterization, compelling conflicts and well-structured plots are all marks of literary excellence. The use of sensory images, figurative language and subtle humor reflect an engaging style that can be apparent in the simplest of stories. These characteristics have made classics such as *Winnie the Pooh*, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, *Charlotte's Web* and *Swiss Family Robinson* endearing to generations of readers.

We can encourage our children to read a variety of books. By the time we are adults, we have developed preferences in our reading. For example, some adults prefer nonfiction to fiction. Of those who enjoy fiction, some prefer fantasy; others like realistic stories. The point is that we must be careful to allow our children to develop their own reading tastes. We can do so by exposing them to various genres. What are the major genres? The two broadest categories are fiction and nonfiction. Under fiction we find realism, fantasy and traditional tales. Under nonfiction is biography and information/concept books. You will see these divisions used in many libraries and bookstores, but they can be further delineated as follows:

Realism is the most comprehensive category. Here we find animal stories such as Sheila Burnford's *The Incredible Journey* and adventure stories such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Regional Tales such as Patricia MacLachlin's *Sarah Plain and Tall* are also part of this category. Problem realism stories such as John Gardiner's *Stone Fox* are a type of realism becoming increasingly popular. Another popular type of realistic story is historical fiction. Elizabeth Speare's *The Bronze Bow* is an example of this genre. Finally, mysteries such as the Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys series and romances such as the Jeanette Oake books are also classified under realism.

The **fantasy** genre includes fanciful stories (Hans Christian Anderson's tales, for example, and A. A. Milne's Pooh stories). High fantasy is differentiated from fanciful stories by its use of universal themes and elevated style. Stories such as Tolkien's *The Hobbit* exemplify this genre. Science fiction is also included under fantasy and is represented by selections such as Jules Verne's *Twenty*

Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.

Traditional tales include fables such as Aesop's and tall tales such as *Paul Bunyan*. Folktales such as *Beauty and the Beast* are also part of this category, as well as legends such as King Arthur and the folk epics such as *Beowulf*. Myths are also considered traditional tales.

Biography is probably the most popular nonfiction genre, especially for children in upper elementary school. Good biographies include Jean Latham's *Carry on Mr. Bowditch*, Scott Odell's *The Hawk That Dare Not Hunt by Day*, and for younger children, Alice and Martin Provensen's *Leonardo Da Vinci*.

Information/concept books are also becoming more popular. David McCauley's *Cathedral* and *How Things Work* have gained wide acclaim.

The specific genre delineations above reveal how many types of stories are actually available. Our children's interests can be satisfied and enriched through the myriad possibilities open to them.

As our children mature, we can discuss negative literary examples to help them develop discernment. As mentioned earlier, a story with a compelling style can make an unworthy theme alluring. Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and Jack London's *Call of the Wild* are two examples. The philosophies portrayed in these works are antithetical to Christian beliefs. Reading and discussing these stories with our high school children can alert them to the techniques of such writers and help inoculate them against the false ideas, attitudes and behaviors these writers promote.

We must, of course, be careful when choosing such

books for family discussion. The following three questions should help in making such choices: (1) What is my purpose in choosing this book for discussion? For example, your purpose in choosing London's *Call of the Wild* might be to expose the fallacies in the concept of survival of the fittest. (2) Is the censorable material too potent to serve my purpose? Many of John Steinbeck's works, for example, are so filled with objectionable material that any profitable discussion would be negated. (3) Will I be able to present the censorable material emphatically as a negative example? In other words, has my study of the story been thorough enough to help me present a clear, Biblical refutation of the theme?

Above all, we can be an example. If, during our times of relaxation, we are more prone to turn on the television set than we are to pick up a book, our children will likely develop the same habit. This is not to say that all television viewing should necessarily be shunned; some can be profitable and educational. But television should not be a family's primary source of entertainment or education. Paul admonished Timothy to give attention to reading (1 Tim. 4:13). We, through encouragement and example, should influence our children to do the same.

Endnote

Jacques Barzun, "Commentary," *Education Week* (March 27, 1991), pp. 30, 32.

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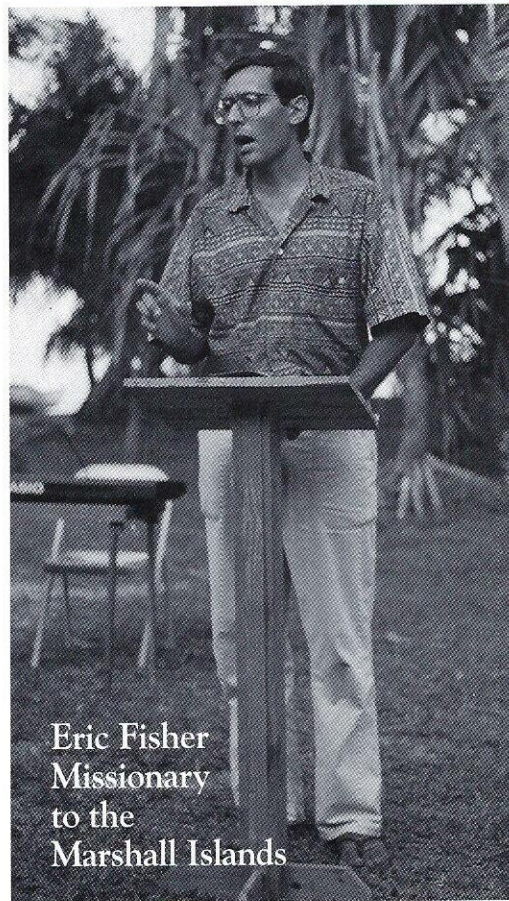
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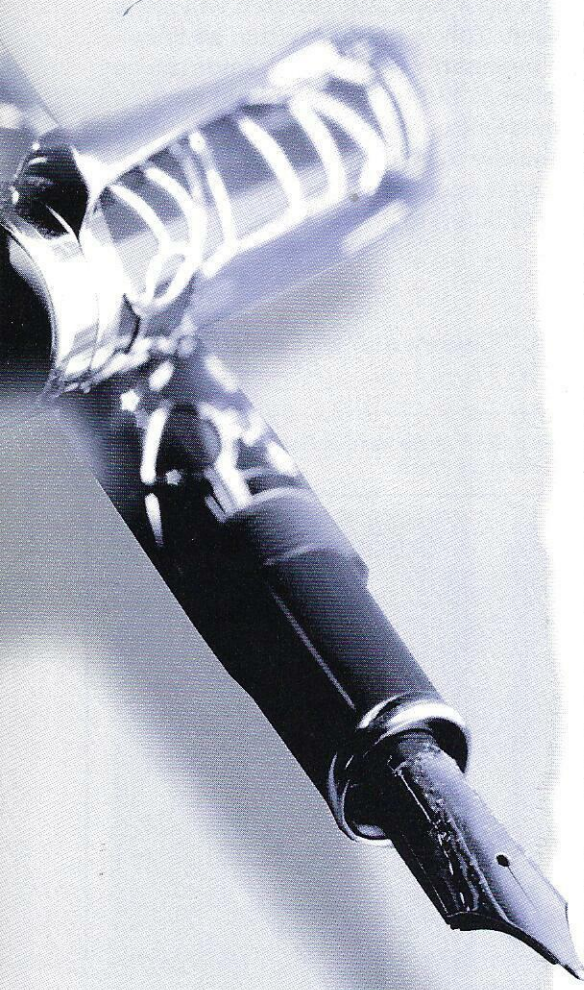
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Eric Fisher
Missionary
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Marshall Islands

Means to a Mightier Pen



Writing is work. Good writing is hard work. Excellent writing requires painstaking labor. Historian and author Shelby Foote regards writing 500 words a very successful *day's* work for him! Columnist and philologist James Kilpatrick set a goal of writing one superb sentence *a month*—a target he admits he did not always hit. This is why Foote, Kilpatrick and others like them are so widely read. Writing is their profession, their gift, their craft. Most of us do not fall into that category. But writing can still be an invaluable tool, or weapon, in the hands of a dedicated Christian if it is done well. Letters to the editor, to our political representatives or to family or acquaintances; high school essays; book reviews; articles for publications; stories for children; even personal memoirs—all of these can be effective means for expressing a Christian perspective and witness or for edifying fellow believers.

If our writing is careless and unrefined, we reflect poorly upon our Lord and upon His truth. If we take the time and effort to write well, we become a “savour of life unto life” (2 Cor. 2:16) and “adorn the doctrine of God” (Titus 2:10). To return to the analogy of the tool or weapon, good writing is like a quality counterbalanced claw hammer (simple and effective) or a finely honed, well-balanced sword (incisive and convincing); poor writing is like pounding in a nail with a monkey wrench or battling with a bludgeon.

Writing, like speaking, is communication. But care in writing is doubly crucial because the written word has a far longer life and a potentially broader audience. Once it goes into print and circulation, errors in fact or blunders of expression are much harder to correct.

What Is Writing?

James Kilpatrick unveils the mystery of good writing in simple and direct terms:

I will tell you a secret. This is all there is to the writing art: *having something to say and saying it well.* When a passage of writing fails, it fails for one reason or the other. Or

both. I cannot help you with the initial task of having something to say that is worth saying. That is your job. Think about it. The second part of the formula is to say what we have to say “well.” To write well, one must work at writing well. All along the way we must read voraciously. We must write incessantly. We must use every sense intently. This is at the core of the writing art: We must look intently, and listen intently, and we must taste and smell and touch with all the concentration we can bring to the task.¹

This formula can be applied more or less thoroughly, depending on how much we write. But those we read most intently and profitably are not necessarily those who know the most, but those who say it best. This takes observation, thought, time and work. The same goes for what we write for others to read.

All writing is composed of at least three essential elements: content, form and tone. A weakness in any one of these areas can undermine the whole. To craft any piece of writing that is strong in all three areas, one must understand how all three elements interact.

Content: “Having Something to Say”

Why are you writing? “Having something to say that is worth saying” is the first prerequisite to good writing. Clearly identify not only your subject—and stick to it—but identify your goal. Ask yourself, “Why should people read what I am writing? What do I hope they will take away with them after reading it?”

There are many different reasons to write: to entertain an audience, to chronicle an event, to preserve a memory, to criticize an opponent. In a Christian context, most of our writing should revolve around the general purpose of *edification*. Edification can take many forms, though most of them will fall into one or more of three categories: *education*, *exhortation* or *encouragement*. Is your aim to educate the reader about some topic, Bible passage or movement? Do you wish to exhort the reader to a particular action or involvement or attitude? Or do you

condescending tone, an arrogant spirit, a belligerent attitude or cheap sarcasm. Christian writing must be genuine, humble, ingratiating and sincere; precise without being petty, detailed without being nitpicky, confident without being arrogant, militant without being pugnacious, assertive without being contentious.

A Parting Shot

Kilpatrick offers one additional piece of advice to aspiring writers: "Work hard on your lead" and "work just as hard on your cracker." In other words, give extra attention to your introduction and your conclusion. Reading some introductions ranks right up there with watching water heat up. You are competing for a reader's time. The lead should seize the reader's attention. Good leads are terse, concise and arresting. They may flash an image across the reader's mind like a high-speed camera shutter, jump momentarily right to the heart of an issue you want to

address or hit the reader with a fresh or uncommon thought that may never have occurred to him.

By the same token, a good "cracker" (concluding paragraph or sentence) wraps an article up tight. Humorist Pat McManus recalls the old days of the general store when old-fashioned packages were wrapped in crisp brown paper and firmly tied up with string, the proprietor giving the twine a final crisp and satisfying snap that signaled the completion of the transaction. That describes a good cracker. Like a dud firecracker, a weak conclusion fizzles out with no bang.

Conclusion

Christianity cannot be expected to flourish without effective communication. To the degree that Christians become lazy readers, weak thinkers and poor writers, to that degree the voice of Fundamentalism is weakened. Opportunities abound to articulate a Biblical perspective

amid the cacophonous chaos of worldly clamor. To the degree we are serious about extending our Christian influence and reflecting well on our Lord, to that degree we will be serious about perfecting all of our communication skills.

Endnotes

¹James Kilpatrick, *Fine Print: Reflections on the Writing Art* (Kansas City: Andrews & McMeel, 1993), p. 66. Kilpatrick's book is nontechnical, informative, fun to read and loaded with helpful, real-life examples.

²William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), p. 23. This slim paperback is a classic treatment of the writing art and a timeless tool for any writer.

³Kilpatrick, p. 50.

⁴Alijandra Mogilner, *Children's Writer's Word Book* (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1992). This book is an excellent resource for discovering appropriate words for any given age level.

What's Gotten into

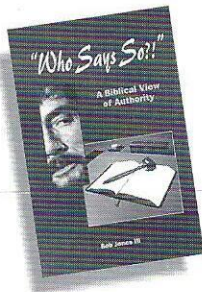
These Kids?!

Do you sympathize with one teacher who wrote, "[There is] a problem that I feel needs addressing . . . the problem of conduct, respect, and discipline in the classroom"?



Modern educators are noticing an alarming trend in today's students. We are raising a generation of young people who have an unhealthy self-assertiveness and disregard for absolutes. In his new booklet "Who Says So?!" Bob Jones III pinpoints the root problem: we have neglected the divinely appointed authority structure. He gives us a thorough, yet concise, examination of the Bible's teaching of the proper authority structure as it relates to all areas of the Christian life.

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AN INSERT DESIGNED FOR PASTORS AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS

Today, one of the greatest ministries someone could have with preachers would be to produce an inexpensive journal dedicated to the minister's life and work. The journal would focus upon the preacher's pulpit preparations: his building and use of a well-chosen library, his fixing of a daily schedule that centers around the study of the Word of God and prayer, and all that is involved in his life behind a closed door, where he kneels shut up alone with God. Such a journal is not immediately at hand. But it is with great appreciation that I am able to announce that *Frontline* magazine is taking a significant step in that direction with this issue by inaugurating an insert for preachers.

Please take just a moment to scan the sections of this first insert. It explores four facets of a pastor's working life with the Word of God. One section discusses a preacher's library. Spurgeon once reminded his listeners, "Paul cried, 'Bring . . . the books' " (2 Tim. 4:13), and the great Baptist continued, "Join in the cry!" So to help us know what books to bring into our studies, the "Bring . . . the Books" column will identify and evaluate key works that every preacher will want to obtain and employ for his pulpit work. Dr. Mark Simmons, pastor of Marquette Manor Baptist Church in Downers Grove, Illinois, and an avid seeker of great books, is writing and overseeing this section.

Another section, "Straight Cuts," reflects Paul's admonition to be a workman "rightly dividing [cutting straight] the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Here various contributors will plunge into the words and expressions of the text of Scripture to provide practical help with accurate interpretation. There has never been a time in the history of the Church when so much exegetical treasure has been laid bare to expositors.

A third section of the insert, "Windows," focuses on those most sought after of all sermon contents—illustrations! Illustrations serve as windows that throw light on the sturdy interiors of our messages. No one would wish to live in a house that was nothing but windows. But who would want to live in a house without any? We desperately need these elusive transparencies in every message. But finding fresh illustrative material week after week becomes almost impossible for the average pastor.

In addition, good lighting involves not only the task of finding choice illustrations, but also the art of using them effectively. Mark Twain remarked that the difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between the lightning and the lightning *bug*! This idea is just as true of illustrative material. "Windows" is not merely a potpourri of unrelated quotations, statistics and anecdotes thrown buckshot fashion at the reader. Instead, each column strings these materials together on the thread of a particular theme (prevailing prayer, the Cross of Christ, etc.) in such a way as to suggest effective usage for the featured illustrations. By simply clipping out the entire page and dropping it into a single file folder on that topic, a pastor saves valuable illustrative material for future reference.

"First Partaker," the first and largest section within the insert, concentrates on the devotional side of a minister's life. Paul wrote, "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits" and added, "Consider what I say" (2 Tim. 2:6, 7). The publisher and editor of *Frontline* have graciously extended to me the opportunity to write this column. From issue to issue, "First Partaker" will consider the inestimably important aspect of the ministry that involves a minister's personal, spiritual prosperity. This includes his own development in prayer, his devotional reading and memorization of Scripture, his taking inspiration from the lives of preachers and missionaries of the past, his experiences of personal revival, his way of dealing with trial, temptation, opposition and discouragement in the secret place of his own heart, plus all the related aspects of his personal growth in grace as a man of God. My own heart has hungered through the years for all the help I could find for igniting daily, fervent love for Jesus Christ and for the work to which He has called me. The topics I share in this column will be those that have most blessed my own soul. I trust that they will prove to be equally blessed to others.

Dr. Mark Minnick

Mount Calvary Baptist Church
Greenville, South Carolina

SOUND WORDS

First Partaker

See the Toiling Soul Is Fed

The Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte once identified a major occupational difference between himself and his people when he observed, "What is occasional with others must be constant with me. Morning, noon, and night my Bible must be in my hands." In a layman's opinion the preacher's constant exposure to the Bible is his special privilege. But in the preacher's experience, this constant exposure is often his special peril.

One of the truly enduring works on the Christian ministry, John Henry Jowett's *The Preacher: His Life and Work*, contains the chapter, "The Perils of the Preacher." It stemmed undoubtedly from unhappy personal experiences that Jowett placed first among the perils of this very problem, which he called "deadening familiarity with the sublime." Describing a preacher's constant exposure to the Scripture, Jowett warned, "Our studies may be workshops instead of 'upper rooms.' Our share in the table provisions may be that of analysts rather than guests. We may become so absorbed in words that we forget to eat the Word."

This occupational hazard of failing to feed upon the Word ourselves is the first topic "First Partaker" will address. Ask anyone in food service if he has much personal appetite for what he prepares professionally. Similarly, candid preachers admit that they can grow unconsciously anorexic to their Bibles. Precisely because it is their source of sermons, the Bible may be less and less the Word of God to their own souls. Spurgeon lamented this secret snare of reading the Bible ministerially, praying ministerially and doing the whole of religion officially rather than personally. "Our office, instead of helping our piety, as some assert, is through the evil of our natures turned into one of its most serious hindrances; at least I find it so" (*Lectures to My Students*, p. 15).

These cautions, from different denominational corners (a Presbyterian, a Congregationalist and even Spurgeon, a Baptist!), encourage me in weak moments. At least I know my struggle to feed on the Word personally is not unique. A. W. Tozer (from still another denominational corner, Christian and Missionary Alliance) called it the struggle between being a "scribe" who can "only tell what he has read," and being a "saint" who has penetrated "in sensitive living experience into the holy Presence" (*The Pursuit of God*, p. 43). When I thumb Tozer's biography (*In Pursuit of God*) and read of this plain man who wore a freshly pressed business suit for the five-mile streetcar ride from his home to his study at the church, I'm seeing an ordinary man, like myself. But when I read of his exchanging the business suit for the tattered old trousers he called his "praying pants," worn during the long hours he spent prostrate in prayer (nose buried in a handkerchief carefully placed on the study floor), I'm seeing the distinction he was making between the "scribe" and the "saint." And I'm seeing the man I want to be when I'm alone with God. I also come away suspecting that this distinction between "scribe" and "saint" is one Tozer could express so precisely because of long years of personal struggle. This thought emboldens me to think that I, too, might pass within the veil.

It had to be with just this notorious struggle in mind that Paul urged Timothy, "The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits," adding, "Consider what I say" (2 Tim. 2:6, 7). To fill out the underlying implications, it's as if Paul wrote, "When I say that it is a *necessity*—when I say that hardworking farmers *must* feed themselves first—meditate on why this must be the dynamic order. Think through what it would take for you to so order your affairs that you are eating first! And may the Lord enlighten your consideration with spiritual understanding of

both your need and the ways in which to ensure that the arrangement of your affairs promotes this vital feeding of yourself first.”

For years I taught ministerial students that it was unwise to separate their personal study of the Scripture from their pulpit preparations. I now think otherwise. Theoretically you would think that a man might feed himself best out of the deep study he does for preaching. But too often this is not the case. Invariably he is thinking, not of himself, but of his people during that preparation time. And it is almost impossible, all well-meaning advice to the contrary, to alter that mentality. I'm not suggesting that this should be the state of things. I'm merely saying that it is. One of the reasons for this problem is that the preacher's personal growth needs, at any particular point in the progress of his ministry, are often at a stage advanced beyond that of his congregation. This advancement is one of the dynamics of leadership. The leader is out in front. He has advanced beyond his people. The pasture in which he is feeding them ministerially today is often the ground he conquered personally yesterday. Now the preacher is pressing on into new frontiers, and therefore his needs are advanced beyond his people's.

This does not mean that the answer to a preacher's need is in a rigid polarizing of his personal appropriation from his sermon preparation, but in a separating of his dealings with the Bible into two stages. The first is personal—just as Paul said. The second is ministerial. Out of the first will come the second, but the second must wait its turn! First a man must meet his own need. Therein lies the secret to really satisfying our souls with the Word. The Word must be directed toward our needs. This is the first prerequisite to profitable times with the Word.

Directing the Word to Personal Ministerial Need

George Muller, who housed thousands of orphans by faith alone, testified to his recognition of this principle when he related that his practice was to read until he found a verse upon which he could “lean his entire weight” for the day. We, too, reveal our instinctive recognition of this principle by our choices of topics and texts for preaching. And it will be by carrying it over from the selection of sermon topics for our people to the selection of study topics for ourselves that we will come to satisfy our souls with the Word. Satisfying Bible study is so because it meets a present need. As it is for the people, so it is for the preacher.

The preacher's needs, like his people's, range between the related goals of (1) finding out what the Bible says to believe and (2) fleshing out how the Bible says to behave. Between these two lies the entire spectrum of essentials for the preacher's faith and practice. So before he opens the Bible on any given day, let the preacher know his need. Let him know it so definitely that he can write it on a piece of paper. Then let him ransack the Scriptures to fill the void in his soul.

For instance, who among us has not faltered out of fear of man. When you find yourself in that kind of trouble, you must deliberately customize your devotional reading of Scripture to address directly such a debilitating temptation. Then add to the Scriptures on which you've meditated something from your books on the ministry, such as Charles Bridges's chapter on “The Fear of Man,” in his classic, *The Christian Ministry*. It is an outstanding analysis of this paralyzing problem. Or, to take another example of need, if you're swamped in depression, then again address the situation deliberately through your personal devotional reading. Try a study of the ministry of Elijah. Memorize the key verses relating his experience. Employ your best commentaries and biographical sketches of his life to take your study to a deeper level. Mark up the margins of your Bible with what you find. And again, search through your library until you find something sympathetic, such as C. H. Spurgeon's “The Minister's Fainting Fits” (*Lectures to My Students*, chapter XI) or J. Oswald Sander's chapter “Despondency: Its Cause and Cure” in his book, *A Spiritual Clinic*.

Regardless of the approach, the preacher must read, study and feed according to his need. And as he does, it is absolutely essential that he nourish a deep, abiding conviction that what he studies applies first and foremost to himself. Bengel's dictum to preachers was, “Apply thyself wholly to the Scriptures, and apply the Scriptures wholly to thyself.” Or, as one of our most wistfully personal hymns pleads, “Break thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me!” And brethren, I, more than any single believer in my assembly, must be the one who cries, “Beyond the sacred page I seek thee, Lord!” I must be Tozer's “saint” who penetrates “in sensitive living experience into the holy Presence” first, long before I seek to lead my people there.

Systematizing Our Feeding

If targeting a preacher's need is the first essential to a satisfying feeding, then systematizing that feeding must certainly be the second. Why are we not sufficiently “nourished up in the words

of faith and of good doctrine?" We would be loath to confess it to our people, but often it is because we have no structure to which we hold ourselves inflexibly accountable. The rule in G. Campbell Morgan's household regarding family altar was, "No Bible, no breakfast." We could profit from that kind of beneficent rigidity.

I realize the danger of attempting to prescribe rules for another man. Dr. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones often quoted what he called the first rule of dietetics, "Jack Spratt could eat no fat, his wife could eat no lean," as an illustration of the folly of directing one another into our own patterns. His caution is important. Nevertheless, both he and nearly every other devoted student of Scripture in the history of the Church testify to a preacher's need to have some system to his Bible reading. Lloyd-Jones himself wrote, "My advice here is: Read your Bible systematically. The danger is to read at random, and that means that one tends to be reading only one's favourite passages" (*Preaching and Preachers*, p. 171).

So what systems are helpful to a preacher? The old Puritans used to divide the approaches between what they called "plow work" and "spade work." "Spade work" they defined as digging down into a small plot (a verse, a paragraph or an entire chapter) and mining its depths with lexicons and grammars until the sequence of thought and every nuance of meaning was laid bare. Both Matthew Henry and Albert Barnes excelled at this, and from their diligent spade work came the commentaries that have blessed thousands (you see the order there—feeding

themselves first; writing for others second). Matthew Henry studied and wrote for his own soul's growth between the morning hours of five and eight before beginning the day's pas-

toral duties. No wonder his commentary breathes such a spirit of devotion that Spurgeon recommended reading it through on our knees! George Muller was another who fed his soul by spade work. He wrote in his diary under the date of May 9, 1841:

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, the benefit of which I have not lost for more than fourteen years. The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great primary business to which I ought to attend

every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, or how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. . . . I began therefore to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching as it were into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul.

Notice his testimony, "searching into every verse to get blessing out of it." And notice the objective. He specifically clarified that he read "for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul." There's the appealing example of one whom we all recognize to have enjoyed the good hand of God's full blessing on his life. Perhaps we cannot constrain the same amount of blessing from God, but we can certainly commune with the same God who blesses.

What did the Puritans mean by "plow work"? They were referring to systematic reading of the entire Bible, or major sections of it, for the purpose of winning familiarity with its entire contents. Along this same line of study is the examination of Scripture by topics, doctrines or key words. Lloyd-Jones's personal practice was this kind of plow work. For many years he followed the scheme designed by Robert Murray McCheyne whereby you read four chapters a day, thus completing the Old Testament once and the psalms and the New Testament twice every year (McCheyne's plan is in his biography by Andrew Bonar and is available on order from Banner of Truth publishing company). Another "plower" was H. A. Ironside. As a boy he began reading through the Bible, and he caught up the total number of times through with his age by the time he was fourteen. He then completed the Bible once a year for the rest of his life (until 1948 when cataracts prevented such close reading). One time Ironside and several other preachers sharing the same platform at a Bible conference were asked to reveal to the audience something of their devotional approach. In the course of the discussion someone asked each man what, for instance, he had done with the Word that morning. When it was Ironside's turn to answer, he hesitated and then

I must be Tozer's "saint" who penetrates "in sensitive living experience into the holy Presence" first, long before I seek to lead my people there.

“Let no Christian among us neglect the means provided for obtaining a fuller knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. . . . Men are studious in various schools and colleges in order to obtain knowledge of the classics and mathematics, but should we not be even more diligent that we may know Christ, that we may study Him, and all about Him, and no longer be children, but in knowledge may be men?”

—C. H. Spurgeon

replied modestly that he had read through Isaiah!

G. Campbell Morgan was another who read the Bible by books, but his preference was a modification of the method in that he practiced repeated readings of the same book. Rising at 5:30 every morning (his children testified that this went on even over Christmas holidays), he would read a book through at one sitting. He would repeat the process forty to fifty mornings (see his *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible* for the result). All of this was done before he ever began preaching from a book. And to throw the standard completely off the scale, Alexander MaClaren read a chapter from his Hebrew Bible and another from his Greek New Testament every day; although even he may have been outstripped by F. W. Robertson, who memorized all of the New Testament in English and much of it in Greek while shaving in the morning! Ah, brethren, there were giants in the earth in those days!

Regardless of our approach, and we will probably do best to alternate between them from time to time, the essential thing is that we study, not as preachers, but as Christians—as men who are looking for a fresh feeding every day from the hand of God. H. C. G. Moule used to plead with young ministers:

I put in my plea . . . for such a secret study of the Word of God as shall be unprofessional, unclerical and simply Christian. Resolve to “read, mark, and inwardly digest” so that not now the flock but the shepherd, that is to say you, “may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life.” It will be all the better for the flock. Forget sometimes, in the name of Jesus Christ, the pulpit, the mission room, the Bible class; open the Bible as simply as if

you were on Crusoe’s island, and were destined to live and die there, alone with God (*To My Younger Brethren*, p. 41).

Brethren, if we do not do this thing, not only our persons but our pulpits will suffer. And our people will drift away to someone who has the breath of God about his life. Tozer warned that although many of our people “love the altar and delight in the sacrifice,” they are increasingly “unable to reconcile themselves to the continued absence of fire.” To explain his warning he continued:

There is today no lack of Bible preachers to set forth correctly the principles of the doctrines of Christ, but too many of these seem satisfied to teach the fundamentals of the faith year after year, strangely unaware that there is in their ministry no manifest Presence, nor anything unusual in their personal lives. They minister constantly to believers who feel within their breasts a longing which their teaching simply does not satisfy (*The Pursuit of God*, p. 8).

Oh to be men of God! Oh to be living, vibrant, pulsing with the words of the living God! To be, as Spurgeon challenged, men so fed that if our veins were cut anywhere, our blood would flow “Bibline”!

At the outset of His call upon Ezekiel, God commanded him, “But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee” (Ezek. 2:8). God has spoken. Open thy mouth. Eat before you preach. Be first partaker of the fruits so that your profiting may appear to all.

Pastor, for the round of toil,
See the toiling soul is fed.
Shut the chamber, light the oil,
Break and eat the Spirit’s bread.
Life to others would’st thou bring?
Live thyself upon thy King!

—Author Unknown



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Straight Cuts

Words for Proverbial "Fools"

“. . . Rightly dividing [cutting straight] the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Proverbs describes a group of rogues who comprise what can aptly be called “the fools gallery.” See if you know any of them.

Have you ever met someone who you felt was so naive that he would be willing to try anything once? There’s a Biblical word for such a person. He is described in Proverbs as the “simple” man. He’s easy to spot in Proverbs, since the English word “simple” always refers to him or to his feminine counterpart (9:13). Why does God use this term to describe naive people? To begin with, the word itself has the root idea of being “open” (“wide-open”). Proverbs 14:15 says that he “believes every word” (wide-open to propaganda); 22:3 explains that while a prudent man sees danger and avoids it, this simple man passes on and is punished (wide-open to try anything once); and 7:7 describes him as “void of understanding” and therefore an easy target for a subtle woman (he’s wide-open to temptation). English descriptions of such a young person would include the words “thoughtless,” “happy-go-lucky,” “impressionable” and “carefree.” Proverbs is written specifically to provide the wisdom this type of “fool” needs (1:4; 9:4), and, thankfully, his condition can be remedied (21:11).

Proverbs describes another kind of fool who is more difficult to deal with. He is the *kesil* (pronounced ke-SEEL; entry number 3684 in *Strong’s Concordance Old Testament lexicon*). He puts in about fifty appearances in Proverbs and generally impresses the reader only with his “thickness.” In fact, one Old Testament lexical authority (*Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*) points out that the associated Arabic word has that very idea, referring to something that is “thick, plump or fat.” You’ll recognize him around town because he’s the guy who thinks it’s great fun to cause trouble (10:23), and he cannot stand to pass up a good chance at sin (13:19). He’s cocky (14:16), mouthy (15:2) and universally generous with a piece of his mind (29:11). The best way to deal with him is to take a rod to his back as if he were a horse (26:3), but even then a hundred such blows are nearly futile (17:10). No wonder he is a calamity to his family (19:13), and the rest of us would do better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than be so unfortunate as to have a run-in with him (17:12).

Passing on to the next portrait in the gallery,

we pause before the face of a fool whose jaw looks set. Call him the obstinate fool. If possible, he’s even one notch lower on the fool’s scale than Mr. Kesil. Surfacing about two dozen times in Proverbs (*Strong’s Concordance* number 191), his name is pronounced “e-VEEL.” He positively despises any efforts to instruct him (1:7), particularly those of his own father (15:5). Wisdom is beyond his attainment (24:7) because he already assumes that everything he thinks or does is the right approach (12:15). Watch out for his anger (27:3)—he has a hair-trigger temper (12:16). And if you should be so optimistic as to presume that he can be rehabilitated, you’re warned that if you put him in a mortar with the wheat and grind him with a pestle, you still will not separate him from his folly (27:22). He’s constitutionally incapable of correction.

Just next to Eveel is Nabal. We met him near Mount Carmel during the days when David was a fugitive from Saul. His ungrateful churlishness prompted even his good wife, Abigail, to acknowledge that “as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him” (1 Sam. 25:25). Thankfully we encounter him only a few times in Proverbs (17:7, 21; 30:22, 32), lest we, like David, be goaded into taking his punishment into our own hands by his unforgivably crass ways.

We’d rather not spend any more time among fools than we have to, but we’re unlikely to get through life without encountering the last and very worst of them. He is the scorner. If the mind-set of Mr. Kesil is dull and that of Mr. Eveel is closed, the mind-set of the scorner is mocking. All sacred things are the targets for his sharp-pointed witticisms. He even “makes a mock of” (scorns) sin (14:9). Most alarming, however, is the fact that he actively attacks those who try to counsel him (9:7). In view of his incorrigibility, we are warned about even attempting to reprove him (9:8) and admonished instead simply to cast him out if we want to bring an end to strife and reproach (22:10). Out there, in the real world, judgments are prepared for him (19:29). The one redeeming asset to his initial presence is that when he’s smitten as he so well deserves, the on-looking “simple” fool will take note and, perhaps, become wise (19:25).

One last observation about these fools. Upon closer scrutiny it is apparent that a fool’s defect is not in his head but in his heart. Fools remain so, not because wisdom is unavailable (after all, she cries aloud in the streets, 1:20, 21), but because they love their folly and refuse God’s counsel (1:22–25). How gracious of God to promise both His Spirit and His words if they will only turn at His reproof (1:23).

—Dr. Mark Minnick

Bring . . . the Books

Reading biographies greatly enriches my soul. I can read them in snatches or at leisure for hours; either way, my heart is always blessed, my spirit is encouraged, and my faith is challenged. The giants in the faith, in whose footsteps we walk, have provided many lessons for us.

In this first column I want to introduce you to one of my favorite friends, James Hudson Taylor. His biography, written by his daughter-in-law Mrs. Howard Taylor, has recently enjoyed another reprinting. Shorter versions, including Hudson Taylor's *Spiritual Secret* and a one-volume edition titled *J. Hudson Taylor* have been printed, but her two-volume work remains the most thorough. Taylor's private diary comprises much of the text, enabling the reader to feel what Taylor experienced throughout his missionary pilgrimage.

The two volumes are subtitled *Hudson Taylor in Early Years: The Growth of a Soul* and *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission: The Growth of a Work of God*. We are familiar with Taylor's great exploits and great faith and the establishment of the mission. But before the growth of a great work for God, there first must be the growth of one man's soul in his intimacy with and faith in the Lord. The titles reflect this principle as it was fleshed out in Taylor's life—the same way God always works in our ministry. First, we must grow in our own soul; then God can grow His work.

Taylor's father taught James a principle that I have often used with my own children: "If you can, do without." James Hudson Taylor practiced this principle all his life, and it served him well during the times in China, where he cheerfully had to do without.

Taylor learned shortly after he was saved to trust God's provision. In one letter to his sister, drafted 140 years ago, Taylor wrote:

Enough, that God my Father knows;
Nothing this faith can dim:
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice with Him.



Dr. Mark Simmons is the pastor of Marquette Manor Baptist Church in Downers Grove, Illinois. He has ministered as a church planter and senior pastor since earning his Ph.D. from Bob Jones University in 1981. Dr. Simmons is an avid reader and has built an extensive collection of fine volumes in his personal library.

The first time I read this work, I expected the second volume to record unmixed blessing! Surely Taylor had faced it all. His faith had attained such heights; certainly it could not be taxed further. But it was.

Taylor was strolling on the beach at Brighton one Sunday. For weeks his journal had been silent, as he struggled over whether to start his own mission. He could trust God for his needs, but if he started a mission, he would have to trust God for the needs of so many others. With the waves lapping over his feet as he walked, he thought, *If I start the mission and God does not provide, the worst thing that can happen is that they will starve and go to Heaven*. With this "encouragement," the China Inland Mission was born.

What a man of faith Taylor was! He prayed for laborers. With eighty-seven missionaries at the mission, he believed God would send a hundred more in just one year. "If you showed me a photograph," Taylor wrote, "of the whole hundred, taken in China, I could not be more sure than I am now." As the mission board raised the support for those missionaries, Taylor penned in his journal, "Depend upon it: God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supplies."

Hudson Taylor spent every New Year's Eve in prayer and fasting for the coming year so it would truly count for eternity. Later he expanded this time to praying the last week of the year with fasting on alternating days—all to see God's blessing.

I have compiled over two hundred sermon illustrations from these books alone—covering faith, prayer, souls, impossible mountains, the call to missions, giving, trials, God's will, the pastor's wife, healing, deputation and many other areas. This two-volume work is truly a treasure mine for those who take the time to dig.

I combed the shelves of used bookstores for a decade before I finally secured an old and somewhat worn copy printed in 1927. Thankfully, through the efforts of the Elijah Company,* readers have a rare opportunity to acquire this treasure. Do all you can to get this work on your shelf—and then read it. Your faith will be stretched, your soul enriched and your people blessed.

*Readers can reach the Elijah Company at Route 2, Box 100-B, Crossville, IN 38555 (615-456-6284).

Windows

This issue's edition of "Windows" features illustrations probing our responsibility for the souls of lost people. The World Health Organization reported this summer that 51.9 million people passed into eternity in 1995. Richard Baxter, the English Puritan, wrote, "If by faith we did indeed look upon them as within a step of [H]ell, it would more effectually untie our tongues" (Quoted by I. D. E. Thomas in *A Puritan Golden Treasury*, p. 93). Here are some illustrations to help move Christians from *refusing* our responsibility, past the point of *neglecting* our responsibility, to finally *facing* our responsibility for the lost.

Refusing Our Responsibility for Souls

The discovery of the wreck of the *Titanic* in September 1985 riveted the attention of historians and reopened the question of why so many people perished on that disastrous night of April 14, 1912. One of the most horrifying answers to emerge from the formal inquiry, which the United

"To illustrate, according to the etymology, is to throw light upon a subject" (John A. Broadus).

"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark'" (C. H. Spurgeon).

States Senate conducted, was that many of the *Titanic's* twenty lifeboats were only half-filled. And, incredibly, the occupants of those boats collectively refused to return to the crying mass of nearly one thousand people left drowning in the dark North Atlantic waters after the ship sank.

An official court testimony from the survivors recorded that a continual moan and cry for help coming from those in the water lasted for nearly an hour. Because those in the boats feared that the mass of people still in the water would only capsize the boats, those who had been so fortunate as to obtain safety in them ignored the cries for help. The chairman of the Senate inquiry, William Alden Smith, questioned survivors. His questioning of one of the ship's crew, Third

Officer Herbert J. Pitman, included the following exchange.

Mr. Smith began, "I have no desire to lacerate your feelings, but we must know whether you drifted in the vicinity of that scene for about an hour."

Pitman answered, sobbing, "Oh yes, we were in the vicinity of the wreck the whole time."

"Did this anguish or these cries of distress die away?" Smith asked.

"Yes they—they died away gradually," Pitman replied.

"Did they continue during most of the hour?" Smith asked.

"Oh yes—I think so. It may have been a shorter time." Pitman responded. And then wiping his eyes with a handkerchief, he faintly protested, "I'd rather you'd left that out all together."

"I know you would," the senator responded, "but I must know what efforts you made to save the lives of passengers and crew under your charge. If that is all the effort you made, say so, and I will stop that branch of my examination."

"That is all, sir," admitted a broken Pitman. "That's all the effort I made."

But that was not all. The most unthinkable callous occurrence of the whole tragedy was that the drowning people's cries were so unnerving to those already in the boats that in some cases they sang loudly to deafen their ears to the disturbing voices of the dying. In boat number 11 someone led the passengers in a cheer, and everyone "cheered and cheered to drown the screams." *Unbelievably*, in boat number 14, as they rowed away from the perishing, the occupants sang, "Throw out the Life-Line! Throw out the Life-Line! Someone is drifting away; Throw out the Life-Line! Throw out the Life-Line! Someone is sinking today."

That dark night, in the space of little over an hour, 1,522 people sank into a watery grave two miles deep in the black North Atlantic, while hundreds of others cheered and sang to calm their own nerves and to divert their attention from the immense catastrophe taking place before their very eyes. (Wyn Craig Wade, *The Titanic*, [Penguin Books, 1986], pp. 328, 329.)

Neglecting Our Responsibility for Souls

That the Church of Jesus Christ has sometimes resembled the survivors from the *Titanic* cannot be denied. For instance, consider the

following account from a painful experience related by Mr. Hudson Taylor.

In the fall of 1857 Mr. Taylor was preaching one evening in Ningpo, China, on John 3:14–17. A businessman in the city, Mr. Nyi, came in, sat down and listened intently throughout the message. At the conclusion of the sermon he stood and said forthrightly:

I have long sought the Truth, as did my father before me, but without finding it. I have traveled far and near, but have never searched it out. In Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, I have found no rest; but I do find rest in what we have heard to-night. Henceforward I am a believer in Jesus.

Mr. Nyi was well known throughout the city because of his cotton dealership, and almost daily after his conversion, he would go into the streets with the missionaries to win an entrance for the message among those with whom he did business.

“If by faith we did indeed look upon them as within a step of Hell, it would more effectually untie our tongues.”

One afternoon he asked Hudson Taylor quite unsuspectingly, “How long have you had the Glad Tidings in England?” The young missionary, ashamed to tell him, replied vaguely that it was several hundreds of years. “What,” exclaimed Nyi in astonishment,

“several hundreds of years! Is it possible that you have known about Jesus so long, and only now have come to tell us?”

“My father sought the Truth for more than twenty years,” he continued sadly, “and died without finding it. *Oh, why did you not come sooner?*” (Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor in Early Years*, [China Inland Mission, 1911], pp. 441–443.)

Facing Our Responsibility for Souls

What is the Church’s responsibility to these lost ones? Over a century ago this question was answered in simple illustration by Stanley Smith, one of the Cambridge Seven. These seven young graduates of England’s finest colleges and universities had electrified the student bodies of their institutions by announcing that they were renouncing all worldly hopes for the sake of obeying Christ’s command to go into the world with the gospel. One of these volunteers was C. T. Studd, son of a wealthy tea plantation owner and one of England’s most famous athletes. The others were sons of army officers and well-known public servants. Before embarking for the field, they toured the campuses of England and Scotland to explain to vast audiences of curious students and

faculty why they were abandoning their fortunes and careers to bury themselves on foreign fields.

Stanley Smith posed the question of how pleased the Lord would have been if His disciples had responded to His command to feed the five thousand the way the Church has responded to His command to evangelize all the world. He described the feeding of the five thousand as if it were taking place in the hall and the disciples were distributing the food:

But at the end of the eighth row, they stop and turn back to the first and feed these eight rows again, pouring bread and fish into their laps and piling it about them. . . . What do you suppose our Lord would say? He would say, “What are you doing? Here—Andrew, Peter, John—what are you doing? Don’t you see the starving multitudes behind?”

In profound stillness he reached his peroration:

And now one last word. . . . It seems to me as if Christ has come right into your midst and has looked into the face of you men and women—young, old and middle-aged. He would take hold with loving hands of each one, and looking into your eyes, point to the wounds in His pierced side and ask, “Lovest thou me?” And you would say, “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.” And what is the test of love? “If you love me keep my commandments.” And what, Master, do you command? “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (J. C. Pollock, *The Cambridge Seven*, [Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1955], pp. 102, 103.)

Should anyone retort that he is unconvinced that the problem is actually as acute as Stanley Smith described, consider in conclusion that if the world’s current population were reduced to one hundred people living in a common village, eighteen would be Muslim, fifteen would call themselves nonreligious or atheists, fifteen would be Roman Catholic, thirteen would be Hindu and only eight would be Protestants of any kind. Of those eight Protestants—Anglicans, Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc.—how many do you suppose are genuinely regenerated? How many, even among the eight (not to speak of the other ninety-two), have been deliberately, compassionately, Scripturally evangelized?

—Compiled by Dr. Mark Minnick

WIT & WISDOM

Thoughts to Ponder

"Just be glad you're not getting all the government you're paying for." —Will Rogers

"May I not measure my spiritual advances by the efforts of my natural being." —A Puritan

"Borrowed beliefs have no power." —James Black

"So many missionaries, intent on doing something, forget that God's main work is to make something of them." —Jim Elliot

"People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out. But in the darkness, beauty is seen only if there is a light within." —Anonymous

"Christ exercised force but once, and that was to drive profane ones out of His temple and not to force them in." —John Milton

"I used to ask God to help me. Then I asked if I might help Him. I ended up asking Him to do His work through me." —J. Hudson Taylor

"Growth for the sake of growth is the theology of the cancer cell." —Edward Abbey

"I find it impossible to avoid offending guilty men, for there is no way of avoiding it but by our silence or their patience; and silent we cannot be because of God's command, and patient they cannot be because of their guilt." —Martin Luther

"If you ask me how you may shorten your sermons, I should say, study them better. Spend more time in the study that you may need less in the pulpit. When we are generally longest is when we have least to say." —Charles Spurgeon

"The intensity of pressure doesn't matter as much as its location. Does it come between you and God, or does it press you closer to Him?" —Unknown

"'Free sex' merely delays the payment." —Unknown

"You cannot cure your sorrow by nursing it, but you can cure it by nursing another's sorrow." —George Matheson

"God has a way of interrupting our idealism." —Mark Minnick

"Delegating work works, provided the one delegating works too." —Robert Half

"The casual look expresses to the world the casual approach with which the sacred is handled." —David L. Cummins

"What counts is not necessarily the size of the dog in the fight; it's the size of the fight in the dog." —Dwight D. Eisenhower

"'A committee should study this' is very often the verbiage of procrastination." —Unknown

"Look at a day when you are supremely satisfied at the end. It's not a day when you lounge around doing nothing; it's when you've had everything to do, and you've done it." —Margaret Thatcher

"Fit me to see my own nothingness, and wonder that I am allowed to serve thee." —A Puritan

"He that cannot obey, cannot command." —Benjamin Franklin

"Nothing is politically right which is morally wrong." —Daniel O'Connell

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religions but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ." —Patrick Henry



When youth workers grow old

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

Salty Stew

Do you ever sing a duet with the vacuum cleaner? Does the shower reverberate with your "joyful noise"? I am convinced that singing—or whistling, as is the norm for my eighteen year old, Paul—must be an hereditary trait. Mama sang while working around the house; I have followed in her footsteps. My father whistles, as does one of my four sons. My mother and her mother before her said that a whistling man is the sign of a happy man. Whatever our mood, God can use a song, whether whistled or sung, to speak to our hearts.

One day while stirring thickening into a stew for our dinner, I found myself singing a hymn about the love of the Lord Jesus. Suddenly, the enormity of His love overwhelmed me, and I started crying. So there I stood, singing and crying and wiping away salty tears before they dropped into the stew.

A freckled face appeared and stared curiously up into mine. It was my nine-year-old son.

"Why are you crying, Mom?"

I sniffed. "Listen to the words of this song, Joel."

I sang the song and then explained the reason for my tears. He didn't laugh like he usually does when he finds me crying over a good book or an old movie. He seemed to understand, and we talked about God's love for us. It was a special time. One that I haven't forgotten. One that I was reminded of a few Sundays ago when our pastor preached on Deuteronomy 6:5-9.

In this familiar passage, God instructs His people to love Him above all else; to use all diligence in teaching His Word to their children in any way that they can from the time the children get up in the morning until the time that they go to bed at night. But the next few verses caught my eye. I continued to read until I came upon a verse that I had never noticed before. Deuteronomy 6:20 reads, "And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you?"

And when thy son asketh thee . . .

Why are you crying, Mom?

My thoughts spun back to that day in the kitchen. *Is that what the Lord is talking about?* I wondered. Later that day as I reread the whole passage, I was convinced that the conversation in the kitchen was, indeed, an example of God's instructions. I felt a breath of encouragement. I was doing something right! *But, Lord, I questioned, how do I make sure my children continue to ask?*

Immediately I thought of the words in Matthew

5:13, where Jesus taught that we are to be the salt of the earth. Salt is a preservative, but it also is the spice that makes an otherwise bland dish savory. If I make bread, a cake or pie, a casserole or whatever it is, if the recipe calls for salt, I put it in. God's "recipe" for me as a Christian wife and mother calls for me to be the salt in my "home stew."

Lord, I prayed, am I the "salt" I should be? Am I helping to preserve my family from the rotting influences of sin? Am I helping to make my family a sweet savor unto You?

My experiences with two of my older-aged children had taught me that the teaching and the living of the commands and principles, the so-called "right" things to do, aren't necessarily all the "salt" that is needed. I could love my children, discipline them, teach them Scripture, be faithful in church and guard their hearts and minds from evil influences, to name a few. And while I should do all of these things, I knew that something else is needed.

I began reading Deuteronomy 6 again, looking for a correlation between the commands and the questioning in verse 20. What is it that causes my children to ask? The individual commands stood out: loving the Lord with all my heart, soul and might. Memorizing. Teaching. Writing.

As I continued reading the chapter, verse 12 admonished, "Beware lest thou forget. . . ." *Don't forget: remember and share what the Lord has done and how He has answered prayer.* A memory tickled my heart, and I laughed! My mother prayed about everything, from a needed safety pin to a parking space downtown that was right next to Penney's. We children took these prayers for granted. If Mama prayed for a parking space, one would be there! The testimony of her strong personal relationship with the Lord became a natural and expected part of our lives.

The *saltshaker*—that was it! But the "salt" is not so much action—talking, doing the right things, etc.—as much as it is attitude: the continual development of an open, honest and vulnerable relationship with the Lord and with my family. His joy, His presence and His power—His "salt"—must so season and flavor my life that talking of Him and living for Him will be as natural as—well as natural—as sitting in my house or walking by the way or lying down and rising up or . . . shaking a little salt into the stew.

By Barbara Buehner. Barbara is a freelance writer living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

A common misconception today is that only "wealthy" families need to be concerned about estate planning. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it is often the smaller estate that has the most to lose from failing to plan. Probate court costs, legal fees and state and federal taxes represent a few of the issues that can result in serious and costly problems where planning has been neglected or inadequate. With proper planning, however, most if not all of those problems are avoidable.

When considering the issue of estate planning, a person's first thoughts usually focus on death and the distribution of "worldly possessions." Obviously, preparing for death and the disbursement of one's assets is an important aspect of estate planning, but a number of other equally important legal issues also must be considered.

The estate planning process involves three major phases: (1) planning for lifetime incompetency/disability; (2) planning for the disposition of assets on death; and (3) planning for the after-death management of assets on behalf of minor, handicapped or immature beneficiaries.

Planning for Lifetime Incompetency

This aspect of estate planning involves the issue of management. When a person becomes incompetent, he is unable to manage his own medi-

cal, legal, financial and personal affairs. He needs someone to step in and manage those affairs for him. In general, that management occurs two ways in our legal system. One method is through a private management plan and the other is through the public probate court system.

For the person who becomes incompetent and neglects to plan in advance to put into effect a private management plan, the probate court is the only alternative. That procedure is called guardianship. Guardianship involves a spouse, family member or someone else close to the incompetent person petitioning the local probate court to appoint a guardian. The court ordered guardianship gives the guardian legal authority to make decisions and to manage the affairs of the incompetent person. In general the guardianship procedure is time-consuming and can involve significant legal fees and court costs. For those reasons, many people today are turning to a private alternative to the guardianship system.

By planning in advance, individuals may appoint their own private power of attorney to manage their financial, legal and medical affairs without the court's involvement and without the cost and legal fees associated with the court system. While there exists an extensive variety of powers of attorney for estate planning purposes, the most popular are the general Durable Power of Attorney

and the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. The general Durable Power of Attorney grants broad legal and financial authority, usually to a spouse or adult child, for the private management of the incompetent person's affairs. The Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care authorizes a health care agent, usually the spouse or an adult child, to make the medical decisions for the person who has become incompetent. Both documents are readily available to the general public and can be obtained at minimal cost. Through the use of those private documents, an individual can avoid the guardianship procedure and the costs, attorney fees and court involvement associated with it.

Planning for Disposition of Assets

The next phase of estate planning involves preparation for death and the transfer of one's assets to beneficiaries. Some common goals in this phase of estate planning include tax avoidance, probate avoidance and the transfer of one's assets in a manner as expeditious and inexpensive as possible. In general, there are two broad alternatives.

The traditional approach is the common last will and testament. With rare exceptions, a last will and testament must be probated [to establish the authenticity and compliance of the will through judicial procedures]. Depending upon the circumstances

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and the size and type of assets, probate procedures can be expensive and time-consuming. The probate process and all the information about the estate becomes open to the public.

The other option, and one that is becoming increasingly popular, is a revocable living trust. In addition to avoiding probate, the revocable living trust remains private, not open to public scrutiny on death. A revocable living trust is an estate plan document similar to a will. However, important differences exist between a will and a living trust. A will is not effective until death and the admission of the will to probate. The living trust, on the other hand, is effective during life and can continue to be effective after death if needed for the benefit of minor, immature or handicapped children, all without probate court involvement. The time for administration of a living trust after death is also significantly shorter than the probate procedure that would be required for a will. It is common for the probate of a will to take one to two years, but a living trust usually is administered and distributed in four to eight weeks

for smaller estates. Larger estates may take longer depending upon estate tax filing requirements.

To determine whether a will or a living trust would be beneficial for any particular family, a competent estate planning attorney should be consulted, since numerous factors should be considered in each specific family situation. However, one should be aware that attorneys vary in style and philosophy of practice. If probate avoidance is an important goal, then you should consult with an attorney with a probate avoidance philosophy.

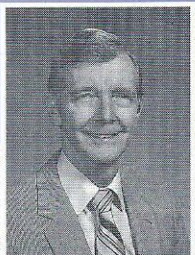
Another goal of estate planning is the avoidance of state and federal taxes. Estate tax is commonly referred to as "death tax." Each state may have its own estate tax and/or inheritance tax structure, so the law in your particular state would have to be consulted to determine if it differs from the federal tax system. Generally, with regard to federal estate tax, each United States citizen is entitled to pass a maximum of \$600,000 tax-free to his heirs at death, during life or a combination of the two. However, smaller lifetime gifts, currently \$10,000 or less

per year per donee, are not counted against this \$600,000 figure. That smaller gift is known as the annual gift exclusion. Married couples can each take advantage of the \$10,000 annual exclusion for a total of \$20,000 per year per donee in an estate planning strategy called gift splitting.

To calculate any estate tax that is due on death, a calculation is made adding any lifetime gifts in excess of the \$10,000 annual exclusion and the value of the estate at death to determine whether or not the combination of the two exceeded \$600,000. If so, estate tax is due starting at the rate of 37 percent. As with income tax, the estate tax rates are graduated and increase with the size of the estate to a maximum federal tax of 55 percent.

Through proper estate planning, a married couple can pass double the \$600,000 exemption, or a total of 1.2 million, tax-free to their heirs. However, that exemption must be done with a specially prepared will or trust that includes a bypass trust mechanism. A simple "all to my

(Continued on page 28)



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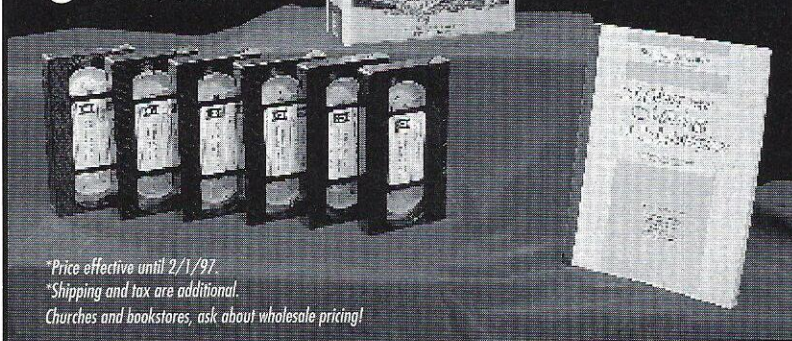
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Ideas for Effective Teaching

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For some appropriate, effective, "quickie" visuals to use for preschool and kindergarten students, keep on hand a supply of pre-cut, basic shapes of various sizes and colors. These pieces make great visuals and can be readily assembled when needed. By arranging rectangles, squares, triangles and circles into certain patterns, you can create people, cars, trucks, buildings, trees and other common objects that will clarify and enhance your teaching concept.

Keep Their Attention

To maintain or create the right atmosphere of interest and classroom control, remember that children have an attention span of approximately one minute per year of age, so organize your class schedule to change activities often enough to foster a proper learning environment. You can accomplish this schedule two ways: (1) prepare enough different method segments to change as often as the class's attention span requires; or (2) (especially when teaching beginner students) repeat the same class schedule once or twice with the same class material taught in the first part of the class time, or arrange the class material in a different order and repeat. This method can reinforce the class material through review and can be an attention-getter if you ask questions that appeal to the kids' self-confidence because they know the answers.

Controlling the Problem Child

Any time you have an inordinate amount of class disturbance by a few students, talk privately with them and ask if they will be your helpers by being super examples for the others in the class. (If you are having constant trouble with many or all of your class, you need to seek practical assistance now. It is abnormal for all the kids in a given class always to be uncontrollable.)

Watch Your Image

If students are not answering you, obeying you or responding to you with proper respect, *upgrade your image*. This is done by (1) knowing that children should respond to adults with politeness, not cockiness; (2) respecting yourself through personal appearance and adequate lesson preparation so you properly "feel good about yourself"; (3) "carrying" yourself correctly by standing while you teach, rather than sitting casually on the desk or leaning against the wall

(sometimes preschool teachers should sit down "on the same level" with younger-age students); (4) respecting the students by talking to them, not at them; use sarcasm sparingly and only humorously, not unkindly; (5) being "alive" with enthusiasm, a universally accepted, respected and successful quality; do not be guilty of making the most exciting Book, the most exciting work and the most exciting Person appear boring by your personal style. Perhaps you do need to let the Holy Spirit change your personality! (6) expecting respect from the students by teaching them how to express proper attitudes and feelings; and (7) establishing clearly your classroom rules (policies and procedures) and enforcing them.

Training Winners or Losers

The Winner

is always part of the answer.

The Loser

is always part of the problem.

The Winner

always has a program.

The Loser

always has an excuse.

The Winner

says, "Let me do it for you."

The Loser

says, "That's not my job."

The Winner

sees an answer for every problem.

The Loser

sees a problem for every answer.

The Winner

sees a green near every sand trap.

The Loser

sees two or three sand traps near every green.

The Winner

says, "It may be difficult but it is possible."

The Loser

says, "It may be possible, but it is too difficult."

Written and compiled by Pastor Mitch Sidles, pastor of Sunny Vale Chapel in Waterford, Michigan.

The methods of Jesus Christ were not haphazard. Every facet of His ministry contributed to an interwoven tapestry of divine self-revelation. It is a mistake to treat His miracles as a separate category from His teaching ministry, intended only to authenticate His identity. In fact, His miracles formed a critical part of His teaching.

The recorded ministry of Christ was dominated by discourses, parables and miracles. Throughout His ministry, Christ utilized these three principal teaching methods: (1) *explanation* (sermons and discourses), (2) *illustration* (parables and metaphors) and (3) *demonstration* (miracles). He explained divine truth in discourses, illustrated truth with parables and demonstrated truth through miracles.

The first step in effective communication is to declare that God is merciful, compassionate, holy or powerful. The next step is to illustrate God's mercy, compassion, holiness or power through a story from everyday life or experience. But the ultimate step in communication goes beyond explanation and illustration. Truly effective communication demonstrates through personal action and experience what it means practically for God to be merciful, compassionate, holy or powerful.

Definition of a Miracle

What is it? A supernatural act. Who does it? God. Where does it happen? In the natural world. When does it happen? In the natural course of human experience. How does it happen? By God's exercising His authority over His creation. Why does it happen? To reveal truth about Himself.

A miracle is a supernatural act in which God intervenes in the natural course of human experience, by exercising His authority over His creation, for the purpose of self-revelation.

God built certain "laws" into the operation of creation. Miracles are not so much suspensions of natural law as they are a sovereign overpowering of natural law—the natural is overcome by the supernatural. Divine force overcame the force of gravity when Christ (and Peter) walked on the water. Divine strength overthrew elemental principles of nature through healings and resurrections. Divine omnipotence overwhelmed the principles of chemical stability in turning water to wine and multiplying bread and fish to feed thousands. From our standpoint, therefore, miracles are naturally inexplicable.

Types of Miracles

Different words for miracles denote different features of the miraculous. Several minor words depict miracles as revealing the greatness of God's power and goodness (*megaleia*, Luke 1:49), as works in which God's glory is displayed (*endoxa*, Luke 13:17), as deeds that are beyond belief, incredible (*paradoxa*, Luke 5:26) or as acts that arouse wonder and astonishment (*thaumasia*, Matt. 21:15).

Three key words, however, portray three primary as-

MIRACLES IN THE

pects of divine miracles: (1) a "wonder" (*teras*) is particularly wonderful, awesome, amazing, astonishing; (2) a "(mighty/wonderful) work" (*dunamis*) especially expresses God's great might and power; (3) a "sign" or "miracle" (*semeion*) in the Gospels stresses the underlying meaning or significance of the miraculous deed.

Number of Miracles

The Gospels specifically record thirty-five miracles. Several passages, however, reveal that many other miracles were performed as well (see Matthew 4:23; 8:16; 9:35; 11:4, 5; Mark 1:32, 33, 39; 6:1–6, 56; Luke 4:40, 41; 5:15; 6:17–19; 7:21, 22; John 2:23; 3:2; 4:45; 20:30, 31; 21:25). Miracles positively permeated the brief ministry of Christ.

Objects of Miracles

What were the objects upon which, or the realms in which, Christ performed His miracles? Miracles demonstrate Christ's controlling and creative authority over two realms: (1) the *material, physical, visible world*, including substances, nature and disease and (2) the *immaterial, spiritual, invisible world*, including demons, death and sin.

Nature and Purpose of Miracles

The miracles of Christ are essentially *didactic* in nature and *self-revelatory* in purpose. That is, they are aimed at teaching His truth and revealing Himself. The fact that they are credentials of His deity reveals who He is. The fact that they are good works reveals what He is like.

The self-revelatory character of the miracles can be further summed up in two general areas. Just as the names of Elijah (which means "Yahweh is God") and Elisha (which means "God saves, delivers") reflect the focus of the prophets' respective ministries, so the miracle ministry of Jesus Christ reflects the truths revealed in His name and title. His miracles were designed to manifest (1) who He is—the anointed, Heaven-sent God-Man (Christ, which means the "Anointed") and (2) what He is—the salvation and deliverance of Jehovah (Jesus, which means "Jehovah saves").

Conclusion

Every miracle demonstrates some spiritual truth about God, man or life. These demonstrations are aimed at effecting a response. In a general sense, for instance, all of the healing miracles obviously demonstrate Christ's compassion and God's authority over all disease. However, a careful consideration of the text will often reveal a subtle distinctive emphasis, or in some cases a clear declarative statement, that indicates the didactic intent of the miracle. One is not left to his own guesses in determining what Christ intended to teach through any given miracle. Examine the text carefully, and you will discover—through the context, the narrator's comments, the verbal exchange

MINISTRY OF CHRIST

or the explicit statement of Christ—precisely why the miracle was recorded.

For example, the healing of the ten lepers teaches the importance of faith in Christ's word (Luke 17:14) and the appropriate response to God's goodness (Luke 17:15-18). The curing of the paralytic let down through the roof tied explicitly into teaching Jesus' authority to forgive our sins (Matt. 9:2-6). The healing of the woman with the hemorrhage highlights the impotence of human remedies (Mark 5:26), underscores the necessity of faith in coming to God (Mark 5:28) and shows that sincere faith unfailingly gets God's attention (vv. 30-32).

Christ's stilling of the storm dramatically revealed His omnipotent and sovereign control over the natural elements and external circumstances. But Mark's inclusion of one tiny, often overlooked detail (4:36b) underscores with subtle beauty the truth of 1 Corinthians 10:13 and 1 Peter 5:8 and 9. We are never alone in our experiences, nor are we the only ones who endure the fearful and threatening circumstances that we think are unique to us.

Why did Jesus walk on the water? He didn't have to, but that act teaches—more powerfully than any discourse or parable could have taught—the reality of His presence with us in, and His authority over, all circumstances (Mark 6:47, 48) and to reveal through Peter's experience that faith in and focus on Him is the key to our victory over seemingly impossible circumstances (Matt. 14:28-31).

The feedings of the multitudes display man's true condition (Mark 6:34), Christ's compassion for man's need (Mark 8:2, 3), our inability in

ourselves to meet man's need (Luke 9:13) and His exclusive all-sufficiency to meet those needs (John 6:5, 6). Even the seemingly unnecessary cursing of the fig tree provided a dual lesson—to illustrate divine judgment on hypocrisy (Matt. 21:1-19) and to teach that our faith can access God's omnipotence (Mark 11:20-24).

Recorded Miracles of Christ (in chronological order)

No.	Type	Miracle	Place	Matt.	Mark	Luke	John
1	N	Water to wine	Cana				2
2	H	Healing of nobleman's son	Capernaum				4
3	N	Draught of fish	Sea of Galilee	4	1	5	
4	*E	Demoniac in synagogue	Capernaum		1	4	
5	*H	Healing Peter's mother-in-law	Capernaum	8	1	4	
6	H	Cleansing of leper	Galilee	8	1	5	
7	H	Healing of paralytic	Capernaum	9	1	5	
8	*H	Healing of cripple at pool	Jerusalem				5
9	*H	Healing of man's withered hand	Galilee	12	3	6	
10	H	Healing of centurion's servant	Capernaum	8		7	
11	R	Raising of widow's son	Nain			7	
12	N	Stilling of storm	Sea of Galilee	8	4	8	
13	E	Demoniac of Gadara	Gadara	8	5	8	
14	H	Healing of woman with hemorrhage	Capernaum	9	5	8	
15	R	Raising of Jairus's daughter	Capernaum	9	5	8	
16	H	Healing of two blind men	Capernaum	9			
17	E	Casting out of dumb spirit	Capernaum	9			
18	N	Feeding of 5,000	Near Bethsaida	14	6	9	6
19	N	Walking on water	Sea of Galilee	14	6		6
20	E	Exorcism of woman's daughter	Phoenicia	15	7		
21	H	Deaf man with speech impediment	Decapolis	15	7		
22	N	Feeding of 4,000	Decapolis	15	7		
23	H	Healing of blind man	Bethsaida		8		
24	E	Healing of epileptic boy	Mount Hermon	17	9	9	
25	N	Money in fish's mouth	Capernaum	17			
26	*H	Healing of man born blind	Jerusalem				9
27	E	Exorcism of blind and dumb spirit	Galilee	12			
28	*H	Healing of deformed woman	Perea			13	
29	*H	Healing of man with dropsy	Perea			14	
30	R	Raising of Lazarus	Bethany				11
31	H	Cleansing of ten lepers	Samaria			17	
32	H	Healing of blind Bartimaeus	Jericho	20	10	18	
33	N	Cursing of fig tree	Jerusalem	21	11		
34	H	Healing of Malchus's ear	Jerusalem			22	
35	N	Draught of fish	Sea of Galilee				21

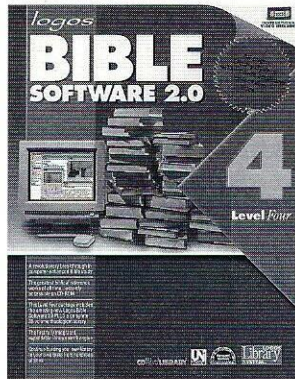
Notes:

- One miracle is recorded *only* by Mark (23).
- Five miracles are recorded *only* by Luke (11, 28, 29, 31, 34).
- Six miracles are recorded *only* by John (1, 2, 8, 26, 30, 35).
- One miracle is recorded by **all** four Gospels (18).

The realm of the visible world includes substances (1, 18, 22), nature (3, 12, 19, 25, 33, 35) and disease (all the healings). The realm of the invisible world includes demons (the exorcisms), death (the resurrections) and sin (7).

Key:

- H = Healing (17 total)
- N = Nature miracle (9 total)
- E = Exorcism (6 total)
- R = Resurrection (3 total)
- * = sabbath miracle (7 total)



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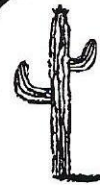
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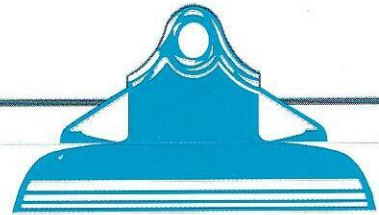
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