

May the God  
who gives  
endurance and  
encouragement  
give you  
a spirit of unity  
among yourselves  
as you follow  
Christ Jesus,  
so that with  
one heart and mouth  
you may glorify  
the God and Father  
of our  
Lord Jesus Christ.

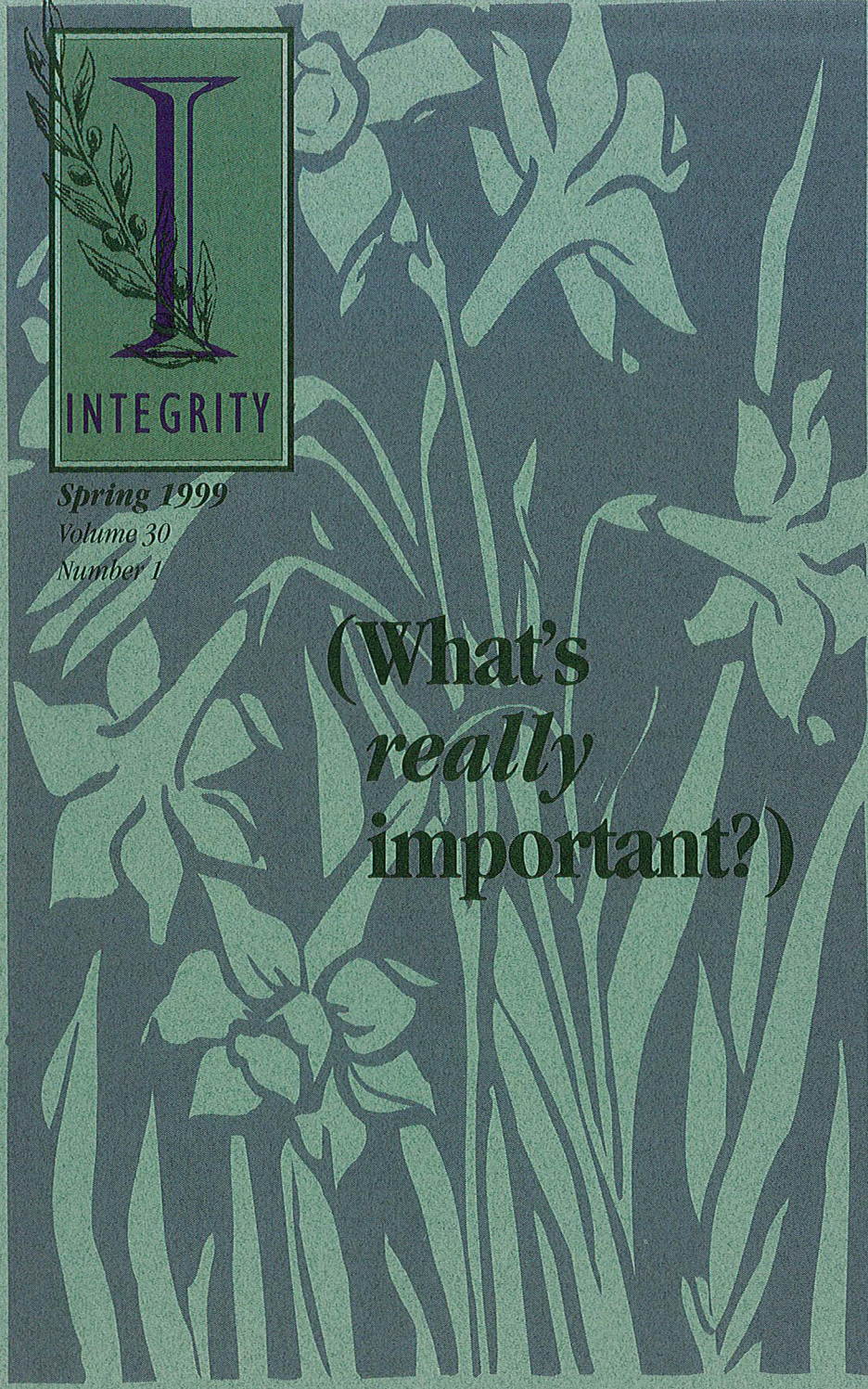
—Romans 15:5-6



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*Spring 1999*  
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**(What's  
*really*  
important?)**



Spring 1999  
Vol. 30, Number 1

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*Integrity is a quarterly journal dedicated to stimulating personal and public thought, prayer, and discussion about living the Christian life. Its roots are in Restoration Movement Christianity, encompassing Churches of Christ, Churches of Christ/Christian Churches, and the Disciples of Christ, but Integrity strives for unity among all Christians. Published by a non-profit corporation, Integrity is intended to be a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers. These believers, united in faith but divergent in opinions, seek to accurately reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as He is one. Accordingly, it should not be assumed that the views expressed by individual authors necessarily represent the opinions of either the editors or of the Board as a whole.*

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## Basic Christian doctrines: What's worth believing?

In a day and time when basics are being sought and re-evaluated in most disciplines, the Christian faith is no different. What is it about my faith that really is worth believing? Do the Christian doctrines I adhere to make all that much difference in how I live and how others perceive me?

In his widely acclaimed new book, *The Things that Matter Most*, Cal Thomas makes a strong case for our nation to return to the basic beliefs about God and integrity if we are ever to address seriously the crime that plagues our cities. Basic Christian beliefs and morality are the threads woven into the ethical landscape of our nation's past.

More importantly, what if we were to write a book, *The Things that Matter Most in Christ*? What would we highlight? What would we hold under intense scrutiny so that something of substance could be championed and passed on to our children? I sincerely believe that there are some basic Christian doctrines that are worth believing and that truly matter.

Charles Gerkin has poignantly highlighted two characteristics of our modern culture that are finding interesting expression in our faith communities. He maintains that both

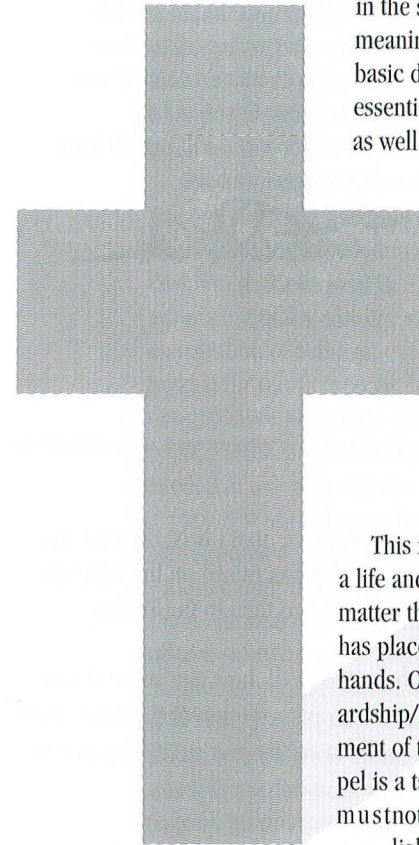
**confusion** and **fragmentation** aptly describe where we are in modern culture (*Prophetic Pastoral Practice: A Christian Vision of Life Together*, page 22ff; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991). Is it a coincidence that we see both characteristics in the church today?

There is **confusion** about the basic Christian faith and standards of ethics and morality. There is confusion with regard to our heritage and identity. There is confusion as to our mission and message in a sinful, dying world. This lack of a theological center is proving to be our downfall.

There is also **fragmentation**. Being outgrowths of confusion, suspicion and intolerance have contributed to this fragmentation. Special interests and narrow-mindedness have had a stranglehold on the life of believers who want to discover the joy of being a Christian. Such fragmentation is frightening because the old ways of doing things are disappearing. New ideas and new methodologies are sweeping aside the old, archaic ways of seeing and responding to the world. Such fragmentation is proof positive that the time is ripe for a re-examination of basic Christian doctrines and beliefs that transcend culture, time, and religious traditions.

Even though the word "doctrine" carries such a negative connotation with many Christians, I believe that the apostle Paul can help us rescue this word in its most significant setting. In 1 Corinthians 15, the basic doctrine or teaching that occupied a place of priority with him was the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was pivotal to the Christian faith. This was essential in the proclamation of the gospel. This

was necessary in the search for meaning. This basic doctrine is essential today, as well.



This is literally a life and death matter that God has placed in our hands. Our stewardship/management of the gospel is a task we must not take

lightly. Our God will hold us accountable regarding our faithfulness to this task. The basic Christian message can only be proclaimed, lived and shared when

we have a theology deeply rooted in the personhood of God.

The church today is tottering on the brink of disaster because of religious banality. An insipid faith expressed in trite language and worn-out forms has relegated us to irrelevance and triviality. God forbid that we not be fresh, alive, and invigorating with our presentation of the basic doctrines of the faith!

The culture at large cares nothing for theological battles and infighting within fellowship ranks. A larger, more crucial battle is being waged for morality and the hearts of individuals. If Satan can keep us focused on minutiae to the neglect of larger battles, he knows he can win the war. We no longer have the luxury of "cabin fever" with our Christian faith.

Christianity is fast becoming a minority religion in our own country. This minority religion has felt the full force of spiritual warfare. I call upon every reader of *Integrity* to ask the following question:

### What difference does my faith make in how I live?

This question forces us to focus on what we have worth passing on to the next generation. None of us wants to pass on some of the sectarian garbage we have been forced to live with. Admittedly, it did stink!

It did make us ashamed to be claiming we were Christians! And we certainly did not feel the presence of God and his Holy Spirit blessing any of our exclusive claims on ministry.

But we must now ask God for boldness in living and proclaiming the life-giving message of the risen Christ.

For the Lenten season this year, I made a commitment to reading two classic works on the resurrection as well as the gospel narratives and 1 Corinthians 15. These two books are *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, by Kirsopp Lake. (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), and *The Resurrection of Christ*, by A. Michael Ramsey. (Philadelphia, PA: the Westminster Press, 1946).

Have you examined the foundations of your faith lately?  
What is worth passing on?  
What is worth living for and believing?

### *Selections from 1 Corinthians 15*

► For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. . . .

► But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. . . .

► But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . .

► Thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

In this issue, our writers examine some of these basic doctrines, including the Lord's Supper and the resurrection of Jesus. Elmer Prout delves further into this issue of "What's worth believing?" as he talks about the all-too-common error in Churches of Christ: condemning the speck in the eye of "denominations," while failing to remove the plank from our own. And we're so pleased to hear again from our own Diane Kilmer as she discusses the reality of the Spirit's working in our lives. Many other writers share their thoughts about certain critical aspects of our Christian faith.

We know you will benefit from this issue as we have.



Curtis McClane  
Editor-in-Chief



## The still center of the storm

Diane G. H. Kilmer

It was a dark and stormy night. . .

We were newlyweds, Bruce and I, driving in the middle of the night "straight through" to Abilene, Texas, from Michigan after our honeymoon, pulling all of our new "worldly possessions" in a small U-haul trailer attached to the car Bruce's folks had given us.

I strained to see the road ahead through a watery, blurred windshield. Bruce slept soundly next to me. The dashboard clock said 3 a.m. And the adrenaline rush that came with the exhilaration of being on our own, headed for our first home, had drained away. My eyelids were becoming too heavy to keep open—I needed to pull over and sleep.

No sight of civilization for hours. My rain-dulled headlights showed a wide shoulder of road just ahead, a slight rise with overgrown bushes that offered safety from the "flood." In the blinding rain, I parked on the rise, turned off the engine, and expected to fall right to sleep. But instead, in the darkness, I felt an urgent nagging inside me to back the car off of the rise—trailer and all.

I obeyed the urge without thinking. I was too tired to think of how irrational it was. I turned the key, reversed the gear, rolled straight back a

foot or two; probably fell asleep within seconds of shutting the engine off.

About an hour later, a sudden, thunderous BOOM! startled us awake. In the downpour the continuous roar rolling just inches in front of our car materialized into a passing train speeding along its track.

My obedience to the urgent feeling had saved us.

### **A Helper to be with you forever. . .**

I didn't know it then, but today, thirty years later, I believe that that pressing thought to move the car came from the Holy Spirit, warning me of danger. Of course, I can't prove it and we can come up with a dozen or so other possible explanations—all equally unprovable. But over the last two decades, I have learned to pay attention to such inner feelings and thoughts. More often than not, these urgings come from a Voice who tells me the truth, comforts me, gives me direction, and reminds me of what I've already learned so that I can stay on track toward spiritual safety and maturity. I have experienced that this Helper—unseen and unknown by "the world"—behaves exactly as Jesus had promised to his worried disciples the night before he died.

**“. . .the Spirit of truth, who comes from the Father, will testify on my behalf.”**

One of my favorite ways to meditate on Scripture in recent years is to imagine myself right into the Bible scene, often prayerfully asking God questions that come to my mind. One day I decided to really enter into Luke's story of the woman suffering from hemorrhages (Luke 8:43-48) in this meditative way. Praying a quick request for the Holy Spirit to lead me and to teach me, I began to imagine what it might have been like to stand near this woman in the crowd. I imagined how the hot, desert air might have felt that day, how the dust might have tasted dry and gritty in my mouth. I imagined the smells of perspiring people, fragrant oils, and animal droppings. I thought that there would be lots of noise—voices in the crowd, children whimpering, and a few moans from those sick ones who were hoping to be healed.

I imagined the woman and I tried to feel her anxiety, her sense of low self-esteem, and her desire to be completely unobtrusive in the crowd. Her vaginal flow had likely kept her from getting married, or, if married, from having normal marital relations (wouldn't her husband be considered impure if he "touched" her?), from having children, from enjoying the social status ascribed those who were mothers in that culture. She had "spent all she had on physicians," with all the indignities, discouragement, and poverty that statement implied. Anyone in this crowd

surrounding Jesus who knew this woman knew that she belonged at the bottom of the community's spiritual, social, and economic scales.

In my mind I imagined the bending body as the woman's hand strained forward to touch the edge of Jesus' clothing. And when she did it, I felt like I was the only one who had seen her succeed. And I imagined her face—amazed joy spread all over it. She could go home well! I felt joy for her.

So when Jesus turned around and asked, "Who touched me?" I felt perturbed at him. She could have slipped away, and rejoiced privately over a very personal ailment. "Why, Jesus? Why did you press her to reveal her situation in front of the whole crowd? Sometimes you told people not to tell anyone about their healing except the priest. Why did you embarrass this poor woman?" I prayed as I looked at the Scripture before me. In answer, these words came immediately into my mind: "Because he wanted relationship with her. And because he wanted her to be completely restored—not just physically, but her spiritual status and social status, too."

These thoughts made sense and rang true. The young Rabbi had called her "daughter" and had declared in front of everyone how her faith in God had been honored by God—thus raising her spiritual and social status in the eyes of that Jewish community. And wasn't it just like Jesus to want to personally connect with her, just as he did with each person who came to him? It

was not his way to perform mass healings with a wave of his arm over a wounded crowd. Jesus pursued personal engagement with people, and he knew exactly what each person needed to strengthen his or her faith—whether it be a few words of affirmation, a loving touch, or some tangible paste of mud medicine from God. The explanation moved me toward gratefulness. I thanked Jesus for healing the woman as he had, and for loving us all so perfectly.

I believed that the thoughts that came to my mind after I had prayed "Why?" came from the Voice of the Spirit who abides in me (John 14:17). How could I be sure? For one reason, the explanation bore fruit in me (more love for Christ). Also, the words passed one of Jesus' own

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### **Jesus pursued personal engagement with people, and he knew exactly what each person needed to strengthen his or her faith . . .**

tests: the Spirit had "testified on Jesus' behalf" (John 15:26). The testimony enhanced my understanding of the Scripture and was consistent with other scriptural examples of what Jesus was like, yet the testimony was not new revelation. The Voice glorified Jesus, took what was Jesus' and declared it to me, as Jesus had promised in John 16:14.

All of our thoughts can be tested to determine their source.

**"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."**

Two years ago during the quiet of prayer, this sentence came into my mind: "It is time to take care of your anger." Recognizing the truth, and acknowledging my exhaustion at keeping the lid closed on the mental box stuffed with anger over years of hurt and injustices, I made an appointment to see a Christian counselor. But as the appointment approached, I began to feel extremely fearful and dreaded opening my Pandora's box, which would be necessary in order for my heart to move toward true forgiveness and the much-hoped-for personal healing and freedom.

One summer morning, before the counseling began, I took my usual early morning walk up our country road to enjoy the scenery and to pray. But as I returned within about a football field's distance from my house, a huge, unleashed dog appeared up ahead, a stranger to this neighborhood, jumping and barking. I froze.

Since childhood I've been irrationally afraid of big dogs. There was no way I could walk home the way I came, so I turned around and began knocking on the doors of the three or four farmhouses scattered along our stretch of dirt road, hoping to telephone my husband to come and rescue me. No one was home to answer their doors. I considered walking all the way around the country block to

arrive at my property from the other side of the dog, but that four mile stretch would take too long, and I had to get to work.

With drooping head and sinking heart, I turned around and began walking toward the huge dog. Re-signed to certain mangling, fear gripped me; my heart raced; my hands grew clammy, despite the warm summer sun. As I steadily approached the dog, I talked to Jesus. I had a sense that he was right there with me, reassuring me that he would not leave my side, “no matter what.” As I drew near the object of my fear, the dog suddenly sat down and stayed there. He noted my passing him on the opposite side of the road with a mere “woof.” He didn’t tear into my flesh, or bark viciously in my face, or even follow me. I entered the safety of my own yard with immense relief, thinking: “The dog did not eat me.” (You dog lovers knew this already, didn’t you?)

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**Of course, I must “test” everything that I think might be from God, by checking: Is it consistent with what God has already revealed in Scripture? What do trusted Christian friends think about it? Does it bear fruit?**

As I approached the front porch, thanking God for taking care of me, the thought occurred to me that I might have just experienced one of those “living parables” that God arranges for people sometimes to teach them a spiritual truth. So I

asked God if that was what it was all about, and the answer came into my head immediately: “Yes, the dog did not eat you and neither will the counseling sessions consume you. I will always be at your side, and you will come out all right.” The dog experience and God’s faithfulness in spite of my fears became a point of strengthening for me in the months ahead as I dared to examine my emotional wounds in the presence of Christ and the human counselor.

**“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.”**

As is evident from my illustrations, I interpret certain “nudgings,” insights into Scripture, and certain thoughts that surface in response to my prayerful questions, as evidence of the companionship of the Holy Spirit. Paying attention to these internal movements (as they can be described) has become a way of life for me. Of course, I must “test” everything that I think might be from God, by checking: Is it consistent with what God has already revealed in Scripture? What do trusted Christian friends think about it? Does it bear fruit? Reflecting upon these internal movements and testing what I notice have become necessary skills in order to “live by the Spirit” in this way. I must discern what is from God or from me or from the Enemy (who cannot live in the same body where God’s Spirit dwells, but who can whisper into my ear from the outside.)

All three of my personal illustrations—the “nudge” to move our car to safety, the deeper understanding of the Bible story, and the emotional strength I received after the dog experience—could be explained away as coincidence, my own imagination and intelligence, or natural causes. But if I dismiss my “supernatural” explanations, then I am left with less satisfactory answers to these questions and others:

- What does it mean to be “led by the Spirit of God?” (Romans 8:14) —How did Jesus intend for the presence of the Holy Spirit (living in us and among us) to help us not feel abandoned, like orphans? (John 14:15-18)
- Why did Jesus think it would be more to his followers’ advantage to enjoy the companionship of the Spirit forever than the companionship of Christ himself in human form?
- Does the Spirit of Truth guide us into all truth through Scripture only? If the Spirit of God’s movement is not limited to the written page, in what other ways might the Spirit lead us? or be our teacher? or empower us? (Romans 8:11)
- Were the Scriptures intended to point us to relationship with God? Was the purpose of the written Scriptures meant to replace the kind of ongoing, current relationship with God the disciples enjoyed in the early church?
- Is it possible that the Spirit of God still speaks into the mind of Christ’s followers today as God spoke to the prophet Samuel?

- Should these words of Jesus be taken literally today? “He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. . . and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers. . . My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me” (from John 10).
- Is it possible that the following passages have something to do with listening to the Spirit of God within us today? I Corinthians 2:6-16. Isaiah 6:9-10. I John 4.

Each believer must sort these questions out for herself or himself. But two decades ago I asked myself, “What if it’s true? What if the Spirit of God really is trying to break through today and speak to me? What are the consequences of ignoring the voice of God?”

I decided to accept Jesus’ invitation to believers offered in Revelation 3:20:


Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

I opened the doors to my mind and heart and invited Jesus in. I soon began taking small steps on the path of this grand adventure of being led by the Spirit of God, and the experiment has become a way of life for me. I continue to cultivate a listening ear and an obedient heart to the calm, quiet Voice. As a result, I’ve often experienced a sense of nearness

to God, a very personal sense of "God with us," which provides me an undergirding security, no matter what my circumstances. I think Jesus and his beloved John discuss this kind of fellowship with the Divinity in these verses:

Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them (John 14:23); We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you

also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that your joy may be complete (1 John 1:3, 4).

If you haven't done so already, you might want to consider asking God yourself if God has something more in mind for you regarding living your daily life in the presence of the Trinity. I encourage you not to settle for less. 

*Diane G. H. Kilmer co-edited Integrity journal with her husband, Bruce, for 11 years and continues to serve as an editorial advisor. She is occupied as a freelance writer for publications and businesses in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.*



## MEDITATION

# The death and resurrection of Jesus: Meanings and implications for my life

Terry Ferguson

*"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." - (1 Cor. 13:13)*

Time and again, especially when I am in a reflective mood, I pick up Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*<sup>1</sup> and read through various sections of this magnificent work. I always come away delighted, humbled, and desirous to read more of his works. But, to my shame, other things always seem to push out my desire to read his other works. There seems to be so much to

do, and there are so many other things to read. But recently I returned again to his writings and found, in my particular copy, a poem that he had written from the prison-cell of his Nazi jailers. This poem, "Who am I?" speaks well of my own struggles—and also, perhaps, of yours—and it becomes a good starting point for the thoughts that I would like to share with you.

### Who Am I?

Who am I? They often tell me  
I stepped from my cell's confinement  
calmly, cheerfully, firmly,  
like a Squire from his country house.

Who am I? They often tell me  
I used to speak to my warders  
freely and friendly and clearly,  
as though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me  
I bore the days of misfortune  
equably, smilingly, proudly,  
like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really that which other men  
tell of?

Or am I only what I myself know of  
myself?

Restless and longing and sick, like a  
bird in a cage,  
struggling for breath, as though  
hands were compressing my throat,  
yearning for colours, for flowers, for  
the voices of birds,  
thirsting for words of kindness, for  
neighbourliness,  
tossing in expectation of great events,  
powerlessly trembling for friends at  
an infinite distance,  
weary and empty at praying, at think-  
ing, at making,  
faint, and ready to say farewell to it  
all.

Who am I? This or the Other?

Am I one person to-day and  
tomorrow another?

Am I both at once? A hypocrite before  
others,  
and before myself a contemptible  
woebegone weakling?

Or is something within me still like a  
beaten army  
fleeing in disorder from victory  
already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these  
lonely questions of mine.  
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God,  
I am thine!<sup>2</sup>

In this life, we often struggle, even as Christians, even the most mature in the faith, with who we are. Who am I? How can I be certain of the reality of some of the most important features of this life? Those important features being not wealth or status, not power or prestige, not even success or health. Rather, I am thinking of things like faith, hope, and love. The death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ helps me to realize that the most fundamental of life's weighty concerns are real; they are not just illusions of the imaginative and fanciful longings of human optimism. They are, of all things, most real.

### The Reality of Faith

The first of these realities is faith. I have placed faith first, because, to me, it is the starting point of all knowledge. Faith is the foundation of all ultimate issues and questions. In our modern, scientific world we have somehow gotten the boneheaded notion that faith is not a part of the real world and is only something religious folk ignorantly hold.

Some time ago I was having coffee with a church member. He introduced me to a friend who happened to drop into the coffee shop a few minutes later for a cup of coffee.

Upon hearing that I was a minister the friend proudly, almost arrogantly stated, "Oh, that God and faith stuff is not for me, I am a scientist."

Now, I am usually a little slow in my replies to such seemingly astute declarations—my mind just doesn't work at genius level all the time (hardly ever, if you want the truth). But a few days later I had my reply. So when I saw the man again, I asked him, in my most cleverly

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**One of the implications of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the emphasis of this fact: that life, here and now, is a life lived ultimately by faith.**

thought-out, philosophical inquiry, "What scientifically verifiable theory ever stated that faith is not a part of the real world?" He looked at me, pondered my question, scratched his head and as he was about to speak, I put out my hand to shake his and said, "Welcome to faith, my friend!"

The Hebrew writer, in Chapter eleven, verse one, tells us that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith has to do with accepting certain statements as true. Faith is a deep commitment to truth that calls us to respond in such a way even though we cannot demonstrate or fully warrant that belief when we are asked. Faith is an integral and necessary part of all human knowing and thinking. It is the unavoidable and necessary component of all human knowledge.

Faith, in our world today, often gets a bad rap. There is the often held assumption that personal beliefs and commitments must be set aside so as not to unduly influence or blind us to the world "out there," as if the world "out there" is somehow more real and certain than what we hold by faith. Faith is not a blind leap into the abyss of irrationality; rather, it is a carefully considered and reasoned judgment based on the certainty that some things are true in life, regardless of the yearnings of postmoderns to do away with truth. Faith is quite simply something by which we all live.

One of the implications of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the emphasis of this fact: that life, here and now, is a life lived ultimately by faith. As Paul notes we do indeed "walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5.7). One implication of the death, and specifically the resurrection, of Christ is that our faith is not in vain. Paul indicates that the resurrection emphasizes that my faith, your faith, is not ultimately faith in faith, but rather it is faith in a living, breathing reality (1 Cor. 15.14-17). Thus faith is real.

**The Reality of Hope**

A second fundamental implication of the resurrection is that hope is real. We are living in a world in which hope is seemingly all but gone. We are living in a time of great despair that is often deeply hidden and covered over. Jimmy Long, in his book *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation*, says of the current younger

generation, Generation X, "they have a virtual-reality hope having little if anything to do with reality . . . they have resigned themselves to despair in the face of human misery."<sup>3</sup>

Theologian Jurgen Moltmann states, "Living without hope is no longer living. Hell is hopelessness and it is not for nothing that at the entrance to Dante's hell there stands the words: 'Abandon hope, all you who enter here.'"<sup>4</sup> Few, if any, can live in this world without hope.

In our desire to focus on this world, the things of this world and the accumulation of this world's things, we have lost the hope that presents itself to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thomas Merton, in *No Man Is An Island*, writes, "Nothing created is of any ultimate use without hope. To place your trust in visible things is to live in despair."<sup>5</sup>

It is not just Generation X who has lost its hope; we too, sometimes on a daily basis, struggle with finding or keeping our hope. We lose hope in our jobs, our churches, our friends, our pastors, and perhaps our spouses and families. Sometimes we struggle with keeping hope in a world that is drowning in cynicism, nihilism and materialism.

Many people today are like the disciples on the Friday and Saturday after Jesus' death. They did not understand or they lost track of what God had done in history and in their lives. Where there should have been hope, there was only despair. Where there should have been faith in God, there was only doubt in God and in

themselves (Luke 24.13-24). But like the disciples whose despair was lifted on Sunday when they discovered that Jesus had resurrected, we too can know that hope is real.

Peter betrayed Jesus, the one person who had cared most for him and when Jesus died on the cross, it was the death of all of Peter's hopes up to that moment. He knew only bitter sorrow for his own denials of Jesus. The dawn could not bring hope; with the crowing of the rooster he heard the echo of his curses against Jesus. Yet Peter went on to find hope in Jesus, who restored him after the resurrection. There is real hope in our world and the resurrection of Jesus reminds us of that daily. Interestingly, Peter writes, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1.3).

**The Reality of Love**

The third of these fundamental realities, that the death and resurrection of Jesus emphasizes, is love. In the fourth chapter of John's first letter, he tells us that the very nature of the triune God is self-giving love, "God is love." To say, "God is love" implies that all his activity is loving activity. If he creates, if he rules, if he judges he does so in love. This love has been made known to us supremely in the cross of Jesus, as John tells us in his gospel, chapter three, verse sixteen. From the very essence of God's being this activity of sacrificial love springs forth.

The great Swiss theologian Karl



Barth was asked a question by one of his students, "Professor Barth, you have written dozens of great books, and many of us think you are the greatest theologian in the world. Of all your many ideas, what is the most

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**Jesus loved because he was a loving person, not because he found attractive qualities in those he loved.**

profound thought you have ever had?' Without a second's hesitation, the great theologian replied, 'Jesus loves me.'" 6

And this is not just love for those who are most deserving of it, for the good and righteous; it is love for the undeserving, it is love for the unloving and unlovely. Paul states, "But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5.8).

For Jesus, love depends on the nature of the lover rather than that of the beloved. Jesus loved because he was a loving person, not because he found attractive qualities in those he loved. The love of God is the fundamental reality. The love of God makes the greatest possible difference to everything. When the love of those around us falls cold and we really begin to wonder if love is real, if it can ever be real, we only need look to the death and resurrection of Jesus to know that indeed, love is real. God demonstrated his love for us by making it known through the cross and by verifying it by the resur-

rection. In knowing this and realizing this we can also love others. God's love is an objective reality that makes a real difference.

**The Reality of Grace**

In the apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter thirteen we read of the three that remain: faith, hope and love. As I have sought to demonstrate above, the death and resurrection of Jesus fully emphasizes the reality of these three. This is why we need to hear the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus, sometimes on a daily basis, because we live in a world that seems so faithless, hopeless and loveless. But there is one more reality that the cross and resurrection implies, which over the years of my life has become the central focus of who I am. It, too, needs to be heard. Don Henley, a former singer for the band, "The Eagles," reminds us in his song about forgiveness that we live in such a graceless age. Grace has become a by-word of a lost era, a term of derision and weakness. But, it is something we all need to hear and we all need to experience—both in giving and getting.

My personal story, perhaps your personal story, is the story of God's grace in our lives, only fully known and only fully realized because of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Oh, the limitless reality of grace, the forgiveness that is freely offered to everyone on the basis of no works at all! Each day I come more and more to realize that the finding of one's true self, this drive that seems to permeate every human being, can

only be found in the decision to accept God's mercy and grace. The cross is overflowing with drenching grace. No matter how much I draw from it, the river of divine grace is always full of water, and it seems that I find myself going back again and again, incessantly, to draw from its infinite depths. The death and resurrection of Jesus implies, and we all must recognize, that our whole life is finally and forever out of our hands. If we are ever to live again, it will be because the entirety of our life has been the gift of some gracious order. It is as Paul records in 2 Cor. 12.9, as God replied to his prayer of deliverance from this dogged messenger of Satan, "My grace is sufficient for you." Oh, Thank God for his marvelous grace, wonderful grace, sufficient grace.

For me and my life, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means that faith, hope, love and grace are realities of this world. We are reminded of this in a passage from God's Word, one that has become the center piece of my life.

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**For me and my life, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means that faith, hope, love and grace are realities of this world.**

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were

dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." (Eph. 2.4-9). ☪

**Endnotes**

- 1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1979).
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.
- 3 Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy For Reaching The Postmodern Generation*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 115.
- 4 Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), p. 32.
- 5 Thomas Merton, *No Man Is An Island*, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1983), p. 16.
- 6 Peter Kreeft, *The God Who Loves You*, (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1988), p. 22.

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## The importance of the resurrection

Edward Fudge

**T**he resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to all that pertains to Christian teaching and living. It is the foundation of our faith, the basis of our hope, and the inspiration of our love.

### The Christian faith is resurrection-focused.

Jesus' resurrection occupies a place at the core of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Without it, the entire Christian system crumbles like a foundationless house hit by a tornado or hurricane. That God raised Jesus from the dead was the core and the climax of the apostolic message, which swept through the Roman world during the first century (Acts 2:22-36; 3:13-15; 4:8-12, 32-33; 5:19-20, 29-32; 7:55-56; 10:38-43; 13:26-39; 17:1-3, 18, 30-32; 23:6; 24:14-15; 25:19; 26:6-8, 22-23). We can never drop or omit this proclamation—that Jesus rose again—and call ourselves Christians in any biblical sense (1 Cor. 15:14-19).

The resurrection gives meaning to the cross. The cross is meaningless without Christ's resurrection. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, nothing flows from Calvary but the memory of a tragedy. Jesus always linked his death and his resurrection—the latter

gives meaning to the former (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; Mk. 9:30-32; 10:33-34; John 10:17-21).

The resurrection authenticates Jesus' identity. The resurrection shows Jesus to be the Servant Messiah of Old Testament prophecy (Psalms 2, 16, 22; Isaiah 53; Acts 13:26ff). It certifies that Jesus is the judge whom God has ordained for the end of the world (Acts 17:30-31). It proves Jesus to be the conqueror over death (Rev. 1:18). His resurrection demonstrates that Jesus is our great high priest (Rom. 8:33). By it, God declares Jesus to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). No wonder, when asked by a skeptic how he might start a new world religion, Winston Churchill responded, "To begin, you might have yourself killed and then rise from the dead!"

### Our past conversion was resurrection-centered.

For 2,000 years, the apostolic proclamation has always declared that Jesus is risen (2 Tim. 2:8). Our repentance responds to this glorious announcement (Acts 17:30-31). By faith, we entrust ourselves to the God who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 10:9-10). In baptism, we affirm that Jesus was raised, even as we portray that saving event (Col.

2:12; Rom. 6:3-4).

### Our present life is resurrection-grounded.

Because Jesus died and rose for us, we are to think in terms of him whether we live or die. Therefore, Paul tells us, we cannot think we live or die to ourselves—for we do both with reference to the risen Christ (Rom. 14:7-9).

Persecution cannot daunt us, because our God has shown himself a God who raises the dead. He can and will deliver us from adversaries now—even from death itself—when it serves the best interests of his kingdom and his glory. In the end, he will deliver all his people from death eternally by eternal life (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

Because Jesus died and rose again, he is rightly Lord over the dead and the living. We must therefore seek to please him at all times. The resurrection of Jesus is the determining basis for all Christian morality and ethics (2 Cor. 5:14-17).

Jesus' resurrection shapes our goals and self-perception as his disciples. Our ambitions must not be couched in terms of human power or impressive strength, but in terms of personal weakness. In this way, God's own power can be exhibited in us, just as it was demonstrated in Jesus himself. God's greatest display of power called for the hero to be murdered by his enemies! This illustrates the contrariness of God's wisdom and ways to ours, and it reminds us not to put trust or confidence in any human power or plans. We follow a Jesus who set his face

like flint to walk into death—and who trusted God completely to bring him out of death again (2 Cor. 13:4).

### Our future is resurrection-based.

Our hope that we will live beyond the grave is not based on pagan notions concerning the immortality of the soul, but on the historical reality that Jesus has overcome death. Jesus has brought immortality and life to light (2 Tim. 1:10). Because God raised Jesus our representative, we know he will also raise us. Knowing this, we cannot remain silent. With Paul we confess, "I believed, therefore I spoke" (2 Cor. 4:13-14). Because we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we have confidence that he will bring our dead loved ones alive with him when he returns. Therefore, we sorrow not as those without resurrection hope (1 Thess. 4:13-14).

The risen, glorified Jesus comes in Revelation to comfort and encourage his suffering people. "I was dead and am alive forevermore!" he says. The hand that holds the seven stars also reaches down to touch every humble believer who needs special strength and grace (Rev. 1:16-18).


Like the believers at ancient Smyrna, our present life and our future hope are resurrection-centered. Without Jesus' resurrection, there is nothing. But because Jesus did rise from the dead, we may purpose to serve him totally, holding back nothing and risking all. If we lose our lives for his sake, we will find life indeed.

Let us welcome each day, as mil-

lions of Christians welcome each Easter, with the words: "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" Hallelujah!

### An inspired blessing for each believer.

"Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great

Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21). 

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## PERSPECTIVES

### Fresh cups and stale bread

*Stephen Eckstein*

In the Old Testament book of Exodus, the observance of the first Passover is recorded in chapter 12. It signified life for Israel but death for Egypt's firstborn.

In subsequent generations, Israel was to remember the inaugural Passover on the 14th day of the first month (Nisan, our March-April) until the 21st day of the month by eating only unleavened bread, a symbol of a totally purified life as *free* people, no longer a nation of *slaves*. Unfortunately, Israel was often remiss in celebrating the feast throughout its history, with a few exceptions (II Chronicles 30:13-37; 35:1-19). After the Jews who returned from captivity had completed the temple in 516 BC, they celebrated the Passover (Ezra 6:19-22).

Another Old Testament practice recorded in Leviticus 24:5-9 is the

table of showbread located in the Holy Place of the tabernacle. On a gold-covered table, two rows of six *fresh* loaves (cakes) were arranged to be eaten by Aaron and his sons each Sabbath. Then *fresh* loaves were placed on the table until they were eaten the next Sabbath. This ritual was to be observed throughout their generations. It was not a mere formality enjoined by the Lord on Israel but a constant reminder of the presence of Jehovah, the giver of all life and of all the grain crops from which the loaves were baked. He was always *caring graciously* for a rebellious and disobedient people, because Israel was His instrument through whom the Messiah, the *true bread*, would come (John 6:32).

During the intertestamental era (about 400 BC to the time of Christ) traditions were introduced to

embellish the Passover and other feasts. When Jesus came, three unleavened cakes (loaves) and four cups of wine had been added to the Passover feast and were used by the Savior for His own purposes. In the Talmud (Pesachim), it is stated, "On the eve of the Passover, it is not lawful for a person to eat anything from the time of afternoon prayer till after dusk. Even the meanest in Israel shall not eat until they have arranged themselves in proper order at ease around a table, nor shall a person have less than four cups of wine." The Orach Chayim said, "Whoever has not got wine transgresses a command of the rabbis for they have said that there shall be no diminution from the four cups. And it is necessary to keep the command of the wise men. He is not to depend upon the bread for if he fulfill the command concerning one cup, he has not fulfilled that respecting the three. Therefore, let him sell what he has and furnish the expense until he procure the wine."

The four cups signified:

- (1) the cup of thanksgiving,
- (2) deliverance or salvation,
- (3) blessing, and
- (4) choosing.

From varied statements by Jesus about traditions recorded in the gospels, it seems evident that all temple ordinances and feasts had degenerated into mere form. Later, the new life and power of the apostles and disciples demonstrated in Solomon's portico had exerted a salutary influence on a great company of priests who became aware of the futility of the temple rites and became obedient

to the faith (Acts 6:7). The day before his crucifixion, Jesus instituted what is known as the Lord's Supper during the Passover. He used the traditional practice: the middle cake of the three, which represented the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was then broken. The rabbis claimed that the middle cake was the Mam-re—the Word or Son of God. This comes from stray remarks in the Talmud by rabbis about Elohim, a Hebrew word translated God. It is plural. Part was hidden under a pillow, the other part was placed back on the tray to be eaten. Jesus took the middle cake of the three loaves on table which represented the Son of God (a possible reference to hidden manna—Revelation 2:17): he gave thanks, broke it and distributed some to each of the disciples.

The eleven ate *fresh bread* at this momentous celebration. Jesus, the *true passover* (I Corinthians 5:6-7), was symbolizing the imminent breaking of his flesh. Jesus then took the third cup of the four cups, the cup of blessing (I Corinthians 10:16). It clearly pointed out the *life of Jesus* (the life is in the blood, Leviticus 17:11) given to redeem lost sinful man.

The next day, Jesus was scourged with unnumbered contusions on his back from which his blood flowed. Then a crown of thorns was crushed upon his head, breaking more flesh with an additional loss of blood. As he trod toward Golgotha, the rugged cross tore into his already mangled shoulder. When the soldiers drove the nails through his hands and feet,

more blood issued from his lacerated flesh. Finally, blood poured forth from a spear wound in his side to climax the hideous crucifixion. The number of breaks (wounds) in his flesh from which the blood of the Savior flowed is known only to God!

### The church today

In my lifetime as a Christian for 60 years, I have observed the ritual of the Lord's Supper in many congregations over the nation. With few exceptions, the format is the same. Comments and prayers are the *mechanics* repeated over and over, devoid of the *dynamics* that should be connected with its observance. Note the following:

(1) It should not be a mournful time of turning down the lights to give a false sense of piety. On the contrary, Jesus has already won the great victory at the cross. The tomb is empty; he ascended to the right hand

**Each commemoration is always the closest to his coming. Each one may be the last. Thus, each celebration is more significant than the previous one.**

of God on High. He is supreme *monarch* of all the *universe*. He is the *living high priest, triumphant* over sin, death, and Satan! He is *coming again* to resurrect all the saints who have fallen asleep, change the living in the twinkling of an eye, and take all home to glory (I Corinthians 15:50-51). Each commemoration is always the closest to his coming. Each one

may be the last. Thus, *each celebration is more significant than the previous one.*


(2) In too many congregations, the broken pieces of bread are passed week after week until only crumbs remain. How many times have you taken a stale piece of matzos or picked out a crumb to say, "I have participated"? Why not have fresh-baked bread cut in one inch squares? Then let each saint take a piece of *fresh bread* and appreciate anew the *freshness of the living bread*, our *victorious* Lord Jesus Christ, seated at the right hand of our majestic God on high!

(3) Most congregations serve grape juice, though a few have wine. Grape juice left over would ferment and become wine; therefore, all cups, if glass, are emptied; or if plastic, are thrown away. *Fresh cups* are prepared for the next celebration. Why have *stale bread* and *fresh cups*?

Is the Lord's Supper a mere mechanical ritual? It should always be a fresh, new, invigorating, spiritually uplifting experience! The Lord's Supper has no meaning *unless* Jesus comes again! It is not like the Jewish Passover, always looking back into history, the Exodus.

To many Christians, the Lord's Supper is only looking back to the cross, while neglecting to look onward, upward, *joyfully*, triumphantly, expectantly—looking for him (Colossians 3:1A) until he comes! These three words in I Corinthians 11:26 make all the difference in the world. *Unless he comes*, all is in vain—all thousands of the Lord's Suppers.

Oh, God! help us to look forward to a living Savior, a glorious Lord, a reigning King. As we observe His supper, we show forth our Lord's death for sin and we depict our *fresh death* to sin. Then we leave the assembly to

live a *fresh, renewed life in Christ* before a *stale, perishing world* desperate for the freshness that only those who live in the living Christ, clothed in his righteousness may bring. Amen! 

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### A CLOSER LOOK

## The Lord's Supper

Lloyd A. Boyll

**W**hat I believe about the Lord's Supper should be based on the scriptures. It is of first importance that we observe it in faith and obedience because we have the words and actions of our Lord recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22: 17-20; I Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-26).

During the experience of over sixty years in the church, I have seen this observance conducted in a multitude of circumstances and manners, both good and bad. It is generally true that our people make the sermon the focal point of worship and too often, the communion seems peripheral. However, as time has gone by, I think there has been change for the better. More congregations spend more time and give greater place and attention to this part of the worship.

Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." He did not want us to forget. *Remembering* is the primary

purpose of the Lord's Supper. Forgetfulness is a common frailty. In the midst of all the hurry and worry of life we sometimes forget even the most important ideas, tasks and persons in our lives. From Jesus's words, "... as often as you drink this cup . . .", he expresses indirectly, that regularity is important. He makes it clear, however, that it is he who is not to be forgotten. Nothing should obscure the face of Jesus! Those who preside and speak should avoid remarks that cause the mind to stray from the essence or the observance.

Our Lord highlighted one great event. Paul reminds us, "For whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Cor. 11: 26) A proper observance will preach, herald, or proclaim that Jesus died for our sins. That sacrificial death involved his fleshly body and his crimson blood.

## Compelling blood

Most of us deplore the violence and bloodshed which is horribly present in our fallen society. We avoid blood or faint at the sight of it. We so dislike pain and suffering that we spend millions of dollars to alleviate them. We prosecute and send to

ingratitude is to be forever driven from us. He emphasizes that it is for me, for the remission of my sins, that he gave his life. He died for me, and I am forever gratefully obligated to let him live his life in me.

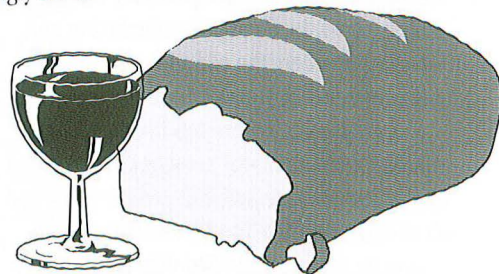
**. . . Jesus does not want the ugly scenes of cruelty, when his body was flogged until the blood flowed from the lacerations, to be blotted from our minds. He wants to prevent our turning our eyes aside from the reality of the flow of his life's blood. This is our communion, or participation, in his body and blood.**

prison those who perpetrate injustice and assault upon innocent persons.

But Jesus does not want the ugly scenes of cruelty, when his body was flogged until the blood flowed from the lacerations, to be blotted from our minds. He wants to prevent our turning our eyes aside from the reality of the flow of his life's blood. *This* is our communion, or participation, in his body and blood. All of this is for a reason, related to our relationship with him. It is a background for self-examination, for serious introspection, commitment, understanding and appreciation. That ugly sin of

*O Love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in Thee:  
I give Thee back the life I owe.  
That in Thine ocean depths,  
Its flow may richer, fuller be.  
—George Matheson and Albert L. Peace*

Many true and related things may be brought to our attention in observing the Lord's Supper, and we grant that his death and resurrection are inextricably bound to one another. However, the primary focus in scripture as it relates to the Lord's Supper, is the death of Jesus and its deeper meaning to us who have made him our Lord and Savior. ❧



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## Suddenly one morning (An Easter narrative)

By Charles R. Swindoll

Word Publishing, Nashville, TN, 1998, 94pp. ISBN 0-8499-13566-X

Reviewed by Henrietta C. Palmer

**T**hrough the eyes of a shopkeeper on the main street of Jerusalem, we become a part of the most gripping event in all of history. The year is 30 AD and the story begins in a little shop on Bethphage Avenue. Because it's the Jewish Passover time, the city is bustling with people and the shopkeeper is pleased. More people bring more business!

Hearing the shouts of the crowd, the shopkeeper steps outside to see what's causing the commotion. People are waving palm branches and acting like a king is coming. All he sees is a young donkey with an ordinary-looking Jewish man on his back. The man nods at him as he passes by and the shopkeeper is mesmerized by his piercing, probing eyes. They are full of acceptance and compassion, and they seem to inflame his very soul!

The donkey stumbles on and a woman who has been sick for many years reaches out and touches the Nazarene, the one they call the prophet. He gently places his hand on her cheek and the woman is instantly healed! What kind of power does he have? The shopkeeper later hears that the prophet was so upset when he found the moneychangers cheating the people in the temple that he drove

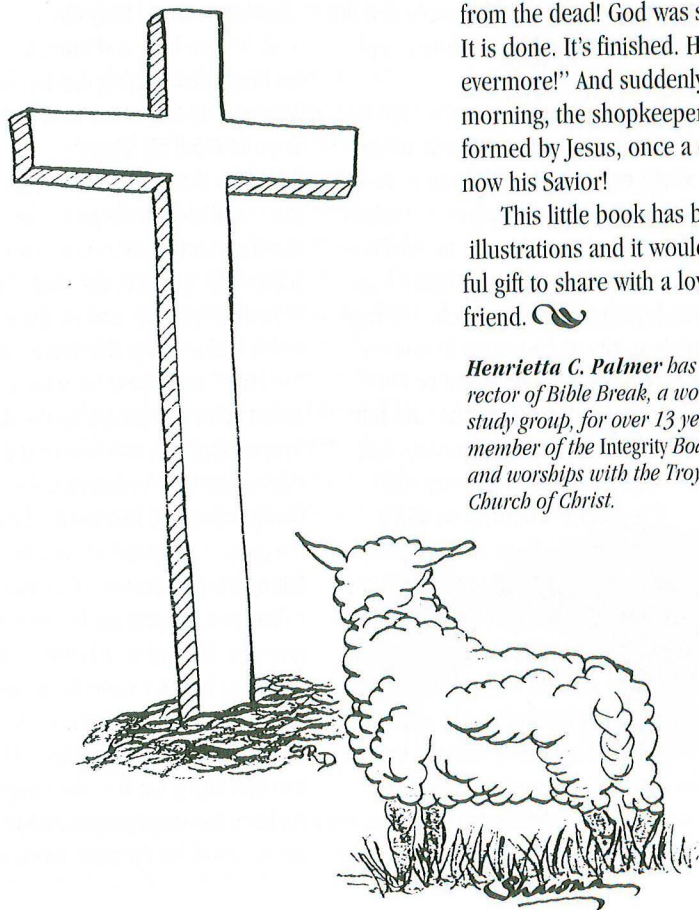
them out with a leather whip. The shopkeeper is surprised because the prophet didn't look like the type to get into a scuffle. Or maybe he did if it meant standing for right and truth.

Over the next few days the shopkeeper hears many stories of how the prophet took the Holy City by storm with his teaching and miracles. Later he hears that the prophet has been betrayed by one of his followers and is on trial for his life.

When the shopkeeper hears about the crucifixion at Golgotha, he closes his shop and makes his way up the hill called "place of the skull." He sees three crosses and on the middle cross under a sign that reads "King of the Jews" is the prophet who had gazed at him so kindly. As the shopkeeper agonizes over the brutality being inflicted, he is astounded to see compassion and love on the face of the prophet. Instead of cursing and hating his persecutors, this man called Jesus is praying for their forgiveness. His last words are, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." The shopkeeper remembers the words of the prophet Isaiah. "He was brought like a lamb to the slaughter. He bore the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors."


Sinking down on his knees, the shopkeeper raises both arms up to the cross and whispers, "I believe. I believe this man is the promised Messiah. Who else could have fulfilled the ancient prophecies the way he does?" He is aroused from his thoughts when the ground begins to shake. An earthquake splits huge rocks on the hillside. He hears a hardened soldier, with tears in his eyes, say, "This was the Son of God." It was as if he admitted, "We've killed an innocent man."

Lost in his thoughts, the shopkeeper stumbles down the hillside to his home. The next day he hears sto-



ries of how the thick curtain between the holy and holiest of all in the temple had been ripped from top to bottom. And strangest of all, it happened at the exact moment Jesus died and the sun went black! He also hears that the crucified Jesus has been placed in a tomb, and officials have sealed the tomb with a huge stone and posted guards to keep away trouble-makers.

Before dawn of the first day of the week, another earthquake shakes the floor and rattles the dishes in the shopkeeper's home. He later hears that the body has disappeared from the tomb. But the shopkeeper realizes the body hasn't disappeared. Jesus was raised from the dead! God was saying, "Amen. It is done. It's finished. He is alive forevermore!" And suddenly one spring morning, the shopkeeper is transformed by Jesus, once a carpenter, but now his Savior!

This little book has beautiful illustrations and it would be a wonderful gift to share with a loved one or friend. 

*Henrietta C. Palmer has been the director of Bible Break, a women's Bible study group, for over 13 years. She is a member of the Integrity Board of Directors and worships with the Troy, MI, Church of Christ.*



## 1 Kings 13 . . . Reluctantly

Elmer Prout

**E**arly Monday morning I Kings 13 came into my mind. Something (or was it Someone?) seemed to insist that I preach on the passage next Sunday. I checked the notes my wife keeps in the margins of her Bible. For at least sixteen years I had avoided the passage as a sermon text. I was sure it had been another twenty-five since I had taken I Kings 13 as a text. I was very reluctant to break that silence.

It wasn't that I had never used the passage as a text or a major illustration. I had. In fact, the memory of those earlier sermons was the source of my present reluctance. In those lessons the old prophet's lie and the younger prophet's disobedience illustrated "the deadly effects of the denominational world's errors." My attacks had been directed at *them* and the false doctrines with which they were leading innocent people into

disobedience. At that time it never occurred to me that I or anyone in Churches of Christ might speak anything other than the absolute truth of God's will.

But as the years of preaching added up I began to realize that we in the Churches of Christ are every bit as human as the people we refer to as "our denominational friends." I found that I could no longer use I Kings 13 to illustrate "their errors." At the same time, however, I was unwilling to apply the story to us. Avoidance of the passage seemed to be the best course.

But it was still Monday. The voice was still insistent. And I did need to prepare sermons for Sunday. I resisted but the pressure to use the story persisted.

Finally, reluctantly, I said to myself, "Well, it won't hurt me to take a look. Maybe the narrative isn't as ugly as your application of it was." I opened the Bible and read the chapter. It hadn't changed. The old prophet was still a liar. The younger prophet lay dead, punished by death for believing a lie. I started to close the Bible. But just before I did, the name *Jeroboam* caught my attention. In those other sermons I had focused so much on the prophets that I had overlooked the king. "Maybe I was in

**. . . as the years of preaching added up, I began to realize that we in the Churches of Christ are every bit as human as the people we refer to as "our denominational friends." I found that I could no longer use I Kings 13 to illustrate "their errors."**

such a hurry to talk about false teachers that I overlooked something else. Is there a broader message in this section?" Reluctantly, I admitted to myself that there might be. Some of the results of my "second look" follow.

### **The Bible is an untamed and untamable book.**

The God who speaks to us through the Bible does not ask, "Now, kiddies, what kind of story would you like most of all to hear next?" In the Bible God comes to us in the same terms God expressed to Moses: "I AM WHO I AM . . . I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE." (Exodus 3:14) In the Bible we are confronted by God in God's sovereign freedom. In other words, the Bible is untamed because God is untamable.

King Jeroboam ran head-on into this reality. To prevent his subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship, Jeroboam set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan. "He said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt'" (I Kings 12:28). With that word the king was absolutely certain that everything was settled according to his royal will. Tamed.

But chapter 13 opens with these lines, "By the word of the Lord a man of God came . . . He cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord: 'O altar, altar! This is what the Lord says . . . At that very moment the king's hand shriveled up and the altar split apart.'" The ancient writer adds "according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the Lord."

King Jeroboam could not control God or the word God sends. Neither can I—although I certainly tried to by ignoring I Kings 13 for so many years. It is true that many of the things that God says in the Bible are not what we want to hear. There are whole sections of the Scripture that I would gladly bowdlerize. When that mood comes over me I need to return to I Kings 13 to watch again as Jeroboam's human word is overturned by the untamed God as his word is spoken.

### **The Bible is not the same as my perceived experience of it.**

I was very reluctant even to open my Bible to I Kings 13 on Monday. I felt that I knew what the chapter said. I was sure that there was no possible way for me to use the story in a sermon. The reason for my reluctance had nothing to do with what the Bible actually says. It had everything to do with my perception of the passage and how it could be applied.

In the early years of my preaching I had used (misused, actually), I Kings 13 as a weapon of attack. At that time I saw it as a perfect illustration of how "the false teachers in the denominations" did their teaching. Just like the old prophet, I thundered, these false prophets lie deliberately and sent innocent people on the road to hell.

As years passed and my vision of other believers cleared, I came to see that I was mistaken to apply I Kings 13 in that manner. Unfortunately I then decided that if the passage can't be used as I had been using it I couldn't teach from it at all.

I had confused the word of God with my perceived experience of it. The fact is of course, that God's word is *God's word*. It is not Prout's word — not even in the moments when my perception is at its clearest and my applications are least prejudiced. God has "more light yet to shine forth from his word" — more than I have seen or can even dream of seeing.

Monday's voice was urging, "Take another look. There are a number of things you have missed." That, of course, is the case with every story, every line in the Bible. When Monday's voice speaks it is our opportunity to "take and read." Again and again and again.

### **The Bible will carry us out of bondage to human definitions into God's liberty.**

King Jeroboam had decided how things would be in his kingdom (see I Kings 12). In his mind the royal word was the final word. But in fact "The king's power, surrounded by official palaver and all the emblems of power, is in fact nothing." (Walter Brueggemann, *Knox Preaching Guides, I Kings*, p.65)

If it was important for Jeroboam's subjects to be liberated from bondage to the king's words, it is equally vital for us to be liberated from the enslaving words of our century.

This text requires us to think quite differently about historical reality. We are so easily seduced into thinking the 'rulers of this age' are important. Against such a domesticated view, this narrative simply asserts (without argument) that

the word of God has its own way. Whatever else might be done in preaching from this text, the foundational point is that the real action is not where it seems to be." (Walter Brueggemann, loc. cit.)

A reading of I Kings 12 and 13 calls us to evaluate our thinking about all systems of human government — including that of the land in which we live. Far from leading us into cozy attacks on "our denominational friends" this passage challenges us to look at our own unexamined nationalism.

We are all children of a system which has formed us and to which we give allegiance. This text raises questions about every system of meaning and power. Things are not settled and sure, and anyone who counts too heavily on the apparent power of the ordained order of social life will be surprised if not dismayed. And when the system of meaning and power violates God's will, the very system itself will, soon or late, wither and fade (see Isa. 40:7-8), even like the hand of the king. (Walter Brueggemann, loc. cit.)

### **Our awareness of the demands of the word of the Lord can be dulled by comfortable invitations.**


The deadly lie spoken by the old man and the death of the younger man is the most difficult part of this

story for me. It does not seem fair. Why wasn't the old liar killed by the lion? Protest rises in my heart. But that protest can easily prevent me from receiving the lesson I need most: "There are ways of accommodation and ways of faithfulness." (Walter Brueggemann, op cit, p.68)

The call to faithfulness: that is a message I need over and over. Obedience in times of clear-cut risk and confrontation makes the adrenaline flow. When the issues are clear and our duty is plain a response of quick

courage comes quite easily. But when the challenge has been met, comfortable religion can beguile and deceive us.

"The real point is a simple one: obey God's will. Do not quit on God's will because of royal protest. Do not turn back because of counter advice. Do not be taken in by the generous or the hospitable, nor by those who seem to have a deeper authority." (Walter Brueggemann, loc. cit.)

Thus it was that Monday's reluctance led to Sunday's sermon. 

*Elmer Prout, a frequent contributor to Integrity, has been a minister and missionary in Restoration Movement churches for many years. He currently ministers to the church in Graton, California.*



## UNITY SIGHTINGS

### God, Hurricane Mitch, and the laundry

Noreen Bryant

*Scrub, scrub, fold, wring. Scrub, scrub, rinse, squeeeeeze. Unfurl with a snap. Pin it to the rope and let it sterilize in the hot, hot sun.*

*"Perdóneme!"*

*"Perdóneme, por favor!" I squawked in my second-grader Spanish over the chatter, the tinny radio, and the washing. (In Honduras, they don't wash things the way we do. Even here, at the hotel in the capital city of Tegucigalpa, the maids wash all of the sheets—dozens a day—by hand in a cement basin called a pila.) "Perdóneme!" I said again. The maids turned to me, curious—their mouths full of clothespins, their arms full of wet, white sheets.*

It was the end of our church's annual week-long mission trip to Catacamas, a small town in Honduras where we have many friends and interests. Whenever a group of us visits, we try to help where we can—

building playground equipment, renovating an orphanage, and even holding a Vacation Bible School. This year, we had refurbished a medical clinic and dug foundations for new homes for victims of Hurricane Mitch.

### The group

This was our biggest group ever: 30 people. Many of us had been to Honduras before; in fact, some were on their sixth annual trip. For many, this was the first time. We were a diverse group, too: while most of us hailed from the Detroit area, we had some from Lansing, one from Tennessee, and one from Canada. Some of us are more liberal in the way we express our faith; some are more conservative. In age, we had everyone from high school students to a retired Biology professor from Michigan State.

This trip was particularly special to me because my two favorite nurses—my mother, Faith Ball, and my sister, Yvette (Yvie) Roy, were coming along on the trip. Both are Catholic, while I attend a Church of Christ. I was inexpressibly happy to have these two segments of my life—my biological family and my church family—at last be able to meet.

Despite our diversity, we all had one thing in common by Sunday: we were *exhausted*—physically, emotionally, mentally. But *spiritually!* . . . well, I'll get to that in a minute.

### Nothing was as we expected

*What* a week we had had. Nothing was as we expected. For one thing, we didn't *know* what to expect. Sporadic e-mails with missionaries in the area and news reports could not give us a clear picture of what devastation Hurricane Mitch had wrought. We were worried. How were our friends? Were the kids we sponsor in the school there okay? Did they have enough food? Was the drinking water

safe? What difference could we possibly make in a week?

### Things begin to look ugly

Our worries verged on anxiety as the trip began. Lots of our suitcases (full of medicines for the clinic) were overweight, and we feverishly repacked, shifting loads where we could, as they checked us in at 6:00 am at Detroit Metro airport. We weren't able to board until the plane was about to depart, and we had to hurl ourselves through the airport to get on the packed jet. An edgy stewardess wrested carry-on luggage out of our hands and sent it, unlabeled, down a chute to the checked-bag area, claiming there was no room for it.

The plane took off, and we took a head count. Seven of us were missing. Seven, including the four main leaders of the group: Pete and Janine Brazle, our group leaders, and Dan and Karen Sorensen, our missions leaders (the ones with all the money for our trip!).

As we changed planes in Houston, there was evidence of neither the confiscated carry-ons nor our seven comrades. Gulping, we boarded the plane to Tegucigalpa. Arriving in the ramshackle Central American airport, we were still without leaders or money, and, to top it off, without a dozen pieces of checked luggage! A couple of us were without any changes of clothes; a lot of medicine was still up in the sky somewhere, as well. Things were getting awfully frustrating.



And, of course, that's where God steps in. Upon arrival in Honduras, we got a vivid wake-up call. In the face of entire neighborhoods wiped out by the hurricane; in the face of little street urchins sniffing glue; in the face of a mother surrounded by kids, holding her hands out for money—how could we *possibly* stay frustrated with our little problems?

### **God shows us he's in charge**

All week long, God kept reminding us to keep things in perspective as he gently helped us through the logistics. We made it to the town of Catacamas without a problem. God used our lack of "official" leaders to allow new leaders a chance to blossom. Our seven missing teammates eventually rejoined us, exhausted but safe, Monday evening. Even the luggage eventually arrived. God had plenty of satisfying and helpful work for us to do (not the work we had *planned* on doing, but by now we were getting the hang of this "perspective" thing). God also blessed us with deepened relationships with many missionaries, individuals, and families in Honduras. We learned so much about faith and about what *really* matters from these people, who had lost homes, jobs, and entire farms, but who still said, "Praise God, my family is alive!"

### **The God of relationships**

And do you know what else God did? I can't begin to explain to you how he blessed us that week in our relationships with each other. Despite all the worry, aggravation, and frustration, *we all got along with each other*. Despite the emotional and

physical strain of the heat, the physical work, and the heart-wrenching poverty, he put his hands on our little group and blessed us beyond our fondest imaginings by causing us to connect with each other as we never had before. It was a glimpse into heaven!

Snapped words spoken in haste were quickly apologized for. Those who were strangers at the beginning of the week became friends. Folks we barely have time to say "hello" to on Sunday morning became confidantes. We could even joke good-naturedly and acceptingly about our differences. Each day we worked side-by-side in real Christian love—caring about each other, deferring to each other, cooperating. God's gentleness was evident all week as we related to each other.

For me, the time was especially precious. I could finally say to my Mom and sister, "See, Mom and Yvie? *Now* do you understand why I hang around these people? Aren't they *great*?" And, conversely, so many of my brothers and sisters from church spoke to me of how much they were growing to love my Mom and sister. During our worship times each evening, it became clear to us that, when we really focus on Jesus, different ways of worshiping become completely unimportant. The "problems" of different denominations were absolutely erased.

### **God's power**

God's power was abundantly evident, as well. One morning, we traveled down to the river's edge, where Hurricane Mitch had completely

eradicated a neighborhood. Shells of homes lay ripped in half. Partially-clothed, filthy-dirty kids ran behind our truck. We spoke with people dazedly sifting through the wreckage of their broken houses. All 30 of us *stood* on a massive tree sprawling across the riverbed. It had been completely uprooted by the force of the flood waters. But in the distance, on a lovely majestic mountain, a white cross presided over the scene. This monument, erected by the Hondurans decades ago, was an especially poignant reminder today of God's power and love, even in the face of disaster.

### **Immersed in God's presence**

I have never been so continually immersed in God's presence among a group of people as we were on this short trip to Honduras. All of us were mindful of this special connection we were experiencing. Each day, we stopped in the middle of pouring cement, digging holes, painting walls—to *pray*. We were all so conscious that week of God's presence in our midst, we were compelled to stop and sing to him, and listen for his voice, no matter what we were doing. And each evening, we had wonderful times of devotion, singing, and prayer.

It was hard to leave Catacamas at the end of the week. God was so much in evidence there. However, the culmination of the week's experience came, not in that small town where all our friends live, but in the chaotic, turbulent, faceless capital of Tegucigalpa on our way home.

### **Sunday**

We reached Tegucigalpa all

together, but on that final Sunday morning we faced yet another dilemma: how to get to church. Some of us were scheduled to board a plane for home. A few of us had gone to early Mass at the cathedral. Between the end of Mass and the impending flight, we knew we'd never make it to the local *Iglesia de Cristo* (Church of Christ) for the church service and still be on time for a few of us to catch the plane home. And, well, frankly, after the week we'd had, we did *not* want to split up. We all wanted to be together to worship God as a team, this one last time.

### **The roof**

Each year before we leave Honduras, we spend a night at the palatial (i.e., not too many bugs, and the water usually works) Hotel Granada in Tegucigalpa. The hotel has a large, flat roof with a wall around it where we meet on our last night for a final time of singing, prayer, and worship. The dark, deserted roof is the perfect place to see Tegucigalpa spread before us; we can imagine that God sees it this way, too.

It was onto this roof that I came Sunday morning to see if we could hold our own, private worship service there. It looked totally different! I opened the door to the roof and found it completely ablaze and aflutter with dozens upon dozens of blindingly white sheets, flapping gaily like flags unfurled in the hot Honduran sunshine.

My first thought was, "Oh, great. We *can't* come up here while they're doing all this laundry! What if we get it dirty or accidentally knock it

down? Talk about ugly Americans!" But then I thought I might as well ask. After all, there was no other place for us to go. I ducked around lines and lines of clean sheets, the wind tossing them in my face, entangling me in their folds. They were hot and already dry, and smelled of the no-nonsense clean of rough Honduran soap. I made my way over to the shaded corner where the pilas were, and where the maids were doing the daily wash.

It was there I inflicted my Spanish on them, and they then let me know it was okay for us to have our worship there; they were due for a break, anyway.

We found a spot on the roof relatively empty of sheets where the 30 of us could gather and we all sat down in a circle on the cement. We sat there, squinting in the bright sun, traffic noises far below us. We were surrounded by concentric rings: outermost, the sunshine; then the huge, purple mountains encircling the city (still showing scars from a lost battle with Hurricane Mitch); then the wall around the hotel roof. The innermost circle surrounding our nucleus of followers of Jesus was a pristine parade of bleached flags: Sunday's laundry.

### Scrubbed clean

We sat there and smiled at each other. The week's events had left us feeling scoured—inside and out. We were so tired. Most of us had done more physical labor and walked more miles in a week than we usually do in six months. Mentally and

emotionally, we were wrung out as we continued to try to process *where* God would have us fit into this scene: us prosperous, pampered Americans here in this world of natural disaster and aching need—where those who have so little had had even *that* ripped out of their hands by a hurricane.

So *emptied* we were, so *cleaned out*. But just as he had done continually all week, God once again filled us with joy and fellowship, and with the knowledge that he was right there, with us; the knowledge that, in every situation, *he* is in control.

We grinned at each other these grins of pure love and understanding. Then we sang, lifting our voices and hands to our inexpressibly gentle and good Father.

### Listening to God

We talked about Psalm 29, which talks about God and his power—so real to us that Sunday morning in the sunshine. Each time Mark read a phrase about the voice of God, we responded, a little louder each time, "Listen!"

We all thought about how God had made us listen that week—to him, and to each other. Newly-minted relationships were in evidence all over our group on that rooftop.

### Together at last

As for me, for the first time in years, I felt spiritually connected to Mom and Yvie (God, of course, had been working on this all week). After more than ten years of different beliefs, different customs, occasional

arguments—years of hurt feelings, raised eyebrows, and inadvertent slights—here we were, worshipping God *together*.

We sat together, Yvie and I, side by side. Mom and I met smiling eyes across the circle. Catholics, those from the Church of Christ, teenagers, retirees, doctors, grocery clerks, conservatives, liberals—each one of us was scrubbed to the point where we'd never be the same. We all were washed of our differences, of past hurts, of misunderstandings—washed as clean as those sheets by our powerful and gentle God.

### Unforgettable communion


Then came time for communion. During this special communion celebration, Jesus made me whole by his sacrifice in a way more real than any other time I've ever experienced.

This meal of remembrance of Jesus' perfect sacrifice—this meal where we can *taste* the glory of our God of relationships—experienced in the sterilizing sun amidst those per-

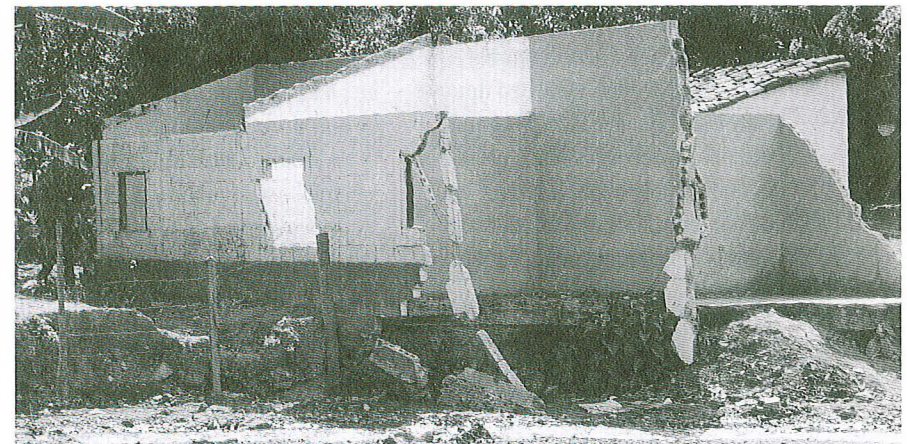
fectly symbolic white sheets, was the culmination of all God had done in Honduras that week. We passed a large tortilla (culturally appropriate unleavened bread!) around our circle and each broke off a piece.

The loaf came to me and I took an extra-large chunk. I turned to my sister, Yvie, and eyes brimming, broke the body of Jesus for her and for me. We shared it despite having shared so little of our faith in the past: with tears, hugging tightly, finally accepting, finally one in Jesus.

We were little girls again, warm in our father's arms, fresh from a good scrubbing. The gentle God of relationships had given us such a perfect gift!

We hugged there together, Yvie and I, on a rooftop in Tegucigalpa, surrounded by the day's clean laundry. 

*Noreen Bryant is the Managing Editor of Integrity.*



*The remains of a home in Catacamas, Honduras, after Hurricane Mitch.*



## Bending the Twig

Laquita M. Higgs

Here's one of my wishes for the year: that every adult in our country would read a hard-hitting article by David Grossman, "Are We Teaching Our Children to Kill?" (*Christianity Today*, August 10, 1998). Grossman, an expert in military psychology, happens to live in Jonesboro, Arkansas, where two boys have been charged with the March 24, 1998, shooting deaths of four girls and a teacher. Grossman was the lead trainer for the counselors and clergy at the school on the night after the terrible shooting.

In his article, Grossman attempts to look at the underlying causes for the "virus of violence," as he calls it. Though he admits that there are a number of factors involved, he points out that there is only one new variable present in each of the countries where violence has escalated dramatically in the last decades. That one variable is "media violence presented as entertainment for children," and he not only includes television and movies in that indictment, but also interactive video games.

Killing one's own kind is unnatural behavior, and our military has had to work hard to increase the killing rate among its soldiers in combat. It has had astonishing success: the killing

rate soared from 15 percent in World War II to 90 percent in the Vietnam War. The technique is called "brutalization and desensitization."

Grossman gives some details as to how the military goes about this because, in his view, we are doing the same thing to our children through violence in the media. Our soldiers have been conditioned to kill, but, Grossman charges, the media have taken conditioning a step further by teaching children to *like* it. Teachers report that some students now laugh during death scenes in films. Furthermore, video games teach the same lessons that the military teaches: point-and-shoot responses and the motor skills needed to hit a target. If a child has learned the lessons taught by the frequent playing of violent video games, he can kill the first time he picks up a gun, even though he may never before have held a gun in his hands. Included in the article is a helpful listing of the top ten nonviolent video games; developed by The Games Project, the list ranks games for their "social and play value and technical merit."

### What Christians can do

Grossman outlines several things that Christians can do to combat this poison in our society. Most of all, we

need to be salt and light in this world. In Grossman's words, "If we don't actively present our values, then the media will most assuredly inflict theirs on our children" (p. 39).

It's a disturbing article, but read it if you possibly can. If you don't have access to *Christianity Today*, you can get reprints by writing to:

CT Reprints  
Attn.: Paulette DePaul  
465 Gundersen Drive  
Carol Stream, IL 60188  
e-mail: PDePaul@aol.com.

Request "Trained to Kill; the cost is \$8 for 10 copies, which includes postage.

### Recommended reading

Grossman's warnings are much needed, but good parenting also requires positive encouragement and practical suggestions such as those found in *Raising Faithful Kids in a Fast-Paced World* (1995; Howard Publishing Co., West Monroe, LA 71291; \$11.99). The author, Paul Faulkner, holds the chair of Marriage and Family and is professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University.

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### . . . good communication with children starts by listening carefully to children when they are very young.

Over a period of four years, Faulkner and his wife, Gladys, conducted interviews of thirty families who were recommended to Faulkner as examples of strong families. The book was triggered by a question from an executive at Wal-Mart, who asked Faulkner if he had any material

"about getting ahead and taking your family with you." As a result, families whose fathers were CEOs and top professionals from all over the United States were interviewed. In a few of the families the mother also worked outside the home, but that required special strategies to maintain the strong family.

### Basic ingredients of strong families

Eight basic ingredients emerged from the interviews, with intentional, purposive parenting coming first. The parents knew what goals they wanted for their children, and they worked toward those goals with all diligence. All of the families had values which were rooted in a strong religious faith, and they had great perseverance in training their children in the same values. They did whatever was necessary to keep those children on track, sometimes at great inconvenience to themselves. They stressed that good communication with children started by listening carefully to the children when they were very young. The parents took their responsibilities seriously, but not themselves—they laughed a lot and often used humor in dealing with their children. Even though the families had plenty of money, they trained their children to work around the home. One daughter reported, "It really made me mad that some of my classmates thought I never had to work hard. I earned all my spending money." The parents creatively trained their children for independence and then let them go when the time came.

At first I occasionally felt that these were "superparents" who were far above us ordinary parents in ability, but soon I came to appreciate the many helpful hints and examples. The section entitled "Strategies That Work" was alone worth the price of the book; it included suggestions for training children for responsibility, for making decisions, and for resisting future temptations. Other helpful sections discussed discipline, establishing family traditions, lists of recommended books, and a group discussion guide.

**The section entitled "Strategies That Work" was alone worth the price of the book; it included suggestions for training children for responsibility, for making decisions, and for resisting future temptations**

Faulkner's own experience as a parent and an expert in family relations adds much to the book. He'll inspire you with the message from these families:

- 1) Define your values and prioritize!
- 2) Set goals and plan strategies
- 3) Make it happen! (p. 195).

It is too easy to just let the days slide by; we parents need to be reminded to persevere in the teaching of our children, for we are doing God's work. Read the book if possible; you'll be glad you did. Other Suggestions:

#### **Beginners Bible videos**

The Beginners Bible video series is an animated adaptation of drawings from the popular Beginners Bible, featuring the major children's stories. The basic outline of the stories remains true to the Bible, though details are added to fill out the stories and give life to the characters. The stories are fast-paced, with each video beginning with a theme song sung by Kathie Lee Gifford and including other original songs. "David and Goliath" is a particular favorite with our four-year-old Rachel, but "Daniel and the Lions' Den" is a close second. The producers do not suggest the age-

group for which the videos are suitable, but both preschool and elementary school-age children should enjoy them.

The thirteen videos, with each run-

**Your children will learn about praising and obeying God as they interact (that's a quiet word for jumping up and down) with the music and stories.**

ning approximately 30 minutes, are distributed by Word Kids! for Time/Life and are listed at \$12.99 each.

#### **Karyn Henley's new tapes**

Karyn Henley's new audio tape series, *Playsongs*, are frequently played at our house and in our car. The popular "Five Little Ladybugs" has been around for some time, but

Henley has added five other titles to the series, which is aimed at the two to five-year-old crowd. Our current favorites are "Kitchen Band Parade" and "Down by the Station." The background music is lively and varied with "catchy" tunes. Your children will learn about praising and obeying God as they interact (that's a quiet word for jumping up and down) with the music and stories. Some video tapes and a songbook are also available by calling 1-888-573-3953 (toll-free). The price for each: video, \$14.95; audio, \$5.95.

Share your parenting concerns, suggestions, and ideas. Write to Elton and me at 9 Adams Lane; Dearborn, Michigan 48120, or e-mail us at <Ehiggs@umich.edu>.

*Laquita and Elton Higgs, both graduates of Abilene Christian University, have generously offered time, talent, and spiritual direction to the Integrity ministry for more than 17 years. Both are occupied as professors at the University of Michigan, and as parents to four-year-old Rachel.*

*Says Laquita, "Alexander Pope, the 18th century English poet, said, 'Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.' Accordingly, we call this regular feature of parenting advice 'Bending the Twig.' All of us as Christian parents should be committed to a great deal of unashamed 'twig bending' for the Lord, and we need each other's help to do it."*

## "Are you still holding on to your Integrity?"

--Job 2:9

Job's wife couldn't believe his tenacity.

But with Job, holding on was a good thing.

**With you, my friend, it's not!**

Please pass on *Integrity* to others you think might benefit from it. Just have interested friends write—or e-mail us—(see addresses on the inside front cover) and we'll happily add them to our subscription list.

If you love your *Integrity*, share it with someone else!

**Let go of that *Integrity*.**

Pass it on!



Our "Hot Topic" for next issue looks ahead to that issue, where we will discuss how we can minister to our ministers. We'd like to hear from you about:

**How do we in Restoration Movement churches treat our paid ministers and their families?**

Please send us your thoughts—short or long, pro or con. We want to hear from you!

Send them to Kelly Sprague,

who can be reached at:

**integrity@mich.com**

or: Kelly Sprague, 5393 Crooks Road, Suite 44, Troy, MI 48098



**READERS' RESPONSE**

**Regarding creeds and Integrity  
Carson City, NV**

I have always appreciated the great work of *Integrity*. You have maintained the excellence and are taking it even further. I am so impressed at your first two issues. When you gave the "teaser" as to the subject matter of the current issue (creeds), I thought about what I would write if given a chance. In your editorial you said what I would have only a hundred times better! I'm glad that I did not make an attempt.

If indeed our creeds are the things we believe, it is interesting to me that I grew up also with a creed made up of things that we didn't believe. It, too, was quite binding. These are among the things in that creed. We don't believe:

- in creeds
- in instrumental music in worship
- in religious holidays
- that God still works
- in titles (except Brother)
- that anyone else is going to heaven
- in immorality (often defined by dancing, drinking, divorce, and "mixed bathing")
- in using any terms that "denominations" use
- that we are a denomination
- in missing any church services unless "providentially hindered"
- in joining efforts with other godly people in any cause
- in using the term "Christian" or "believer" to refer to anyone but us

- that religious leaders, other than our own, are sincere
- that two people can disagree on spiritual things and both be Christians

I am so thankful for the wonderful and invigorating winds of change from God's Spirit.

I am grateful for publications like *Integrity*, *Image*, and *Wineskins*, and thinkers like Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, Philip Morrison, Lynn Anderson, and you and your associates.

I'm fortunate to live within a day's drive of the Pepperdine Lectures and for the last 20 years I have been attending.

Truly, God is good!

Thanks for your great works for Him!

Grace. Peace. Love.

.∞/.

. II . Praise God!

/ \.

*Bruce Henderson*



**WITH LOVE FROM THE BOARD**

**D**id you know, dear reader, that we pray for you each time we meet together as a Board? We exist as a journal for one purpose, and one purpose only: to serve God by serving you. This ministry of reconciliation aspires to unite believers all across Christendom.

We hope to inspire you in your walk with God through all manner of articles and artwork. Please let us know if you have special requests, or ideas for topics to be discussed. You may e-mail our Editor-in-Chief, Curtis McClane, at **diakonos@gateway.net**, or our Managing Editor, Noreen Bryant, at **integrity@mich.com**. We're always anxious to hear from you!

With that in mind, we'd like to extend to you a warm and grateful thank you for your contributions and responses to our winter solicitation. As you know, we don't get paid for our ministry; the journal is funded entirely by your donations.

Once again we feel heartened and affirmed in our ministry by the hundreds of kind responses and donations you have sent to us.

Please be assured that we'll do everything in our power to be good stewards of your money, striving to bring you what *you'd* like to read about for the coming year.

To God be the glory!

With sincere thanks and the love of God,

*The Integrity Board*





We know you like to read as much as we do, and, since you read *Integrity*, you probably especially enjoy reading about issues concerning Christianity. Accordingly, we'd like to use this space to enrich your reading list. (Although, if it's like ours, your stack of "must-reads" is so high that it threatens to topple over, unread. And if you're like us, even this looming stack isn't enough: there's always more that we "must" read.)

**Hidden Manna: Faith and Story**

I was so excited to receive in the mail and new quarterly journal edited by Daniel C. Massey. The vision of this magazine is this: *Hidden Manna* is dedicated to the belief that a faith fed by stories is a faith that endures.

Stories strengthen faith. I read my new copy sent by the editor from cover to cover that evening, finally finishing around 1:00 a.m.! I want to encourage you as a faithful reader of *Integrity* to subscribe.

It is a must read!

- Contents for the first issue:
- "The Vision of Hidden Manna"
- "Can God, our God, be found?"
- By Lynn Mitchell
- "The Feet of Jesus"
- by Daniel Massey
- "King of the World"
- by Zoe Mullery
- "A Theology of Hope: A dialogue"
- "Barter, A Hasidic tale"
- "The Cinema d'Amour"
- by Albert Haley

*Hidden Manna* is \$15.00 per year for four quarterly issues.

Their e-mail address is:

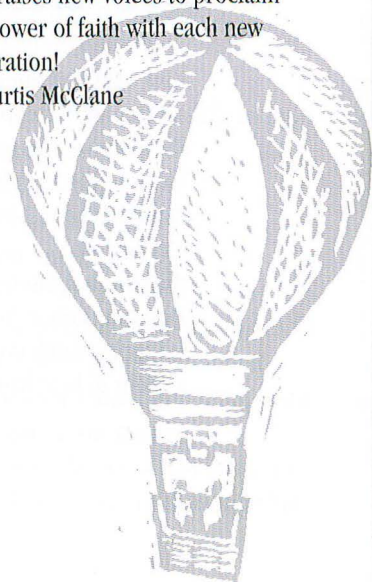
hiddenmanna@triquetra.org

Website:

http://www.triquetra.org

If you love stories of faith, you will be absolutely love-stricken with this new journal. Isn't it amazing how God raises new voices to proclaim the power of faith with each new generation!

—Curtis McClane



Spring 1999



Coming up in *Integrity*:  
An article *you* wrote?  
A poem from *your* heart?  
A drawing from *your* pen?  
Wisdom *you* have to share?

If you would like to submit materials for any of these upcoming issues, please do so! We are always interested in seeing manuscripts from new voices. You will find submission guidelines on the inside front cover.

*Summer 1999*

**Ministering to our ministers**

*Fall 1999*

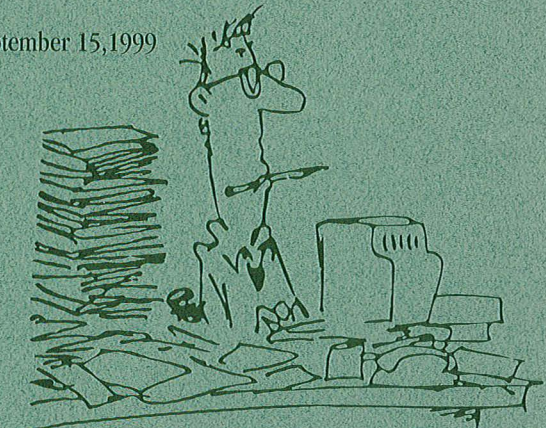
**Graceful living, graceful dying**

Submission deadline: May 20, 1999

*Winter 1999*

**The Richness of the Christian Faith: What I've Learned from Other Believers**

Submission deadline: September 15, 1999



Start typing!  
We're looking forward  
to hearing from you.