

# Integrity

4051 S. Lincoln Road  
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858

Nonprofit Organization  
**U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID**  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106  
Permit No. 189

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

May/June 1991  
Vol. 22, No. 3

# Integrity

INTEGRITY, a journal published bimonthly by an independent nonprofit corporation, 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 the Board as a whole.



Art by Ian Green, Waterford, Michigan

## Editorial: Dialogue

“Does God Really Love Me?” — Laquita M. Higgs

Forgiven, and Forgiving — Paul L. Watson

Wringing Hands — J. Bruce Kilmer

The Tall and the Short of It:  
A Rich Ruler and a Wealthy Tax Collector — Ken Hensley

Well-Wrought Woman — George Ewing

For Worse — Hoy Ledbetter

How Old Was Jacob When He Stole the Blessing? — Jerry Daniel

Intercepted Correspondence

Readers' Response

May/June 1991  
Vol. 22, No. 3

**Editors**

Diane G.H. Kilmer  
J. Bruce Kilmer

**Layout Editor**

Natalie Randall

**Integrity Address**

4051 S. Lincoln Road  
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

**Board of Directors**

Sidney R. Bonvallet  
Wayne A. Bonvallet  
Brant Lee Doty  
Elton D. Higgs  
Laquita M. Higgs  
Joseph F. Jones  
Diane G.H. Kilmer  
J. Bruce Kilmer  
Curtis Lloyd  
Foy Palmer  
Henrietta C. Palmer  
William Palmer  
Amos Ponder  
Karl W. Randall  
Natalie Randall  
Jan Van Horn  
John Van Horn

**Editorial Advisor**

Hoy Ledbetter

**Subscriptions**

are by written request.  
There is no subscription  
charge, but we depend on  
your contributions, which are  
tax deductible.

**Manuscripts**

written exclusively for  
INTEGRITY are  
welcomed.

**Back Issues**

Available from  
1269 Pickwick Place  
Flint, MI 48507

**Dialogue**

Dialogue is important for the growth of the church. Too often our studies are one-way — our *own* way or understanding of a doctrine or a passage of Scripture. How many of us, under the guise of “study,” have really tried to “convert” someone to the Church of Christ, instead of genuinely trying to learn from them, while sharing our own thoughts and opinions? For years, how many “Jule Miller Filmstrips” did I show, with little thought as to whether the person I was showing them to had something to teach me?

We must give each other room to be different, to grow, to come to our own conclusions. This does not mean that we have no definite opinions to share, or that any conclusion is all right so long as it is our own conclusion. But it does mean that we have to be good listeners, that we have to be open to change, and that we must dialogue.

We pray that *Integrity* may be a place where dialogue takes place. This does not mean that all of the articles will be neutral, or even that our editorials will be neutral. We have strong beliefs about many issues. Not too long ago we received a letter asking us why we were not more neutral regarding a certain issue, in this case, womens’ role in the church. My response was that I was not neutral regarding this issue. I believe it is important for the growth and maturity of the church that women be allowed to fully exercise the gifts God has given them. Though I am not neutral about this issue, and many other issues, we will print articles and letters concerning this issue and other issues with which we do not agree.

The March/April issue of *Integrity* contained two articles with very different opinions about making a certain view of abortion a test of fellowship. This issue continues the dialogue with letters from you.

We want you to be involved with us in this ministry of dialogue, of learning, and of growth in our relationships with each other and with God. Keep writing to us, and as you are able, keep sharing your ideas within your local fellowship.

This issue of *Integrity* contains several shorter articles which allows us to share a wide spectrum of thoughts. We hope it provides an opportunity for dialogue and growth for you.

J. Bruce Kilmer  
Co-editor

**“Does God Really Love Me?”**

LAQUITA M. HIGGS

“I find it hard to believe that God really loves me.” Connie is a Christian, but she feels unloved, even by God. Her life has fallen apart; a divorce and a husband who abused the children were bad enough, but then the terrible pain in her leg was finally diagnosed as muscular dystrophy. As she tried to deal with the crippling effects of the disease while tending to her two children, she became skeptical about God’s love. Even when she was able to secure a trailer house which could accommodate her new wheel chair, she was cautious about attributing any of the help to God. She believes in God, but she cannot believe that God loves her in a warm and personal way, that He cares about all these trials. “If He *really* cares,” she reasons, “why am I going through all this?”

On the other hand, there are Christians such as Judy, who says that she knows the sense of being enveloped in God’s love. Her marriage nearly ended in divorce, and she has known repeated troubles and heartaches, including at present a daughter whose life is threatened with bulimia, an abnormal gorging and disgorging of food which seems completely senseless. Yet, tears of thankfulness come to Judy’s eyes as she quietly speaks of the warmth of God’s loving care, of how she often feels God giving her “a big bear hug.”

How do we explain these different reactions to God? Does God really love Judy more than He loves Connie? Is the love which Judy feels an experience reserved for the deeply spiritual person, or can any Christian have it? Sometimes we have personal “hang-ups” which make it hard even for Christians to receive or give love; yet, there are some biblical principles which can teach us about this matter of knowing God’s love, even when it appears to be absent.

**The Bottom Line**

The “bottom line” is faith, the rational decision to trust and obey God in all circumstances. It is a faith that God’s Word is true when it says that God loves us, that He cares for us and will never forsake us. It is a faith that involves a constant seeking of God, even when He seems far away. It is a faith that gives Him all of ourselves, all of our will and all of our desires.

Faith and love are inextricably linked together; it is impossible to disentangle one from the other. Even on a human level we know this. Delilah, Samson’s paramour, chastised Samson when he wouldn’t reveal the secret of his strength. Three times she begged the secret from him, only to be teased with false answers. In exasperation, she blurted out, “How can you love me when you do not trust me?” (Judges 16:15).\* Do you suppose God has ever wanted to say the same to us?

Connie, mentioned above, is not alone in being unable to put faith in God’s love. The Israelites had the same problem, and before Moses died he reminded them of the effects of such a lack of faith:

“You grumbled in your tents; ‘It is because he hates us,’ you said, ‘that Yahweh brought us out of the land of Egypt to put us under the power of the Amorites and so destroy us. . .’ And I said to you: Do not take fright, do not be afraid of them. Yahweh your God goes in front of you and will be fighting on your side as you saw him fight for you in Egypt. In the wilderness, too, you saw him: how Yahweh carried you, as a man carried his child, all along the road you traveled on the way to this place. But for all this, you put no faith in Yahweh your God” (Deut. 1:27-33).



What great love God had for the Israelites, and what little faith his Israelites had in that love! It is a lesson for all of us: faith must be the foundation for experiencing the love of God. When we question God's love, it is not God's love which is lacking, it is our faith which is so weak that it cannot appropriate God's love. When we are angry with God, we implicitly accuse Him of a lack of love; we put the burden all on Him because we do not want to look at our own role in the matter.

The trusting part of our faith, then, puts us in the path of God's love. The next step is for us to cultivate our love for God through faith's other dimension, obedience. Obeying God is a conscious and purposeful decision, activated by our love for God. As John reminds us, "This is what loving God is — keeping his commandments" (I John 5:3). Turning our will toward God in obedience is an act of love toward Him, but such love cannot be embodied in a coldly sterile, automatic obedience. One of the strengths of the Restoration Movement has been its stress on obedience to God, but unfortunately that has too often become a matter of keeping law, rather than the re-making of the heart, which involves the giving of the emotions as well as the giving of the will. A preacher of the Church of Christ once confessed that he does not *feel* a love for God, though he would very much like to. He suspects that the Christian walk would be easier if only he could feel some emotion for God, but he has been conditioned to be wary of the dangers of emotion in one's relationship to God. How does one overcome emotional blocks to feeling those "bear hugs" that Judy talks about?

### Cultivating a Relationship with God

A personal relationship with God is going to be different for each Christian; in fact, that is one of the beauties of a relationship with God. Because we are all individuals, he relates to us in an individual fashion, so that each one of us can know that we are very special to Him. It doesn't matter that many others are special to Him, also, for we can be assured that He has

the capacity to love and care for each of us in a special way. Good parents are like that! We can first of all, therefore, accept and then take comfort in being a favored child of a loving father, who knows us intimately and doesn't shrink from embracing us — or from disciplining us when necessary.

Secondly, we can actively seek a closer personal relationship with Him, even one that we can emotionally *feel*. Though the relationship begins with a rational decision of faith, our continued seeking will deepen it. In the same way that human relationships take time and effort, we must try to know Him better and not just know *about* Him. We must open ourselves trustingly to Him, in complete submission confessing our sins and seeking purity of heart. We must practice thankfulness, rather than complaining, and in every situation we must look for evidence of God's love. There will be times when circumstances are dark and all our faith will be needed, but we know even then that God's love awaits us if we have the faith to look for it.

The initial question we raised had to do with whether we could feel that God really loves us. That seems to place the emphasis on something that God has to do to convince us that He loves us. However, God's love for us and our love for Him are mutually interactive: God's love becomes more real to us as our love for Him deepens. God loves all mankind, of course, but God's love does not become personally operative until we put our faith in Him by inviting Him to be Lord of our lives. We do not earn God's love initially or after we become His children, but we accept His love, so that our faith — our trust and obedience — becomes a mark of our love for Him. This truth seems overly simple, yet at the same time it is an extremely complex matter which we cannot fully understand until we know perfect Love in heaven. We start on the road to both experience and understanding, though, by putting our faith in God, by placing all things in His hands, so that we can say with John, "We ourselves have known and put our faith in God's love toward ourselves" (I John 4:16).

David is an appropriate model for us, because

he experienced dark times in his life. Though he had served King Saul loyally, David was a victim of Saul's insane jealousy and was being hunted as a common criminal. Doeg, a herdsman, maliciously reported that David had been assisted by a priest of God, and the angry Saul had Doeg kill the righteous priest and all his relatives. How unjust it must have seemed to David; not only was David marked for execution, but now anyone who dared to help him might be killed. In the fifty-second psalm, David poured out his rage at the wickedness of men such as Doeg, but just as passionately David affirmed his trust in God's love. He didn't ask, "Does God really love me?" but instead he wrote,

I, for my part, like an olive tree  
growing in the house of God,  
put my trust in God's love  
for ever and ever.

I mean to thank you constantly  
for doing what you did,  
and put my hope in your name, that is  
so full of kindness,  
in the presence of those who love you.

(Psalm 52:8-9)

May David's words be our affirmation, as we draw close to our Lord.

\*All quotations are from the Jerusalem Bible.

Laquita M. Higgs, a graduate of Abilene Christian University, has a doctorate in Medieval European history and teaches at the University of Michigan (Dearborn). She has worked and written for *Integrity* magazine for more than ten years.

## Forgiven, and Forgiving

PAUL L. WATSON

"Father, forgive them;  
for they know not what they do." Luke 23:24

Of all the words which Jesus spoke, none move us, intrigue us, or challenge us more than these. "Father, *forgive* them," Jesus says; and in awe we ask, "How *could* he forgive those outrageously, flagrantly impenitent persons who were at that very moment participating in his death?" "Father, forgive *them*," Jesus says; and we wonder, "Forgive whom?" The execution squad? The Jewish leaders? Pilate? The crowd? His own bystanding disciples? Us, we whisper and hope? "Father, forgive them; for they don't know what they are doing," Jesus says; and we ponder: Is ignorance an excuse

after all? Were they forgiven in spite of their ignorance, or maybe because of their ignorance? Were they all, in fact, equally ignorant?

This entire scene (Luke 23:32-43), and especially this appeal of Jesus to the Father, form a densely packed, potentially explosive unit, not unlike the atom, and deserve our closest attention, our most careful handling. It is worth noting, for example, that these words of Jesus are preserved for us only by Luke, and even then they are left out of some of our best and earliest manuscripts of Luke's gospel. How are we to account for this? I suspect F. W. Beare is correct when he suggests, "[the verse] may have been omitted in some manuscripts



because of a feeling that this prayer for forgiveness is out of place.” Out of place from the viewpoint of those committed to proportional retaliation (“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”), perhaps; but not out of place for those who know “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*” (1 Tim. 1:15), and that “Christ died for the *ungodly*” (Rom. 5:6), and that “while we were yet *sinners* Christ died for *us*” (Rom. 5:8). God’s Son did not come to congratulate the righteous, but to forgive the rascals, even you and me. To put it a bit crudely, “Savior” (Jesus) was his name, and “saving” was his game, even to the point of invoking Heaven’s forgiveness on his own worst enemies.

### Moral Blindness

Again, Jesus cites their ignorance as the reason for requesting their forgiveness. Yet we find their ignorance incomprehensible. Oh, the centurion and his squad may not have “known what they are doing.” But what of the mob, and especially their leaders? What about those who had hailed Jesus as Messiah just five days earlier, or those who had heard his unimpeachable testimony the night before? Were they in fact “ignorant?” At this point we should recall that the Scriptures speak of two kinds of ignorance: the ignorance that comes from a lack of knowledge or information, but also the ignorance that is a moral blindness, a sinful moral state that comes, not from *unknowing* but from *unbelieving*. “I blasphemed, persecuted, insulted,” says Paul, “but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly, in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13). The Jews, “ignorant of God’s righteousness,” sought to establish their own and did not submit to His (Rom. 10:3). The Gentiles were “darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart” (Eph. 4:18). It is not merely a lack of information, but a lack of acceptance; a blindness despite the information available. As one of James Thurber’s characters says, “Mere proof won’t convince me.”

Still again, we wonder: To whom is Jesus referring? He could be saying to the soldiers, “You are just carrying out your orders, in blind

obedience, not knowing who I am.” He could be speaking to the anonymous mob who probably assumed that Jesus must have done *something* wrong for the authorities to crucify him, saying to them, “You, too, with your limited knowledge and your even more limited sense of responsibility, are acting ignorantly.” But what of the Jewish leaders who perpetrated the action? In the words of Walter Bowie, “In them also was ignorance - the awful ignorance of men in whom pride and self-assertiveness have so corrupted their sense of values that darkness has become their light.” Jesus might be speaking to his erstwhile disciples, those who had abandoned him then and desert him even today, who in the ignorance of their cowardice do not perceive that their acts of desertion speak louder than their words of confession. For one and all he prays, “Father, forgive them.”

### Forgiveness for All

That, in a nutshell, is the Gospel. Here at the cross we see a microcosm of sinful humanity: callous soldiers; a bloodthirsty mob; calculating, unscrupulous leaders; a self-serving Roman diplomat; cowardly, invisible disciples; even a sarcastic criminal! “Ignorant,” one and all. And their ignorance, their evil seems enormous, even overwhelming, to us — but not to God. Again, as Walter Bowie expresses it, “There is a degree of evil which would seem to us unpardonable. But our little judgments stand hushed before the words of Jesus on the cross; words which express a divine compassion that is wider and deeper than our thoughts can go.”

Filled with awe at this “divine compassion,” we would slip away from the cross — “would” if we “could,” that is. For even as we hear these words: “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do,” we remember other words that Jesus also spoke before he came to Calvary: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). “If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:15). And especially we remember that answer to Peter’s question, “Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother?” To which Jesus replies, “Seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21ff.). Then Jesus relates the story

of a man who was at once both debtor and creditor, owing the king \$1,000 while being owed some \$20 by a fellow servant. At his pleading, the king forgave him the \$1,000 debt; but when his neighbor asked for relief from the \$20 obligation, the forgiven debtor turned him down. Whereupon the king recalled the forgiven debtor and reinstated *his* debt, and sent him to jail when he could not pay. “So,” says Jesus, “so also my Heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

### Forgiving Isn’t Easy

That’s pretty clear, isn’t it? Those of us who have *been forgiven* — centurions, thieves, hypocrites, cowardly disciples — are also expected to *be forgiving*. But that is not easy, is it? If I am a young woman who has been raped, how do I forgive my attacker? If I am ignored, neglected, perhaps even cheated by my children in my old age, how do I forgive them? If I have lost a job because a gullible supervisor has believed a jealous, lying co-worker, how do I forgive either of them? If my mate has deserted me and our children, how can I forgive him or her, even if he or she begs to come back, much less if he or she does not?

Let’s be very clear-eyed about this business of forgiving. It is not easy; it is not the “natural” thing to do. In her excellent book, *Learning to Forgive*, Doris Donnelly suggests a number of reasons why people do not readily forgive. These include the following: 1) The pain is new and deep; 2) because of anger, jealousy, resentment; 3) because of a desire for revenge (“I don’t get mad; I just get even”); 4) because forgiveness is not socially acceptable; 5) there is an easier way: “scissoring” people who have hurt us right out of our lives; and 6) because of pride.

Yet, as long as we are being honest about the difficulty of forgiving, we should be equally honest about what happens when we *don’t* forgive. In this situation we begin feasting on our own pain, anger, jealousy, and that diet has no nourishment in it. We also increase stress and tension within ourselves, and between us and those who have wronged us. Even our relationships with innocent bystanders become

strained, as when we try to force family members to “take-sides” in a two-person, intra-family dispute. And inevitably our relationship with God is weakened, perhaps even broken. Louis Evelyn recounts the story of Jean Anouilh’s play, *The Last Judgment*, where

The good are densely clustered at the gate of heaven,

eager to march in,  
sure of their reserved seats,  
keyed up and bursting with impatience.

All at once, a rumor starts spreading:  
“It seems he’s going to forgive those others, too!”

For a minute, everyone’s dumbfounded;  
They look at one another in disbelief,  
gasping and sputtering.

“After all the trouble I went through!”

“If only I’d known this. . .!”  
“I just can’t get over it!”

Exasperated, they work themselves into a frenzy

and start cursing God;  
and at that very instant they’re damned!

Love appeared,  
and they refused to acknowledge it.  
“We don’t know this man!”

“We don’t approve of a heaven that’s open to every Tom, Dick and Harry.”

“We spurn a God who lets everyone off!”

“We can’t love a God who loves so foolishly!”

And because they didn’t love Love,  
they didn’t recognize Him.

If we refuse to be reconciled with our brother before we bring our gift to the altar (Matt. 5:23), we should not expect to find peace with God at the altar.

So we know that forgiving is often very hard to do; and we grant that to remain unforgiving is to set out on a path that leads to self-destruction. Yet the problem remains: *How* do we learn to forgive? How can I overcome all that keeps me from forgiving you, especially



when you don't seem to want or need my forgiveness? How do we do it?

## Steps in Forgiving

There is no quick-fix solution to each and every complex human situation, no foolproof remedy for each and every wound. But surely forgiving can be learned and practiced; surely we can grow in forgiveness as we can in love, in kindness, in patience, and in all the grace of Christ. And perhaps a good place to start would be to confess, to ourselves and to God, the hurt we feel when we are abused, slighted, or wronged. Did not Jesus ask, when the Samaritan leper returned, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17)? Did not Jesus cry out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34)? There is real pain in such exclamations, a real sense of ingratitude, rejection, abandonment. But so often, when we experience such pain, we try to hide or deny our hurt: "Oh, that's all right. Think nothing of it. I don't care. It really doesn't matter. Don't mind me." Fiddlesticks! It is only when we admit our hurt that we can begin to truly forgive. Forgiving may take time, and distance (i.e., perspective), and help from others to effect reconciliation. But at least we have said, "You've hurt me," and "I want to get beyond this hurt to the place where we can feel good about each other again."

A second step is to begin looking at the object of our hurt, not as "the enemy," but as a person, who has the same kinds of fears and feelings that I do. To see the "enemy," in other words, not as a "drunk driver" or a "bully" or a "cheat," but as a person, with a name and an identity. Doris Donnelly tells a marvelous story of a woman whose mother-in-law was given to making "left-handed compliments": "Your dinner would have been marvelous if you hadn't overcooked the meat." "This room would be lovely if it weren't so cluttered." "Do you always overdose your plants with water?" The daughter-in-law finally realized her mother-in-law's life was filled with unhealed hurts that were never dealt with, which in turn never allowed her to relax or to praise others. At her next visit, after her first cutting remark, the

daughter-in-law began to chuckle. The older woman said, "I don't think you're taking me seriously!" To which the younger woman replied, "I don't take this part of you seriously, that's true; but I do take you very seriously." At which point forgiveness and healing began. Jesus saw an unhappy, guilt-ridden tax-collector and called him, "Zacchaeus." Jesus saw a compulsive housecleaner and a competitive sibling and called her, "Martha." We can take a giant step toward practicing forgiveness by seeing our enemies as real persons, then treating them as such.

The third step is a risky one: to dare to love and offer forgiveness, even before forgiveness has been requested, knowing full well that such an offer may be rejected. The other person's response to my offer cannot be controlled. He or she may ignore me, may rejoice in my acknowledgement of my hurt, may feel so guilty that he or she cannot respond at all. I can only control my own actions; and I can offer "the right hand of fellowship," not denying my hurt but to say by my action that I want to go beyond where we are now, to a healed, restored relationship. Is this not what Christ was doing on the cross? Taking the first step; offering forgiveness to any who would accept it? How desperate would our situation be if Christ were still waiting for us to make the first move, to admit our mistakes, to ask for forgiveness. How desperate might our enemy's situation remain if we are unwilling to reach out to them?

## Power to Forgive

The most crucial step of all, however, is to realize that the power to forgive comes from God himself. As someone has said, "the gospel nearly explodes with the mystery that God forgives." As we learn to accept and to feel that divine forgiveness, we also find the power and the capacity to forgive others. Corrie ten Boom tells the powerfully moving story of how, after being released from a German concentration camp in which her sister died, she spoke frequently in public of her experiences. Then one evening after her lecture she was greeted by a man whom she recognized as an SS guard at the shower room in the processing center at Ravensbruck.

"How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein," he said. "To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!"

And suddenly, it was all there — the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blانched face.

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile. I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus,

I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness.

As I took his hand a most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm, and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself."

Forgiven, we are also empowered to forgive.

---

Paul L. Watson, a graduate of both Abilene Christian University and Yale University, is minister at the Cole Mill Church of Christ in Durham, N.C.

## Wringing Hands

J. BRUCE KILMER

Turn your dial to any Christian radio station or visit any evangelical church and you are likely to hear a castigation of our society and its morals — or more exactly, its lack of morals. The Apostle Paul warned about the dangers of being conformed to this world, and it is true that many of the values of today's society are not in tune with biblical teaching. However, often the tone of much of the judgment coming from evangelical circles today is shrill or self-righteous, sometimes even desperate. It is as if millions of us are wringing our hands at the conditions of today's world, but feel that there is little we can do about it except escape to our own fortresses and hurl verbal judgments at the enemy.

We do not need to wring our hands with anxiety over the take-over of society by secular humanists, or homosexuals, or the New Age Movement. Neither human philosophy, nor

sexual disorientation, nor channeling, nor anything else in creation can separate us from the love of God. And it is this love which should draw us to unbelievers, rather than isolate us from them. In the security of God's love for us, we can accept the good aspects of humanism and show that there is more in Christ. We can love persons who are homosexual. We can have empathy for those who are seeking spiritual things through the New Age Movement.

Some in the churches have realized that we should stop wringing our hands and do something. Meaning well, they have set out to change the world by force. Whether it be the force of condemnation or the force of law, the world has refused to be moved from its immorality.

Wringing hands will never change people. Even enacting laws to make certain acts of immorality, criminal, will never make people



moral. Our time wringing our hands and our efforts in changing laws would be spent better in building relationships. Jesus did not spend his time wringing his hands or trying to get laws enacted. He spent time with people. The types of people with which he spent so much time are the types of people which we often judge — and even worse, they are the types of people whom we often avoid. Read Mark 2:13-28. See the man who ate with tax collectors and “sinners.” Here is a man who was not hobbled by legalism, who did not miss the forest for the trees. He knew the true purpose of the Sabbath. He came to bring new wine and new garments. There was no time for wringing hands or for enacting more laws!

It is really more a matter of attitude than what is right and wrong. We can stop wringing our hands when we love “them,” whomever “them” are! We can stop wringing our hands when we ourselves repent of the similar sins which we judge so harshly. We can stop wringing our hands when we trust that God is in control.

Jesus never wrung his hands at pagan, materialistic, cruel, and idolatrous Rome, because he saw beyond Rome to the persons

who made up the Empire, such as the centurion (Matt 8:55-13). Jesus did not wring his hands at the divorce and remarriage, because he saw beyond a law or a doctrine to the people, such as the Samaritan woman he met at the well (John 4). He did not wring his hands at the adultery going on around him, because he saw beyond the sin, to the woman brought before him to be stoned (John 8:2-11).

When we love the unbelievers, the immoral persons, the people who are really not so different from ourselves, when we associate with them instead of isolating ourselves from them, when we stop wringing our hands, then, and only then, can we be salt and light.

As Christians, let’s not be known as a people who are forever wringing our hands, but as a people who are forever extending helping hands of love to all of the human race.

We pray that His kingdom will come to all the earth, to all people.

---

Bruce Kilmer is co-editor of *Integrity* with his wife Diane. He grew up in the Church of Christ (a cappella) and graduated from Abilene Christian University. Currently he lives in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan where he is the Regional State Court Administrator for the Michigan Supreme Court.

## The Tall and Short of It: A Rich Ruler and a Wealthy Tax Collector

KEN HENSLEY

Maybe I didn’t pay the best attention I could have in my 7:30 a.m. “Life of Christ” class, and that’s why it has taken me so long to notice. Maybe I was never taught the insights as I’ve recently discovered them (I say “discovered” playfully, knowing that there are many seasoned exegetes who have been living with this passage longer than I, or they, can remember). The comparisons and contrasts are overwhelming, the lessons timely and relevant. The men, and

their legacies, are veteran educators of how we react to the Savior’s call to follow him.

Luke introduces us to two very similar, yet, in essence, very much different, men in chapters 18 and 19 of his Gospel. Both men had an interest in meeting Jesus, or, as in the case of Zacchaeus, in just seeing the Master walk by. Mark tells us in his account of the event that the rich young ruler ran up to Jesus in order to ask him a question (Mark 10:17). Notice the

difference already beginning to develop between the ruler and tax collector. One runs to Jesus in order to satisfy a question, the other climbs a tree and waits.

Why did the young man run to Jesus while the tax collector opted to sit on a limb? Notice the rich young ruler’s reply when Jesus reminds him of the commandments: “All of these I have kept since I was a boy (Luke 18:20-21).” Contrast that with the reaction of the crowd to Jesus inviting himself to the house of Zacchaeus for dinner: “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner” (Luke 19:7b). The ruler held all the necessary credentials needed to be worthy enough to approach someone as distinguished as Jesus. He must have been proud to have been able to say to the Good Teacher, “All these I have kept since I was a boy.” Zacchaeus, on the other hand, had the notoriety of being a tax collector who skimmed the money off his own people for his personal gain. Is it any wonder that he would rather climb a tree than mingle with the crowd to see the Rabbi? One kept the commandments; the other didn’t quite make it.

Further, notice the contrast between their attitudes toward their possessions. The rich young ruler, we can presume, amassed his wealth through honest and just means, knowing what we do about his commandment keeping habits. Zacchaeus, from his own admission, has “cheated” for his gain (Luke 19:8). Jesus asks the noble ruler to carry his commitment one step further, to sell all he has and give it to the poor and to follow him” (Luke 18:22). We all know what happens next; the rich young ruler leaves sad because he is very wealthy and very much attached to his wealth. Jesus offers the young man a personal invitation to become a follower, and yet his wealth becomes his shackle instead of his sacrifice.

Zacchaeus is different, though you would expect him not to be. Our expectation of such a man would be one who would approach Jesus to make a buck or as one unable to sustain a seriously honest commitment. Yet when Jesus spots Zacchaeus in his tree and asks him to come down, Zacchaeus welcomes Jesus gladly (Luke 19:6). Already we can begin to see a difference in the dispositions of the two men

when approached with an invitation from the Master. It is also likely that we would never expect Zacchaeus to be a man who would part easily with his riches, no matter how they were accumulated. Yet when the crowd begins to murmur about the credibility of Jesus (remember, he’s going to the house of a sinner), notice what this tree-climbing tax collector does: he stands up and makes it public knowledge that he is willing to pay back anyone he has cheated (Luke 19:8). And the offer is not just to pay back what he illegally skimmed off, but pay back four times the amount!

When the rich young ruler left the presence of Jesus, discouraged at the high cost of his commitment, this left the disciples wondering who, then, could be saved. For Jesus has just told them that it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom (Luke 18:24). Why if a rich man could not be saved, who could be? The next words of Jesus, offered as encouragement from an awesome God to his people, should be etched in the positive hall of fame. “What is impossible with men is possible with God. (Luke 18:27) Maybe this is why Jesus chose to end his episode with Zacchaeus by leaving us another memorable phrase, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10).

What do I learn from these two men? I see one man whose camel was stacked too high with misguided priorities to make it through the needle, even when the offer was extended by God himself. On the other hand, a chapter later, I find another man, unethical and despised, who winds up sitting at the same table with the God who brought salvation to his house. In a world where the emphasis is increasingly being placed on climbing the corporate ladder, maybe, just maybe, we need more people willing to climb trees. By the way, when it comes to climbing trees, did anyone ever climb a tree more important than the one Jesus climbed for you and me?

---

Ken Hensley is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee, and minister to the Church of Christ, Allied Gardens, San Diego, California.



# Well-Wrought Woman

John 4:5-41

No, Joab, I'll not sleep with you tonight,  
nor any time the way we have before.  
Is there another man? Well, I can't say  
just "Yes" or "No" — It's not the way you think!  
I met a man today by Jacob's well  
who caught my eye — but would not let me flirt!  
My body's not so old or skin so rough  
but that most men still notice me. *You* do.  
*You* know you've never found me less than warm!  
You'd never call me *fat* — just look at me!  
Five husbands will not stretch a girlish shape  
or age it as one squirming, unborn child.  
These tiny birdtracks by my eyes just make  
my face more interesting, and I am much  
more woman now than when at twelve I first  
became a bride. So when he spoke to me,  
I thought I heard him seek what most men want.  
That Galilean accent roused in me  
a trait that you know well — I love to tease!  
I know my men! "And why would you, a Jew,  
want water from a vile Samaritan?"  
He looked at me, but not like other men,  
then spoke not fifty words before I felt  
the little warmth within my loins become  
the fire of Moses' bush deep in my heart.  
I found myself enfolded in his speech  
and not his arms. I handed him this cup.  
Our fingers touched. Men's hands can stir my blood.  
*These did* — but *no*, it's *not* the way you think!  
I felt a long-dead elder brother's hand  
upon a lost and frightened little girl.  
Men often look *at* me; *he* looked *within*.  
I never felt an eye so warmly pure.  
I never felt so chaste, so loved before.  
I've often thirsted for men's lips and felt  
a dryness in my throat, but when my own  
caressed the refilled cup where his had touched,  
I felt a greater thirst assuaged. How sweet  
the cleansing water from this living well!  
Don't think I love you any less — it's just  
this cup's full to the brim; it holds my broken heart,  
love-healed. I go back to my Father's house tonight.

— GEORGE EWING

# For Worse

HOY LEDBETTER

In a few days I am scheduled to preside at the marriage ceremony of one of our "almost" children — one who, though not naturally related, has so often had his feet under our dining table, slept in our beds, and shared our joys and tears, that we think of him as a member of the family. Since by reason of so much common experience I must necessarily be emotionally involved in his future, I am praying with special fervor that his marriage will be successful. Given the high rate of marital failure in our generation, such prayers can hardly be superfluous.

Conducting weddings always forces me to relive my own, which was almost thirty-nine years ago. It is now difficult for me to distinguish between what I remember and what I imagine I thought at that time, but I do know that we did what many couples have done: we took each other "for better, for worse." I suppose that at first we had a romanticized picture of what life together would be like, according to which we expected everything to be "better." Of course, we gave lip service to the "for worse" part, but we were really counting on the "for better" life together.

Do you know what? It turned out to be "for worse." It always does. One by one, and perhaps two by two, my faults (which, in case you are curious, will not be listed here) began to surface, faults she had not expected me to

have. This unpleasant discovery forced her to come to terms with what it really means to take someone "for worse." She decided to take me as I am, except for whatever improvements she could make with gentle influence and loving encouragement.

I, of course, had to do the same, although my task was much easier than hers. As a result we both came to enjoy each other as we could not have otherwise. We became free of the imaginary world in which troubled couples often vainly try to live. We are not always happy with what we have to tolerate in each other, but we accept that as a part of the package.

If, at this late hour, I had occasion to seek another mate, I would be very reluctant to do so, knowing how difficult it is to replace one who has taken me, and whom I have taken, "for worse." People who live on that level can only be parted by death.

We are tempted to refer to the "for worse" part of marriage as the hard part, but in the long run it is the easier way to live. Every couple, young or old, ought to remember that.

---

Hoy Ledbetter, founding editor and Editor-in-Chief of *Integrity* for 15 years, has served as minister to several a cappella Churches of Christ during his years of ministry. He presently serves First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Albany, Georgia with his wife Jary and daughter Priscilla.

*Integrity* offers bound volumes of series of issues that focus on one theme. These volumes are \$2.00 each, or \$1.50 each in lots of ten or more.

"Unity and Christian Fellowship" (2 issue volume)

"Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage" (3 issue volume)

"Holy Spirit" (5 issue volume)

Also available:

"Woman's Place in Church Activity" by Norman L. Parks, \$2.00 each, \$1.50 each in lots of ten or more.

Send your order and money to Amos Ponder, 1269 Pickwick Place, Flint, MI 48507.



# How Old Was Jacob When He Stole The Blessing?

JERRY DANIEL

Over the past several years I have on occasion asked church groups — Bible classes, youth groups, etc. — to describe their mental image of Jacob when, in the familiar story (Gen. 27), he tricked his father Isaac into blessing him in lieu of his brother Esau. Almost without exception they have described him as a very young man, a teenager or at most a man in his 20s. (The only exception to date is that of an elderly lady who opined that he was probably about 40 at the time.)

## What Does Genesis Say?

On the contrary it is, I believe, provable from the text of Genesis that he was already an old man, probably at least 73 years of age! If so our picture alters rather radically, doesn't it? Jacob's tricky nature, and even more his amenability to Rebekah's trickiness, were not merely youthful anomalies; they were imbedded character qualities which were present even in the time of the hoary head. It also serves as a warning not to take our impressions too seriously; they must constantly be checked against the factual statements of scripture — and this is true of matters far more urgent than the age of Jacob. Mostly, however, it's just fun to take a lighthearted look once in awhile at something upon which the fate of our planet doesn't hang!

There may be a fatal flaw in my reasoning, and if so any *Integrity* reader (or for that matter any reader with integrity) is free to point it out. Commentaries, so far as I know, have

by and large failed to pay attention to this matter. But now to the evidence:

- 1) We know that Jacob was 130 years old when he went to Egypt (Gen. 47:9).
- 2) We know that Joseph had been in Egypt approximately 20 years:
  - a. He was 17 when he was sold by his brothers (Gen. 37:2).
  - b. He was 30 when he entered Pharaoh's service (Gen. 41:46), therefore 13 years had passed.
  - c. Another 7 years passed during the years of plenty, plus an undetermined portion of the period of lean years.
- 3) Therefore Jacob was 110, or just a bit younger, at the time Joseph was sold.
- 4) As mentioned above, we know that Joseph was 17 when he was sold by his brothers, therefore Jacob had to be about 93 when Joseph was born.
- 5) We know that Jacob spent 20 years with Laban (Gen. 31:38), and we know that Joseph was born during that stay (Gen. 30:25), therefore Jacob had to be at least 73 when he first came to Laban's home. [His exact age depends on the precise time of Joseph's birth; i.e., if Joseph were born 10 years after Jacob came to Laban's home, then Jacob would have had to be at least 83 when he first came. It would appear, however, from Gen. 30:25 that Joseph was born at the very end of Jacob's stay with Laban, therefore I conclude that Jacob was about 73 when he first came.]

- 6) And since Jacob went to Laban's home soon after the stealing of Esau's blessing (Gen. 27:41-28:2), I conclude that he had to be in the vicinity of 73 when that event occurred.

The only assumption made is that the Hebrew text is sufficiently accurate to preserve the various numbers correctly. If the numbers in the above passages are accurate, it would seem that the conclusion is accurate. It will be fun for our readers to work through the passages and decide for themselves.

If Jacob and Esau were indeed old men — in their 70s — when this event took place, what a shock it is to our imagery! Who will be the first to publish Sunday school literature illustrated with pictures of greybeards battling over the blessing?

---

Jerry Daniel serves as minister and elder to the Echo Lake Church of Christ in Westfield, New Jersey where he and his family have lived for 20 years. Jerry, who holds a Ph.D. degree in history, is editor of *CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society*.

## Intercepted Correspondence

The following "Intercepted Correspondence" is a continuation of a feature we began in the January/February 1988 issue of *Integrity*. These letters are *Integrity's* version of C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* and more recently Os Guinness' *Gravedigger Files*.

To refresh your memory, we have an im-

aginary setting where Bruce accidentally comes across these letters in his computer class. Bruce thought he would warn the rest of us of what may be going on under our very noses. The nefarious teacher Apollyon continues his instructions to the young devil Ichabod.

My Dear Prospective Political Polluter,

You have entered seriously into the political arena at a most propitious time. Feelings often run deepest in the circumstances of war, and rifts driven during national crises are ready-made for our exploitation. If I may suggest one point to be utilized in our nefarious part of the conflict: exploit the currently-mouthed shibboleth, "I hate this war, but I will support our troops." Encourage this nonsensical position,

and have it mouthed by all; it simply allows a sanctimonious sanction for the status quo.

You can hardly be blamed for revelling in the brooding hostility within the "two congregations nearby." Indeed, this is the fruition of the labor of one of your unknown colleagues who is assigned to that town. And, detecting a note of admiration and envy at another's success as you write, I can only admonish you to pursue

---

*He who walks in integrity walks securely. Proverbs 10:9*



your own labors with disciplined diligence. The same fruits may indeed be reaped at Broad Way! But you must be persistent in subversion.

Your greatest, most productive work at present, however, may well come about by enthusiastically backing the “self-appointed eschatological sages among the saints.” For His own good reasons, the Enemy has couched the description of earth’s End Times in figures, allusions, and suggestions which seem to some to demand application to the current Middle East crisis. They are indicators that the world is headed toward its final annihilation and the consummation of His plans for this little globe and its inhabitants. I must chuckle in thinking how many generations of the past have thought precisely the same thing: “THIS IS IT! The END TIMES are HERE!” I revel in the dogmatic proclamation of those who believe they are privy to the Enemy’s ultimate plans — plans for which He has clearly said the timing is unknown to any man. Every time this story is repeated, (and I cannot guess how many times this has happened in these two millennia), I laugh at the dogmatists who miss the entire point: His servants, as His Son’s words clearly say, are to be ready at all times, and at any time! We have been able to capitalize heavily each time a “self-appointed sage” has vehemently warned against an event which did not occur! (Of course, one day the warnings *will* be appropriate; and we shudder to think of it; but let us fully enjoy any current confusions and revel in the consequent disruption it fosters.)

The muddled situation between the “stricter-than-thou’s” and the “mainstreamers” needs nothing more than occasional prodding in the sensitive areas you have delineated. Folks of this bent of mind further our cause marvelously, detesting and devouring one another in a manner glorious to behold. Determine your course of action by careful scrutiny, diligent analysis, and appropriate instigation of divisive thought and action. All evidence indicates that you are doing well in this mode. Keep it up.

Yours in fostering festering fragmentation,

Uncle Apollyon

My Dear “Badder-than-thou” Uncle Apollyon,

Although I recognize your malevolent intentions in urging me to exploit the “hate the war/support the troops” sentiments, the way some of the people in my territory have been saying this doesn’t make it easy to exploit. They view the war as a necessary evil in a world marred by sin. They also point out that the soldiers themselves (on both sides) are not responsible for the decisions that put them in harm’s way. And they pray in such a sickly benevolent way for everybody on *both* sides that it’s hard to get through to plant the kind of anger and hate that (directed at *either* side) would make irrelevant any determination of *which side* is right. It seems to me that I stand a better chance to bring about harm if I concentrate on convincing people that the solutions are simple, and that anybody who doesn’t agree with a facile answer to it all (in any direction) is unpatriotic, irreligious, or a macho warmonger. I am disappointed that there were not more casualties among the Americans, since that is always an opportunity for fomenting bitterness, despondency, and recriminations against God and man; but perhaps I can get some satisfaction out of cultivating callousness to the tens of thousands killed, injured, and unhoused on the other side.

Meanwhile, the local wars go on apace. It’s amazing how well people use psychological “smart bombs” to injure those who are objects of their contempt or envy. Only last Sunday in Bible class, we were discussing the Christian’s responsibility concerning alcohol. Brother Sausbaum, whom everybody knows to be a recently reformed alcoholic, spoke up and said that those addicted to alcohol need supportive and sensitive friends who can both encourage and confront them. Brother Upstrait replied that he had been *very* supportive on occasion, when he had to practically carry a tipsy man out of the worship service after he got too loud. Bam! — a bomb right down the hatch, since everybody knew that the drunkard referred to was Brother Sausbaum; he hasn’t been seen in Sunday School since, and if our side is lucky, he’ll soon be back on the bottle and out of

church altogether. Then in the war between the churches, there was Brother Lottenirv’s remark, in the midst of a supposed reconciliation meeting, concerning a harsh word spoken by Brother Tenderheart ten years ago, and ever since remembered by the latter with a great sorrow and self-recrimination, especially since Brother Lottenirv had continued to hold it against him. Wham! — another unforgiveness bomb, zapped in through the open channel of a tender conscience. The meetings broke up with the two sides more hardened against each other than ever before. It’s amazing what consummately effective damage people can do sometimes with nothing but their fallen instincts to guide them!

A group of young leaders in our congregation has gotten together to instigate greater variety and energy in our worship services. I wormed my way into their confidence, because this movement could pose a severe threat to the spiritual apathy of those who want nothing more than to be soothed and lulled by a thoroughly predictable and lifeless worship service. Rightly handled, however, this initiative could result in putting the apathetic bunch even more firmly in control, as well as thoroughly discouraging the young activists. Accordingly, this is the advice I gave them: (1) Make sure that everybody

understands the virtue of your progressiveness, and reject any song that is more than ten years old. (2) Stage your innovations carefully, giving the worship a “show biz” atmosphere that will attract the younger generations. (3) Don’t clutter up your services with awkward silences; people like to keep their minds occupied from the outside so that they don’t have to engage in uncomfortable meditation on the state of their lives before God. (4) Make it clear that you have no concern with the old fuddy-duddies who don’t appreciate the style of worship you’re trying to introduce; don’t waste your time trying to explain what you’re doing — just do it! The ones who don’t like it can go elsewhere.

The Easter Season is here again, so I must devote some time to drumming up enthusiasm for the Easter Bunny (we wouldn’t want anybody thinking too much about You-Know-Who and his empty grave). Perhaps I could bolster my political visibility by sponsoring an Easter Bunny Hop for the kids. I wish I could give them poisoned eggs for prizes, but we must remain subtle, mustn’t we?

Yours in hoping for the worst,

Ichabod

## Readers’ Response

Gentlemen:

I just put down the March/April 1991 issue of your fine little magazine, *Integrity*, and I would like to comment on three of the articles. One is John Loftus’ “Tolerating the Tolerable,” the second is Hoy Ledbetter’s “Reply” and the third article is Kathy Wyler’s

“My Jesus.” I know, you will want to correct me — Kathy’s article is not an article, it is a poem. You just say that because it is so beautifully written. I say it is an article because it says so much about Jesus. In fact, Kathy says more about Jesus in her one page than John and



Hoy both do in all of theirs.

John said one thing, though, that I agree with. He said too many Christians are majoring in the minors of the faith, and I think that is true. However, there is only one major in the Christian faith, and that is love — love of God, love of one another, and thirdly, but still in there, is love of one's self. Jesus tells us that. This formula fits everything, and everything else in the faith is minor to it — yes, even doctrine. Hoy quotes Campbell as saying doctrines are inferences and deductions taken from the scriptures when fairly inferred, but are not to be made in terms of communion (with Jesus), but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the church.

Men have a compulsion to go too far. They drive too fast, eat too much, and tend to evaluate the things they love far above their true value. So it is with doctrine. Some people, and notably preachers, love their doctrines so much that they put them above everything else. As my preacher once told me, "Everything is derived from doctrine." (I disagree) True, doctrines have their rightful place in the faith. They explain things and they hold believers of a like mind together, so they can work in unison as a congregation. But they cannot do the thing love does — bring us closer to the Lord.

I would say to John and Hoy, you are both preachers and have a very high regard for doctrine. That is good, but I would also say, as I do to all preachers in the Restoration Movement, watch it! Don't let doctrine assume the supreme sanctity. Don't let it come between you and the Jesus that "strides between the cannon and the tanks, the bunkers and the trenches" . . . "that works and plays and laughs and cries" . . . "that spreads a picnic on the grass and welcomes all to sit" . . . Yes, Jesus is the Good Companion. . . anywhere you go, everywhere you go. You preachers, you Restoration preachers, don't lose sight of that.

Just thought you would like my opinion.

Lewis H. Collison  
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Dear People,

Quite honestly, I don't really see the big concern by John W. Loftus and Hoy Ledbetter (March/April 1991 *Integrity*). One argues the church should be tolerant on abortion while the other says the church shouldn't. But frankly, what does it matter? The simple fact is this: most of the time, regardless of whether a church favors or opposes abortion, it will do nothing to stop it or to help unwed mothers who don't want abortion.

Sound harsh?

Ask yourself an honest question: Suppose you ran a chain of abortion clinics. You are planning to open a new one in one of three cities. They are similar except for their religious makeup. You want a town where: (1) no one will picket your clinic, (2) no one will attempt sidewalk counseling to lead patients from your clinic, (3) no one will start a home for unwed mothers, and (4) no church will support "Birthright" or some prolife group trying to help unwed mothers. Now be honest. If you ran a clinic, and were concerned about the above, would you locate in a town that was: (a) 75 per cent Catholic, (b) 75 per cent Southern Baptist, or (c) 75 per cent Church of Christ?

I first realized the Church's lack of real concern on abortion some ten years ago while living in Amarillo, Texas. I heard one Church member talking about TV preacher Jerry Falwell's efforts to start homes for unwed mothers around the country. She sadly told me, "If I were truly honest with myself, I would pray and thank God Jerry Falwell is not a member of the Church of Christ, or those babies would die."

Now for my own experience. In 1980, I moved to Norman, Oklahoma. The Disciples of Christ's major church supports a woman's right to abortion, to the point the preacher has signed ads supporting that right. The members and preachers of the two major churches of Christ in Norman have said in conversations and talks in Bible classes that they oppose abortion. But neither church did anything to halt

abortion in Norman, which has had an abortion clinic since 1974.

For example, in 1986, I wrote an article for the *Oklahoma Constitution*, a conservative pro-life quarterly, asking churches who would like to help unwed mothers to send their addresses and phone numbers to the *Constitution* so area churches would know of a network of help. I sent 30 additional letters to churches of Christ in Oklahoma City and Norman. None responded!

In 1987, a housewife started a Norman chapter of "Birthright" to offer financial and physical help to unwed mothers, including homes to women who had been thrown out of their homes for refusing to have abortions. The organization set up its office near the University of Oklahoma, across the street or next to five campus ministries, including the Church of Christ Student Center and two doors down from a Christian Church student center. When the city tried to close "Birthright" for not having enough legal parking for an office, the group asked the campus ministries if they could use part of their lots to meet the legal requirements. Both the Christian Church and Church of Christ student centers declined to help. Only the Mormons offered use of their lots.

During its first four years of existence in which "Birthright" has provided homes for 30 mothers, emergency food and rent money for 129, maternity clothes for 574, and baby supplies and prescriptions for 431, support has come from a mixture of churches. Congregations making regular monthly donations include Baptist, charismatics and Catholics. But none of the Churches of Christ contribute. No sermon on abortion has been given at my church since May of 1987.

In terms of action, in Norman, there is no real difference between the Disciples of Christ who support abortion and the Churches of Christ who oppose it. Neither has done anything to stop it.

Steve LaPrade  
Norman, Oklahoma

Dear Bruce and Diane,

I hope this letter finds all going well for you. Much has changed in my life since the last article I sent to you. I think you'll find what I'm about to tell you interesting. This past December (1990) I married Tonya Harp of Memphis, TN. Her dad, Verlon, preaches for the Cherry Rd. Church of Christ. We met because he had read my first article in *Integrity* and asked his daughter if she knew who I was (we both attend Freed-Hardeman University). She approached me during an intramural softball game to tell me that her dad had used my article in a "devotional" (later I found out it was a house church lesson — I can understand why she might be hesitant to tell a "Freddie" what it really was). The rest, you might say, is history.

Someone once asked me if I regretted writing articles for *Integrity*, assuming that its liberal reputation might somehow hinder my future plans. Obviously, and for more than one reason, I tell them not at all. It has been through the ministry of *Integrity* that I met my wife and have been challenged to expand my own context of studying and preaching the Bible. For this I can only say thanks.

I have many articles which I have written but I believe this one I'm now sending speaks to our culture and its influences on us as Christians. I hope you find it profitable. I would also like to be added to your mailing list; I'm graduating in May and then I hope to go to graduate school (hopefully to Pepperdine), so I'll keep you posted on any address changes.

Thanks again for your efforts towards providing a forum which encourages honest, sincere, and contemporary study of God's Word. Your efforts have been and will continue to be rewarded.

In Christian love,

Ken Hensley  
Henderson, Tennessee