

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.

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What a glorious experience! There weren't very many people watching us march, and the media didn't pay much attention, but that didn't matter. It was significant that our Lord was being praised right in the middle of Enemy territory.

On this same day marches were being held in 340 cities in the U.S. and in 80 nations of the world, all singing the same set of praise songs in many different

languages. In 1994 the marches will be held on June 25th, and every nation in the world will conduct a March for Jesus. For more information about marching for Jesus in your town, contact: March for Jesus, USA, P.O. Box 3216, Austin, TX 78764.

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An Odd Reality

This issue's writers confirm that the Christian path to knowing God is marked by paradox. Their articles substantiate the notion that seemingly self-contradictory experiences actually lead to spiritual growth. Our authors' paradoxical claims include: that temporary, aging bodies can house eternal youthfulness; that the Unseen can be trusted more than what is seen; that waiting is a productive activity; that hope and victory can be harvested from a desert of disease and death.

The following poem, "An Odd Reality" submitted by Adrienne Rigsby Caughfield (a recent ACU graduate), succinctly presents the seemingly absurd perspective (compared to the world's norm) that we Christians share:

Beyond our sanity lies perfect sense;
What seems to lack direction in our eyes
is guided by the hand of providence.
What seems most foolish is, in fact, most wise.

We value human might and force as strong,
yet God brings forth his champions in the weak
to prove that all our posturing is wrong--
True strength is found among the kind and meek.

Where is the scholar's vain philosophy?
How stand the standards of this human day?
Christ's death remains an odd reality;
his life reveals a harder, better way.

Our way to life is made of paradox;
the road to God is laid with stumbling blocks.

How can we see the path to God when every stumbling block attempts to impede our vision?--by first setting our eyes on the face of Jesus!

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (II Cor. 4:6).

(Continued on page 80)

Forever Young

ALINE EDSON

Something about a Christian never grows old. The dear Word of God says so: "...though our outward man is decaying yet the inward is renewed day by day" (II Cor. 4:16b). That which is renewed every day can never grow old. What, then, of this process of renewal? Is it voluntary or involuntary, universal or selective? And how is it accomplished?

Again the blessed Text informs us: "Be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is." Transformation by *renewal of mind* sounds like a choice to dig deep into God's Book to ascertain his will for us. We must choose the course that transforms our lives and renews our mind (inward self) day by day. And not just a few highly-favored Christians are so blessed. Indeed, Paul enjoins the choice of constant renewal on every Christian and prays fervently that God will grant that we be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner self that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, being rooted and grounded in love and able to comprehend with all the saints the love of Christ which passes knowledge that we might be filled with the fullness of God (paraphrase of Eph. 3:16-19).

The picture, then, of the inner person growing and flourishing and maturing, nurtured by the very Spirit himself is in stark contrast to the outward person that is destined to undergo a process of decay and death. It is a strange and beautiful paradox that while the outward person is at full physical functioning for all to see, the spirit may be feeble but growing unseen. Then, as we search the Scriptures daily to find God's will for us, and live lives transformed by what we find, the inner person is renewed, refreshed and flourishes. As time goes on and the

body grows weak and weary, the inner person grows stronger and stronger reaching for the fullness of God in Christ Jesus--a perfect illustration of the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (II Cor. 4:18).

Why Die On The Inside?

But if this bold premise be true--that Christians need never grow old inwardly--then why the lackluster spirit that so often characterizes so many of us as our bodies show signs of aging and slowing down? We act as if the whole operation shuts down simultaneously: body, soul and spirit. And that is the easy way to go: it explains lack of activity, lack of involvement and lack of responsibility for continued growth. It is a sad fact that what doesn't grow does, indeed, die. But the Bread of Life and the Fountain of Living Water will keep the Christian's spirit forever young and vibrant.

Can you see Caleb's flashing eyes as he asked for a mountain to subdue on his eighty-fifth birthday? What spirit! Physically he might have been hard put to accomplish the feat (but he said he was as strong as ever). The important thing it seems to me is that he thought he could do it, and he wanted a chance to try. He was ready for the challenge with a spirit that burned brightly in spite of an aging body. During the forty-five years since God called him into active service, something had sustained Caleb inwardly. Faith, hope, energy, enthusiasm--all were present in abundance. Do you think it might have been that he had walked with God during those years and had his spirit nourished daily by this loving association?

As Christians get nearer home, eyes of faith ought to see more clearly, steps ought to quicken and hearts grow lighter

as we envision the place prepared for us: so wonderful that eyes have not seen nor ears heard the wonders of it. Joy and excitement produced by anticipation of our future ought to empower every day with exultation. How can we allow ourselves to grow drab and draggy with such promises in view?

Slowing down and giving up not only cheats ourselves, but what kind of advertisement are we to those who are not so far along life's way? What if they are asking themselves if a life of faith really pays off? Or if it can hold out to the end? By the condition of his spirit an aging Christian can help or hinder the answers to those questions. When a believer's life is vibrant, enthusiastic and growing in grace and knowledge, it's a big plus for influencing the ones who are following. If our life is flagging and dragging, tired, and just marking time, then it burdens young Christians, and perhaps makes them wonder how a life lived for

Possess The Land *

We knew about Huntington's disease when we adopted her, but it was still a shock to learn that our daughter, whom we shall call "Ann," had the degenerative genetic disease which affects both mind and body. We thought if it came, it would be in her mid-30s, the age when most people first show signs, but she is only 25 and is still finding her way in life. There's no treatment and no cure, and it doesn't go into remission, but it will move relentlessly for a few years until she becomes totally helpless. We're scared. We're prepared to devote our lives and resources to her care, but, oddly enough, the one thing that frightens us most is how we will manage to live with her again. We like to think of ourselves as being

Christ can end up so joyless.

The adjectives that describe an aging body ought not—and need not—describe a Christian's inner being, no matter how many summers and winters he or she has seen. Enthusiasm that belongs to youth, hope that grows brighter with the years, and a deeper love for people as we sense Christ's great love for us ought to characterize a spirit renewed daily by his grace. Old, tired, weary, feeble, worn out, ready to die—these characteristics may describe the outward person, but the glowing, growing, ever-renewed inner person has wings and will go home in the full strength of youth, praise God!

Aline Edson is 72 years young. After retiring as a teacher, she entered a civil service career from which she recently retired for other pursuits. Aline and her husband have four grown children and are members of the Sydney Baker Church of Christ in Kerrville, Texas.

mature Christians, but we didn't manage to be very mature in our relationship with her during her teenage years when she was so rebellious and self-absorbed. Those years were a nightmare for us, and it was an enormous relief when she left for college. We love her dearly, but she has always been difficult, and now this disease makes her behavior even more erratic and irresponsible. Furthermore, her rebellion against God continues and she has acquired some rather unholy habits.

We know that God gave her to us, and we have often remarked that our difficulties with her have taught us so much. We obviously had a lot to learn, but here we are again back in God's school of discipline. Looks as if we won't

graduate until we get to Heaven! One of the lessons that God has taught us through her is that we know so little about being victorious Christians. As she demonstrated again yesterday morning just as we were going in the church building, Ann has the ability to plunge the family into anger and despair. We wish that our emotional well-being were not so tied to hers, but it is. We wish we had the equanimity which finds God's peace in the midst of turmoil, and sometimes we do, but we fail all too often. Yet, though we have been slow learners, He is patient and has managed to get a few lessons across to us. We felt the Lord would have us write about some of the things that He has been trying to teach us, probably to help us remember them! We summed them up in three (3) categories.

(1) Expect Trouble.

This may seem very pessimistic, but most of us work hard to avoid unpleasantness and so end up feeling resentful and self-pitying when trouble comes along. The sooner we learn that struggle is a part of the Christian life, the better off we'll be. Our Lord had trouble, so why shouldn't we have our share? Jesus said, "In the world you will have trouble. But courage! The victory is mine; I have conquered the world" (John 16:33, NEB). We used to find it disturbing that every spiritual high seemed to be followed by some terrific conflict with Ann. Now we know to expect it, get our spiritual armor in place, and try to keep it from slipping. On the other hand, the Christian life is more than a matter of endurance. Jesus found victory, and his victory is ours as well. Why, then, do we sometimes feel so defeated? Why are we so scared as we look into our future with this dreadful disease? When that happens, we have to possess the land.

(2) Possess The Land.

We remind ourselves of this principle rather often. It takes a little longer to explain, but we have found it to be basic to finding victory. At the end of his life, Moses reminded the Children of Israel that they were supposed to have taken possession of the land when they first arrived 40 years before. God had already made the land over to them and had told them to take possession without fear or discouragement, but the Israelites were cautious and frightened, and they asked that spies be sent in to explore the country. Instead of rejoicing in the report of a fruitful land, the Israelites seized on the part of the report which depicted the tall warriors and fortified cities to be encountered. They began grumbling against God; they rebelled and refused to enter the land. Moses gave them a pep talk, but it did no good; only when they were told that God wanted them to return into the wilderness did some of them decide to go into the land, but it was too late. By then, they were doing it on their own, without God's blessing, and they were soundly defeated. The lesson for us, then, is that we must rejoice in what we have been given and cheerfully receive even the hard parts, even a rebellious child, rather than letting our fear dominate and bring defeat.

The Israelites had a material, tangible land to possess, whereas ours is a spiritual "land," i.e. the kingdom of heaven mentioned so often by Jesus, the realm ruled by God. We are his children and, as such, have a "right" to the kingdom of heaven. Why, then, when we have been given the kingdom of heaven, are some of us living back in our Egypt of pride or addiction to pleasures, or in the wilderness of our fears and doubts? Yes, Ann has made us realize that we've taken possession of only a small corner of our inheritance.

Jesus has some answers for us. In his Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), Jesus said that the poor in spirit possess the kingdom, as well as those who are persecuted in the cause of right (including abused parents!). His prayer, asking that his kingdom come, was coupled with the petition that his Father's will be done. When reminding his listeners that they did not have to worry about their basic needs because God would look after them, Jesus commanded his listeners to seek first the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness. He noted that it is not the person who merely says the right words, but he who does the will of God who will enter the kingdom of heaven. It looks as if possession of the kingdom comes down to an obedient, trusting faith stemming from a humble heart.

Moses said much the same:

"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 carries 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. 1:29-31), Jerusalem Bible).

Sounds like a pretty good definition of faith: to believe that God loves us so much that he will fight for us or carry us like a child, whichever is appropriate.

Now we can see that some of our problems with Ann have arisen from our lack of faith. We felt it our duty to keep trying to teach her, even when it was obvious that we were getting nowhere; instead we should have trusted that the Lord would do it or would show us how. We hope no one misunderstands; children must be taught. But if they become unteachable, as our daughter did, then we should let God take over, all the time praying and praying some more. Our faith was also lacking in that, when she made

life so unpleasant, we often felt we had to "take up for ourselves" by trying to teach her to be grateful or to do what we wanted, not trusting that the Lord would look after her—and us. The phrase "possess the land" has come to be for us a big reminder that the bottom line in achieving his victory is a submissive, child-like faith, the kind of faith that will give us the courage, or the hope, to endure and to endure joyfully.

(3) Conquer With Love.

But neither faith nor hope is the end of the story; love is, and for the last three weeks, while Ann has been home recuperating from foot surgery, we've been in the Lord's school again. (Her disease has not progressed too far yet, so she is still semi-independent.) It's the first time she's lived with us since a disastrous summer four years ago. We have to admit that it was a good three weeks overall, and although it was very tiring physically and spiritually, we managed to secure the land we had possessed by showering Ann with loving attention, accepting her as she is, unholy warts and all. Once we had to draw the line when her behavior went beyond what we could tolerate in a Christian household, but we did it out of conviction and not out of our own anger or resentment, and she complied after a tense hour or two.

But then there was yesterday, when we nearly blew it all. We were to move her into her new apartment in the next state, and she got into one of her petulant snits. The best we could do was simply keep our mouths shut, else we knew something very unloving would emerge. For us, keeping quiet was a small victory, and yes, we were brought up short again, realizing that we still have a great deal to learn about sacrificial love, the kind that expects nothing in return. We can manage it for awhile, but we find it hard to sustain when we get so very tired or when Ann gets into one of her moods. That's

when we have to start over and possess the land again, having the faith that we can endure, that we can overcome our own selfishness which wants a "thank you" now and then or a recognition that we're giving up a lot to do this. That's when we must remember that we have a glorious land to possess, for God is there

Seven Miles

KATHLEEN BLAKELY

The road to my mother's house is seven miles of curves and hills from the edge of the small town where my brother lives. The drive is just long enough to invite reflection. It is a drive I take every week to see Mom, usually to take her back that seven miles to eat at her favorite restaurant.

Two years after she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and a year after moving her to an adult foster care home, this drive is becoming increasingly difficult for me. I try to count my blessings. Mom is content with her situation, showing none of the anger and difficult behavior often identified with her disease. My brothers, my sister and I have conferred together on all decisions regarding Mom, and we share equally the responsibilities, so no one of us is overloaded. She has a wonderful caregiver, a Christian woman who sees her work as her call from God. Social Security and VA pick up the bills. So all my bases are covered. But when I look ahead to the future, I can see no happy ending to my story. And when I look back, I miss so much the woman Mom used to be. I am forced by circumstances to live as the Scripture teaches, one day at a time. I can usually keep the future at bay, but the past often sneaks up on me, and wins the battle

before us, ready to carry us or fight for us. Right now, we'll just settle for the hugs.

* Generally, we do not print anonymous articles in *Integrity*. In this exceptional case, however, we believe that it is appropriate in order to protect the daughter's privacy.

without a fight. Driving down the road, I wish I was on my way to see my real mother.

My real mom was the world's best listener. When she asked, "How was work?", she really wanted to know, and she wanted to hear the whole story. She listened to Daddy's tales for 35 years, and to her children's whenever we gave her the opportunity. We could always make ourselves out as the good guy in the course of events, and she would believe it, whether or not it was true. Critical words about her husband or children didn't exist in her vocabulary. Sometimes I still tell her about my job, but she isn't able to understand, respond, or remember.

She used to delight in her grandchildren, never tiring of hearing every detail of their development and all the special things they said or did (that a parent likes to tell a number of times). My niece Candace, who was just one year old when Mom became a widow, was a favorite, because her delightful enthusiasm for "Gamma" and for life in general got Mom through that first long, rough winter alone. Today she doesn't always recognize Candace, since an eleven year old with pierced ears and a real sense of style doesn't jive with the Candace in her mind—a small, dark-curly-headed

dynamo.

So why do I make this drive? Partly because it is expected of me. In the plan we siblings have worked out, this is one of three visits Mom will have this week. I do it partly because regular visits contribute to her general sense of contentment. And partly because, once in a while, I'll get a chance to visit with my real mom for a minute or two.

One day I mentioned something to her about Dad, and I knew by her eyes she remembered him. "I don't know why he loved me, but he did," she said. I didn't know how to reply. How could I put into words, and help her remember, the love we know they shared, giggles behind closed doors, countless hours spent in quiet togetherness, and a goodbye kiss every morning before work up to that very last day? So I made a joke, "Because you were shorter than him" and we both laughed. Then my real mom disappeared,

Trust And Obey

DENISE GERMAIN

"Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." These words rang through my mind as I sat on the jury panel. For the past three years I had been arguing with the U.S. District Court personnel to take me off their list. You would think that having four little children would constitute a hardship. Every six months a jury summons was sent to me to which I would write a letter and ask to be excused. First because I was pregnant and due to have my fourth child, later because I was nursing and, finally, because child care for my two youngest was just not available. What if I were assigned a long case? I was angry that no one cared about my

and the train of conversation was lost. But, for the hope of one of these moments, I make the weekly drive.

Seven miles of wishes. Then I turn the corner, park my car and enter the big, sprawling home. It always smells warm and clean. The other residents greet me; after a year I'm a familiar face. Then I see Mom, sitting on the edge of her chair. Her eyes light up. "Where are we going?" she asks. I tell her, get her coat, and say a few words to her caregiver. Mom looks at her and she introduces us, as she does every week. "This is my daughter, Kathy."

To hear those words, I'll gladly drive seven miles.

Kathleen Blakely is a graduate of Great Lakes Christian College. She is a Claims Processor in the Sisters of Mercy Health Care System, and the Minister of Worship and Programming at Southpoint Community Christian Church in Woodhaven, Michigan.

predicament. When the last summons came I was told I would have to show or the judge would cite me for contempt. The clerk at the other end of the phone told me that if it were an emergency, I would find someone to care for my children, and I suppose she was right. Eventually I learned that there are many such people in my shoes and, contrary to what I originally thought, the court system simply cannot make exceptions for women like me.

What started out to be a very angry and frustrating trip ultimately turned into a wonderful learning experience. Once again I ask myself... "Why does it take me so long to hear the Lord's tender

pleading—"There's a reason for this—trust me." How many times do I have to receive this lesson before I begin to automatically respond with a "Yes, Lord, I will follow"? As an adult I am not accustomed to having someone tell me that I have no choice, such as showing up for jury selection. I felt uncomfortable being in a situation where I was helpless to do anything about it. If it were in the summer and close to home, it may have looked interesting—Lord knows I need diversions to being a full-time stay-at-home mom with four children ages 9, 6, 4 and 21 months. But this was downtown Detroit, 22 miles away, and I didn't know where I was going. I was afraid. Soon these thoughts reminded me that I had felt this way before.

Afraid To Trust

Last January the Lord began a work in me and I started down a path with the same feeling of fear and helplessness. For 39 years I lived with emotional turmoil and confusion: being tossed about with every wind of doctrine, a double-minded woman, unstable in all my ways, ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Life was excruciatingly painful and I never fully knew why. A series of events turned this around for me.

It started with the day I went forward at church. I wanted the church to pray for me because I sensed that I was about to embark on a journey of some sort and I was terrified. I knew somehow that the Lord was about to open doors and reveal things to me that I had not experienced before. I was right. I felt that a veil was being lifted as though I were blinded by something of which I was unaware. Later I realized that this blindness was denial of the truth—not in a conscious way, more out of ignorance than anything. The Lord then led me to a woman therapist at the Downriver Guidance Clinic who helped me through the process by which I would

begin to discover myself. Interestingly enough, our church began a support group on Wednesday nights led by a woman who had been co-dependent. Her husband was addicted to drugs and alcohol. She has since divorced and remarried and shares her knowledge and healthy insight with the rest of the group. It was with the help of these two elements that I began my journey out of denial into one that continues to become healthier and healthier every day. With the help of these people and Mark Frost, our minister, and several recommended books, I have discovered my dysfunctional past as well as my dysfunctional marriage.

Let me say here that 80% to 90% of families today are dysfunctional and everyone can benefit by the tools I've been handed. I truly believe that we should use every available opportunity to become the healthy individuals that God intends for us to be. I also learned that I married someone from a dysfunctional background as well, because that's what felt normal and non-threatening to me regardless of whether I was happy or not. I was not. Only now, twelve months later, am I learning what happiness is and what it means to be content. I know more fully now that the Lord is with me. With His strength and courage I can overcome all obstacles if I will just trust Him and obey His direction. That's all He asks (For without faith it is impossible to believe Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him).

Fear At Court

After finally going through the jury selection process and being picked to serve on a jury, I found it very interesting to see how each attorney and clerk spoke and acted to the judge. I observed a reverence and respect that I had not seen before and something you don't often see today in the normal course of the day. It seemed as though I was in the early

colonial days (with the exception that the judge and one of the attorneys were female). What seemed stranger yet was that it was totally acceptable and comfortable for them to act in these ways—so polite, so accepting of what the judge said, hardly any argument, in complete submission.

In contrast to this was the actual case: a young man violating his parole by having guns in his home, totally disregarding the law. He was living with a young woman who had three children, two of which were his. They were not married. Their lives were in total chaos. Theirs was a very dysfunctional home for sure. A raid was made against the home because they observed a continuous flow of traffic in the home and they suspected drugs were involved. During the raid the guns were found, and a blow-up of a picture the agents took that day clearly showed a loaded Colt 45 lying on a shelf in the closet. Underneath the gun was an 8 x 10 studio portrait of two little children about the ages of two or three, perched on large ABC blocks strategically arranged for balance. I could only see one of the children for the gun covered the face of the other. A loaded rifle leaned against the wall in the corner of that same closet. According to testimony, as the house was raided the children played in the backyard.

All during the trial the children were in and out of the courtroom. At one point the oldest boy, who was about four years old, fell asleep all alone on the bench. I'm not sure if he knew where his mom was or not. She would only step into the courtroom for a minute at a time. Most of the time she was out in the hallway. He seemed accustomed to being alone—never once did I see him look around for her. I was struck with the oddity of his calmness or should I say lack of spirit for his age. I know my four children would never sit that still. I couldn't help but hurt for him.

When I left court for the day and

headed for my car, I saw this same family walking down the street; the small child was left to walk on ahead. He did stop at the traffic light, but nobody ran to catch him or even seemed to care that he was standing on the street corner. One of the other jurors gently laid her hand on top of his head and told him not to go in the street. We all kind of looked back, wondering where his mom was. They stayed behind about 20 feet, debating about something. I wondered why nobody was coming for the boy; then they finally flagged a taxi down and the boy turned and joined them. My heart ached for him and for them. I began to think about the homeless in the city and how much I didn't want to even go there in the first place. It was much more comfortable to be in my warm home with my nice things. How sad it is and how ashamed I felt that prior to this I had never thought or had reason to think of the homeless in our city. I vowed to look into the Rescue Mission to see what I could do to help.

One other thing I had observed in the picture shown to us at court was that there was absolutely nothing hanging on the hangers in the closet. There was a jacket on the shelf and a few items of clothing on the floor along with a pair of shoes. I wondered where their belonging were—did they have more clothes somewhere? I found myself wishing I could take them in and help them. Surely all they needed was counseling, schooling and a chance to make something of themselves. However, I have learned that I am a rescuer, and people are responsible for themselves. These adults, sadly enough, made choices, and there are institutions out there to help them. I decided again that the Rescue Mission could help me understand and perhaps help with these concerns as well. And I can pray—why do I always look to prayer as a last resort? The Lord has made it so clear that this is one of our greatest weapons against the enemy.

Life-Giving Trust

As I pondered these things, I reflected back to myself and wondered why, after 12 years of on and off therapy, I had never heard that individuals from dysfunctional homes are taught three rules: 1) don't talk, 2) don't trust and 3) don't feel. I'll never forget the day my minister, Mark Frost, shared these rules with me for the first time as I sat in his office telling him how much I just wanted to die. Life had become excruciatingly painful and nearly unbearable. When he told me about the three rules, I realized that this was true in my family as I grew up. In fact, I learned the rules so well that even though I know that I don't have to play by these rules any longer, I am constantly battling the automatic pattern of resorting to them when I feel threatened in any way. Fear is my number one enemy at times.

During the drive home from my jury duty, as I was contemplating these thoughts, I felt a sudden urge to turn the

radio on. A song was playing and I listened with utter amazement at how the Lord works. He knows me so completely. I wondered if the writer went through the same dysfunction because the words expressed my experience of the last twelve months exactly:

I can see clearly now the rain is gone.
I can see all obstacles in my way.
This is the rainbow I've been praying for.
It's gonna be a bright, bright sunshiny day.

It definitely is a sunshiny day! I'm happy to say that I no longer want to die. In fact, I look forward to life and all the exciting things the Lord is doing and will continue to do. I have a lot of catching up to do and I've only just begun.

Denise Germain and her husband have been members of the Trenton Church of Christ for 18 years and reside in Flat Rock, Michigan.

Spiritual Truths For My "Sacred Journey" (Part Three) Active-Waiting: A Theology of Divine Intervention

CURTIS D. McCLANE

Waiting. I hate waiting. When I am waiting for something, I seem so passive and helpless. I am the type of person who likes to be in control, and I definitely am not in control of a situation if I have to wait. You see, the real problem is that I cut my teeth on a "doing-faith" and it is difficult for me to give way to a "being-faith." And yet, as I reflect on my sacred journey it becomes apparent that my greatest moments of spiritual experience

and growth have been during the waiting periods.

The contrasting images in my life are striking indeed: a nervous pacing of the floor in contradiction with a folding of the hands in prayer. Nervous pacing is really the opposite of what it seems. It is not active-waiting. Instead, it is forced passive-waiting. My nervousness and agitation of spirit are the symptoms of a deeper spiritual warfare going on in my

soul. Human free will and the Divine Sovereign will are engaged in combat. Who is really in control? A folding of the hands in prayer is really the opposite of what it seems. It is not passive-waiting. Instead, it is volitional active-waiting. My calmness of spirit is a testimony to my resignation to the divine will. God is in control. And only when I relinquish my desire to make things happen, to fix the problem, or manipulate circumstances in my favor will God then be free to work in and through me.

God Waits With Us

I never really understood this spiritual truth and reality until I met Don. His wife, Kathy, called me one day from the local hospital and requested that I come by and visit with him. I did not at that time know either one of these people. Kathy called me because her brother was a member of another church in another town, and he suggested that she give me a call. I remember that original phone call. Kathy indicated that Don was not a Christian, but she felt strongly that he was at the point in his life where he needed someone to talk to.

I arrived at the hospital and found his room. Don was sitting up on the edge of his bed. He was weak. His arms and legs were swollen. It was obvious that his body was retaining fluids. He had difficulty breathing. And he was taking the last of his radiation treatments for lung cancer. He did not really want to talk, but I asked him if it would be fine for us to hold hands and breathe a prayer to God. Don said he would like that. I said a prayer before I said a prayer. You probably know what I mean. "God, I know you will hear this prayer, but please use this one to minister to Don, to reach the depths of his soul and kindle the embers of love he has for you."

Little did I know that God actually answered that little request in my own life. Don became the teacher, and I became

the student. After a short time he was able to come home. Once a week I made it a point to go by and visit him at home. He had a hospital bed brought into his bedroom so that he could rest easier. And on those days I was privileged to sit by his bedside and hold his hand, I could sense a real deepening of his faith in God.

Don went through a brief period of gaining some physical strength. He made the decision to commit his life to Christ. His family and I witnessed his new birth of the water and the Spirit. Probably six times after that he was able to hobble and shuffle into the worship assembly and lift his voice in praise to God with the rest of us.

He took a turn for the worse, and one Sunday morning instead of being with us for corporate worship, he had to be rushed to the local hospital. Right after my sermon, someone relayed the message to me that Don was extremely ill and the doctor's prognosis was not good. I rushed to the hospital instead of going home for lunch with my family. He died just minutes before I arrived.

I witnessed in Don's life a faith and dependence on the Sovereign activity of God in his life. His entire life was one of active-waiting. Before leaving Don's situation, I want to share two things that demonstrated this best. I remember one week when he could not make it to worship services, he called me and asked if I would come over to his house and help him celebrate the Lord's Supper in his own living room. During those special moments of togetherness we talked about suffering and waiting. He said that he could identify with Jesus' suffering while he was waiting to die on the cross.

Also, a week before he died, Don made this comment: "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired. I am ready to go home and be with the Lord." His waiting to die had become wearisome. His physical suffering became excruciating. But he did not see himself just passively lying in his bed waiting to die. He was

eagerly anticipating and actively-waiting for God, his Father, to take him home.

Wait In Life's Moments

Henri J. M. Nouwen has written one of the most helpful articles on this entire subject: "A Spirituality of Waiting: Being Alert to God's Presence in Our Lives" (*Weavings*, No. 1,2 (Jan./Feb. 1987): 6-17). He points out that one reason waiting is so difficult is because people are afraid—they are afraid of the future, they are afraid of not knowing, they are afraid of what others might do, they are afraid of themselves, especially the inner feelings and thoughts that come into play when one chooses to wait. It is amazing how often Satan, our adversary, is able to utilize fear in our lives to paralyze our faith. And in this instance, fear keeps us from waiting.

The essence of waiting, Nouwen maintains, is to be present to the moment I am now in. Because the present moment is *the moment* in which God is going to work. Just think of how much time and energy we waste wishing the present away for a future that never comes within our grasp. Tomorrow I will change. I wish for different circumstances. I lose sight of the fact that God wants to work in my life right now with opportunities at my fingertips. But with a wave of the hand I dismiss them as trivial, hoping for that grandiose, center-stage, once-in-a-lifetime appearance. But in my heart of hearts I know such a thing will never happen. And yet, I still allow that kind of thinking to de-sensitize me to the touch of the Master's hand in the present moment.

I have learned, as Henri Nouwen so insightfully points out, that "waiting is open-ended." Once I learn to believe that God is active in my life, I still have a tendency to want to control how God is going to do what he has decided to do in my life. Faith and trust mandate that my vestigial urgings to control must be

relinquished. This is a testimony to my belief in the Sovereignty and Providence of Almighty God.

Providence is an amazing thing. Recently in our Wednesday evening Bible Study we wrestled with the topic of God's providence. We were all agreed that too often in the past Christians have tried to define providence in terms of beneficial, positive things happening to them. But this is not the idea of providence at all. In the stance and posture of active-waiting we become the recipients of "guidance, planning, and forethought behind the scenes" in which God is subtly at work accomplishing the divine will in a fallen world (Bob Barnhill, "The Unseen Hand," *Restoration Quarterly*, No. 2, 18 (1975): 89.).

Wait For The Word

Nouwen also points out that a spirituality of waiting includes an "alertness to the word." It is the word within our community of faith that seeks to shape our will. Too often our search for God's will in the Word is nothing more than an exercise in privatization. We go searching for our own little truth and find what we were looking for. The concept of alertness helps us hear the word in the context of the church. The preaching event, the reading of the sacred text, scripture-prayers, psalms and hymns are just some of the ways in which we can hear the voice of God. Active-waiting is the attentive ear tuned to the right frequency to pick up God's vibrations. This communal hearing helps make us aware of a mutuality of waiting. All of us collectively are waiting for different movements of God in our lives. And at the same time we are collectively waiting for the promise of our Lord's return. The *parousia* (appearing) of the Lord provides the background in which the Word and the Spirit create within each of us a new life characterized by waiting.

Rear Admiral George J. Dufek, a U.S.

naval commander, tells of his experience years ago in an Antarctic expedition with Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd. At that time Dufek was a lieutenant and navigator. It was Byrd's goal and mission during this trip to break through the ice of Sulzberger Bay farther than any other sailing vessel had previously done.

Byrd's small wooden sailing ship, U.S.S. Bear, was soon hopelessly jammed in the ice. The sails were of no help and the engines were no match for the teeth of the ice-jam clamping down on them with a death-grip. As Admiral Byrd paced the deck of his ship, he said, "Patience, that's what you need in the Antarctic. Wait—give wind and tide a chance to change. It will loosen the ice and allow us to go on."

Dufek then relates, "Turning to me, the Admiral said, 'Remember that, George. It applies to life, too. When you get stuck, don't give up. Be patient. Wait. Hold what you have. Circumstances will change and let you go on again.' We got through the ice in Sulzberger Bay, and in the years since then I have found the Admiral's philosophy to be true" (*Words To Live By*, edited by William Nichols. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1959; pages 111,112).

Life's experiences have taught me a spirituality of waiting. Like Dufek, I, too, have had to wait for God to move the ice-jam in my life. I got to the point where I could do nothing else. But in reflecting on all this, I was compelled to ask, "Can a biblical theology of waiting be constructed, or is this just a psychological nicety to help me make it through the tough times?" Turning to the pages of Scripture I was unprepared for what I discovered.

A Theology of Waiting

In the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures there is a clear emphasis on a spirituality of waiting. The Psalmists affirm the place of waiting in their relationship with Yahweh. And the wide-range of perspectives utilized in just the Psalms

material is evidenced by the 21 passages and seven different Hebrew words present. Three profound theological concepts leap out as one engages with the biblical text for the purpose of discovering and formulating a theology of waiting: silence, expectation and hope.

In Psalm 62 the composer uses two different words for silence. "Truly my soul silently waits (*dumiyyah*) for God; from him comes my salvation" (62:1). And later in the same psalm he reiterates the same thought: "My soul, wait silently (*damam*) for God alone, for my expectation is from him" (62:5). This affirmation and first person imperative comes from a context of calm assurance that God is his rock, refuge and salvation. It appears from this psalm that David is reacting against the treachery of people in influential positions who gave him a raw deal. At a time when he would naturally want to strike back and get even with those who are unjustly making his life miserable, he backs off and asks for God to begin working. The silence is a cessation of his revengeful heart. The silence is a stepping back and allowing God to take over. The silence is a deep-seated trust that God will make things right.

The Hebrew concept of *qavah* embodies both expectation and hope. We hear David sing a plea for deliverance and forgiveness in Psalm 25: "...Let no one who waits (*qavah*) on you be ashamed; let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause" (verse 2). In Psalm 37 David sings about the heritage of the righteous and the final end of the wicked: "For evildoers shall be cut off. But those who wait (*qavah*) on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth" (verse 9). And finally, David writes a song in which he pleads that his experiences not be a hindrance to those coming to God: Let not those who wait (*qavah*) for you, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed because of me..." (Psalm 69:6).

One other Old Testament reference

before we move to the New Testament: Isaiah 40:31. In the second movement of Isaiah's prophetic oracle, a message of comfort and hope is offered. The prophet offers these words: "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint." It is in active-waiting that God's people are renewed. Inner, spiritual renewal comes when we wait for God to work. Inexhaustible energy and unstoppable exuberance are the wind beneath our wings!

When I turned to the New Testament I found in the life and ministry of Jesus a curious phenomenon that I had not noticed until Nouwen pointed it out to me in his helpful article. Jesus' ministry is very active up until the time he is betrayed by Judas. He is constantly teaching, healing, helping, caring, touching, guiding and doing for others. But when he is betrayed, the gospel writers tell us that he was literally "handed over" to the Roman authorities. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus was able to do something. He pleaded with his Father to take the approaching cup of suffering and sorrow away. He brought his disciples with him for support.

But once Jesus is "handed over," he can no longer do. He, from this point onward, is "done to." He is ridiculed. He is subjected to a mock trial. He is spat upon. He is de-clothed and robed, crowned with thorns. He is led to Pilate's hall. He is whipped and beaten. And he is finally nailed to a cross. He has control over none of these events, because he allowed himself to be "handed over" by Judas to the Jewish authorities. But God is working in Christ's passion event.

From the passion experience, Jesus becomes the paradigm for waiting. It is a waiting that endures senseless suffering. It is a waiting that looks beyond the immediate to the eternal. It is a waiting that asks God to use the present

circumstances to his glory.

Waiting.
The bus is in front of me.
I cannot go even though the light is green.
I hate waiting.

Waiting.
The doctor said that it was nothing to worry about.
But I won't know the results until Monday.
I hate waiting.

Waiting.
Nine months is a long time to be an expectant father.
We've tried a thousand different names.
I hate waiting.

Waiting.
I prayed awfully hard that God would change me.
Not much has happened since then.
I hate waiting.

Waiting.
The cashier is having trouble with her register.
I even got into the express lane.
I hate waiting.

Waiting.
I said I would forgive him for what he said.
But I wanted some assurance he would never say it again.
I hate waiting.

Waiting.
I am looking for God's hand in my affairs today.
I overslept and the office staff was cranky.
I hate waiting.

[And God says to me in my moments of active-waiting:]

My son, active-waiting:
I see the bus in front of you.

But the lady boarding has muscular dystrophy.

Be silent and wait for me to work.

My son, active-waiting:

I know it seems a long time until Monday for the results.

But I am teaching you to place your hand in mine.

Be silent and wait for me to work.

My son, active-waiting:

Think nothing of being an expectant father for nine months.

I have been expectant for thousands of years.

Be silent and wait for me to work.

My son, active-waiting:

I know you want to change quickly with your life.

But lasting change is proportionate to the time involved.

Be silent and wait for me to work.

My son, active-waiting:

The cashier you are so impatient with,

This is her first day on the job.

Be silent and wait for me to work.

My son, active-waiting:

Think of the many times you have asked me for forgiveness.

Have I ever asked for reassurance that it would never happen again before I extended my forgiveness to you?

Be silent and wait for me to work.

My son, active-waiting:

Do you know why you overslept this morning?

You are allowing yourself to be driven and everyone else knows it.

Be silent and wait for me to work.

Active-waiting.

God, I hear you now.

God, I am sorry.

I love waiting.

Dr. Curtis D. McClane holds a D.Min. from Drew University, an M.Div. from Harding University Graduate School of Religion, and a B.A. in Bible from Freed-Hardeman.

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 66)

When we turn to Jesus, the Ultimate Paradox, he will reveal the truth in life's contradictions and illuminate our path to God:

I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

May these pages provide our paradoxical lives with encouragement, fellowship, and understanding.

Diane and Bruce Kilmer
Co-Editors

Intercepted Correspondence

The following "Intercepted Correspondence" is a continuing feature begun in the January/February 1988 issue of *INTEGRITY*. These letters are *INTEGRITY'S* version of C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* and Os Guinness' *Gravedigger Files* and are written by two different *INTEGRITY* board members.

To refresh your memory and inform new readers, our imaginary setting has Bruce attending WordPerfect computer classes, where he accidentally begins intercepting subversive communication between two devils on his computer screen. The *INTEGRITY* board decides that we must inform Christians everywhere of the destructively evil plots of the nefarious teacher Apollyon and his young student Ichabod by publishing the letters for as long as they can be intercepted.

My Dear Nonplussed Nephew,

It ill behooves you to be confused or embarrassed about my imposed secrecy with reference to our agent who is now working with "Scooter" Barton. My rationale is elementary: what you do not know, you cannot divulge to others, intentionally or unintentionally. Your being privy to the information could not conceivably aid or abet the task now undertaken; revelation of the agent's identity by any manner whatsoever might seriously damage the operation. You must accept my judgment in the matter; and, I assure you this does not in any way reflect upon your reliability, character, confidentiality, or esteem in my sight.

Your second cause for concern stands high among those which give us deep difficulties. It's all tied up to the words our Enemy spoke to the first created pair—that I would bruise the heel of the Woman's seed, but he would bruise my head. Those words simply meant that he can cancel the penalty of death (and residence in our halls, which is legitimately due every man who has sinned), because of his unfair but effective use of Grace. The meaning is simple: every human being, by rights, should be our property, since sin can be found in them all. But

God cheats. He reclaims these doomed sinners on the basis of the intervening death of his Son and their commitment to his service; literally steals them from our fold!

You say you have a problem in trying to understand how the Cross, a symbol of shame, could be misconstrued as suggesting victory. In this, you touch another of the Enemy's illogical but effective anomalies. We had that nomadic preacher literally dead to rights, condemned to the "torture stake;" and it was a lifeless corpse they put in the tomb. But after three days he burst forth, alive! And we were foiled once more. Now the anomaly is being exploited no end. We cannot change the facts, and it profits nothing to complain about the illogical use of the symbol, as you have noted. But we *can* do precisely what you have noted: encourage the cheapening, ornamental display of diamond-encrusted, or magnificently carved and aesthetically beautiful representations of a cruel death instrument.

I certainly urge you to emphasize the negative aspects of this whole circumstance. Encourage worship of the symbol, and erase its true significance;

make the whole chain of events sound too much like fiction to be credible to a rational mind; adroitly attack the accounts in the Christians' Bible as contrived or perverted by prejudiced, power-seeking zealots; capitalize upon the divisive attitudes and divided followers of that Jesus; call attention to the numerous hypocrites, the "back-sliders," the obnoxious "holier-than-thou" ones and their ilk. In other words, to alter the familiar statement slightly, "Accentuate the negative, and eliminate the positive!"

Another point to remember: the Enemy plays by the rules. He is totally predictable. We have no such restraints. "All's fair in love and war," the adage goes; and we're at war! You may speak the truth, or you may lie freely, as the circumstance requires. You may sow seeds of doubt, and reap the fruits of disbelief; you may sow seeds of discord, and reap the fruits of division; you may sow seeds of envy, and reap the fruits of hatred. Choose your seeds well, sow them appropriately and wisely, and your efforts are guaranteed a plentiful harvest!

Yours in blissful disruption,

Uncle Apollyon

My Dear Avuncular Advisor,

All of your talk of sowing and reaping makes me somewhat uncomfortable. We may take some satisfaction in seeing these humans ignore the coming consequences of their actions, but with the Tyrannical Creator lurking out there, just waiting to end our game and toss us into the Outer Darkness, I can't say I look forward to seeing the score settled and the chips cashed in. Humans, after all, can indulge in the foolish but comforting luxury of not believing in God. We devils, unfortunately, don't have the capacity to hide under the blanket of physical existence and pretend we're nothing but a concatenation of atoms. We're all too

terribly and constantly aware of the spiritual realm and the high eternal stakes we're playing for. I don't know why the Old Softie continues to let us do all the damage we do, but I'm going to enjoy it while I can. I must try to relish the fact that for us, doing evil is its own reward.

I am continually amazed (but of course gratified) at the mental gymnastics by which humans manage to bypass not only all the evidences of the Creator's presence in the world, but their own moral and spiritual nature as well. It takes a very "sophisticated" intelligence, indeed, to cast aside the very ground of one's being. We of the Ultimate Rebellion know that with which we contend: we hate It and strive against It (but not without trembling), even though we know Its power. These sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, on the other hand, *choose* to lock out of their cognizance the Source of their lives, while they nose around like animals in a trash dump to find scraps of superficial, man-made "spirituality" to satisfy their deepest longings. Fortunately, we don't have to fully understand these creatures in order to damn them; and I'm not one to look a gift soul in the cranium.

I'm happy to say that there's trouble brewing in the home congregation again. Sister Outreach and Brother Inscape have locked horns over a proposed new Sunday School curriculum for the adults. Brother Lockstep, the Sunday School Director, has introduced a plan to have all adult classes go through an outline of the Bible in a year. Now this sounds like a sterling suggestion, but Sister Outreach contends that people know enough about the Bible already and should be learning about the missionaries we support; and Brother Inscape insists that what is really needed is an hour of meditation each Sunday morning, or at least some really juicy sharing of our emotional problems. Brother Lockstep has responded with a predictable "pox on both your houses," since both of their preferences are entirely

too unstructured for him. I am trying to cultivate the clash between them, since if they sat down and discussed the matter in a prayerful spirit, they might find out that each of them has something valuable to contribute to a solution, and that looking both inward and outward in a disciplined way might be upbuilding to the church. My strategy is to convince each of them to continue fighting for principal's sake and not to engage in weak-kneed compromise.

By the way, something ought to be done about this Chuck Colson fellow. In his latest book, *The Body*, he presents some dangerous threats to our work by attacking the popular idea that a church is to be mainly a haven from stress on

Readers' Response

At this year's Pepperdine Lectures I happened to pick up several back issues of *Integrity*. Thank you for the great material and the positive spirit. Please add me to your mailing list and accept the small gift I have enclosed.

Bruce Henderson
Carson City, NV

It is too much, too precious, too strengthening, too encouraging to put into words just now but thank you for the March/April issue. Praise our Father and his Son!

Kathy Wyler
Kerrville, TX

I do enjoy your paper. The messages are inspiring and helpful. May God bless you as you send out his message.

Bill Parker
Oakland, OR

Sunday for people who work hard making money and buying things all week. If people actually start believing that the real Church is not defined by good-looking buildings and social respectability, we could be in real trouble. He seems to think that persecuted (or at least "unrespectable") Christians may very likely make a greater impact on the world than those who fit into the society. Fortunately for us, that point of view is probably not going to be much heeded; in fact, we may even garner some opposition to it from the pulpit.

Yours for the respectability of evil,

Ichabod

Great articles! My first time to read *Integrity*. I'm a late-comer to freedom in the Lord, having only recently been set free from extreme legalism. I'm hungry for reading materials like *Integrity* and other such materials that I hear of.

Melvin Broaddus
Visalia, CA

On June 12th we marched with 2,000 people on Woodward Avenue, the main street in downtown Detroit. There were black, white and brown people, and we came from churches with a lot of different names over the doors, but we had a unifying force which made us one: the name of Jesus. We weren't protesting anything, but we were praising the name of Jesus and singing and shouting that he is Lord of this city and King of the nations.

(Continued on the back cover)