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PRAYER MEETINGS AND CHANGING TIMES

by Neil B. Wiseman

Prayer meetings, midweek service, people's meetings, group intercession, and testimonies—what mental pictures crowd your mind when you hear these words? I recently used these terms with a group of ministerial students in a word association exercise. They were asked simply to write their first thoughts when they heard these words. Some of the more candid replies included "duty," "dull," "boring," "routine," and one person even wrote, "waste of time."

I wonder what is happening to the midweek prayer meeting. Has the time come to relegate this service to a nostalgic memory from our past? Maybe the church is too slow to change; perhaps the history of the Christian era shows that the church has, at times, tenaciously held to a pruning, tertiary part of her program. But maybe the opposite is true; could it be that the church sometimes gives up a part of her very essence and in such a surrender weakens her members and cripples the power of her ministry in the world?

Maybe the ministerial students in my word association experience were uniquely different from the majority of people who attend our churches. Maybe their experiences had been too limited. Maybe they were not mature enough to see the real issues. But they are the product of the present-day church. And I suspect their perspective had been shaped by unfortunate, poorly planned prayer meetings that accomplished little or nothing.

One of the most sobering thoughts about the contemporary holiness church is that we have trained personnel, satisfactory buildings and reasonably affluent church members. We have so much that the founding fathers of our movement never had. But do we possess what they had? Their prevailing prayers in their public meetings produced power for spiritual exploits. First, they did their best. Then they met for intercession where they prayed for the direct intervention of God to bless and expand their service for Christ and His church. It was not a choice between work and prayer; it was both. After counting all those assets we have which they lacked, do we have that incredible force which resulted from their prayers of absolute dependence on God?

It is obvious that all of their spiritual power did not result from meaningful meetings of intercession at midweek. But I wonder if they could have accomplished what they did without frequent prayer meetings. And a more pressing question for us—can we? Now, a prayer meeting, whatever else it may be, is a conscious effort to connect God and man. Thirty or forty years ago, the prayer meeting was known as the power station of the church; we were taught that the spiritual life of the church depended on the
prayer meeting. For the individual Christian, the midweek service was known as a spiritual refreshing station. Have changing times, the fast pace of contemporary society and the television age made all of this unnecessary? If not, then, in the face of declining attendance and frustration about how a prayer meeting is supposed to be, perhaps it is time to reset our compasses. What is a prayer meeting to achieve?

- Nourishment. The Christian life is more than a dreary road of compulsive duty. It involves all the things we do to nourish our Christianfulness. We belong to Him. Our commitment is to be indwelt by the Living Christ. So attendance and active participation in the church’s group intercession experience is not something that we must do, but something we want to do for Christ’s sake and our own. Admittedly, this distinction between duty and nourishment is a fine line. But if the prayer meeting is planned as a deliberate gathering of the children of God with their Heavenly Father, the atmosphere of the service is quite different when a Christian is expected to be there because all faithful believers are to be loyally present at every prayer meeting. Of course, there is a duty, but it is the duty of a warren baked desert, traveler searching for water and bread.

- Change. Prayer powerfully changes people. This is a fact. People do change things. But check the prayer meetings of the New Testament—people were really changed there. Broken interpersonal relationships were healed; at the place of prayer, the grudge-bearer found grace to forgive and the person who had wronged his brother or sister found courage to admit that he had been the cause of stumbling. And the people of God today, to really be who they are meant to be, must be both forgiven and forgiving. It is not enough to say that a fellow Christian should change his attitude. We must have our self-deceptions shattered so prayer can happen. And that is something we have been the hindering cause to other members of the family of God. At the prayer meeting, how often, as we make our needs and petitions known, do we begin to understand that God works His will through ordinary folks like us? And only the prayer meeting can help people to accomplish those desperately needed ministry tasks. There, at the prayer meeting, God turns our requests into personal marching orders.

- Community Bond. Modern man feels alone in his spiritual pilgrimage. He needs the knowledge that he does not travel alone. The pace at which most people produce both outer and inner pressures that meditate and contemplate a rare luxury. But all along the way we have companions. The shared experiences of fellow sojourners is often used by God as a channel of grace; we simply realize that we are normal. We are travelers. On this holy way, we have great possibilities of growth. I love Dag Hammarskjöld’s words: “In order to walk the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action.” But it also passes through the association of contemplative companionship with the people of God. We are far from alone. There is community of strength among the people of God; as we enter into prayer and sharing with them we discover His strength to meet our weakness.

- Application. Some critics have an element of accuracy in their reproach which claims that preaching and teaching are so verbal that the average church member has difficulty applying the depths to their lives. The prayers of the seasoned saint expressing his need for more of God impacts the new Christian in ways that one preaching never can. The pastor’s testimony of victory over temptation helps the observing teenager know that God is faithful to provide a way of escape from every threat of the devil. Our serious commitment as a church to worldwide evangelization becomes very clear when the people of God begin to testify of the ways the Lord has blessed and multiplied their financial sacrifices for mission endeavors; everyone is stirred to do more. How well we remember the first time a New Christian was asked to lead in prayer during the midweek service. He was so frightened that the only thing he could remember was the Lord’s Prayer. But his praying was a victory that reminded the church that only this young man had ever led to the Lord through the church’s public evangelism efforts.

And how could a discouraged pastor find help faster then to hear the people of God calling his name before the Father in the prayer meeting?

Could it be that God would really use our new commitment to join prayer the people together on a regular basis for intercession and honest sharing? The elements might include a blend of the best from a serious study of the prayer meetings of the New Testament, the useful elements from Wesley’s class meetings, well-presented with understanding and spirit, a review of the great prayer meetings of church history plus applying the helpful skills you have gained in small-group Bible studies. Such a prayer meeting probably has eternal significance that will shape your local church, impact the denomination, influence the holiness movement and increase our evangelical results in the world.
The mysterious but hopeful fact of our human experience in every generation is that God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. He is perfectly right in the ways that surprise even his most alert children. We can never exhaust the wonder of the common events of our everyday life—testing and leading us in strange paths, offering us remarkable gifts.

The first and most unexpected of God's surprise moves is the surprise in the manger: the mighty God-Creator-Father-Mother-Redeemer (to combine several symbols of the Infinite Reality which can never be put into one or many worlds) re-imagined in a Baby born in a stable in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. This is the surprise of the incarnation—God becoming a Man: "...as a human being"—in God's common life with its weaknesses and glories, its hurt and its healing, its tragic evil and incredible good.

Read again the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke and catch the wonder and surprise of which the story of the birth of Jesus is filled. Call it incredible! Why not? The deepest, best place of the impossible is God Himself. Science may give educated guesses concerning the "how," but only the language of faith can really address the "what" and the "why." Beginning in the timeless past billions of years ago and continuing in the present, the language of Job says of this creation: "The stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

The wonder of the greatest pieces of music and poetry ever written are Handel's Messiah and Haydn's oratorio. The stories related to Him were heard by many millions recently. On a hot Sunday in June, I heard the latter with new ears, as perhaps because my ears were more attuned than before.

The first part of the oratorio is a musical restatement of the first versions of Genesis: And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Then follows the tenderness with the chorus: "And whatsoever was created by the hands of the Lord, and all of the earth is filled with His glory." For the religious leaders of the day didn't believe it. This was no way for the Messiah to come, riding on a donkey! So He triumphed up charges and had Him killed on a Roman cross.

Stahl, the self-righteous Pharisee couldn't believe it. And Jesus was taken to Pilate's followers—until his experience with the Living Christ on the road to Damascus.

Who could believe such a story? Incredible! Impossible!

Here, in the beautiful musical poetry of Haydn's oratorio, the story of Creation, the incarnation, and salvation are joined. This little green planet is a speck in the vast multiverse with a hundred thousand other stars as large or larger than ours. Yet on this little planet, in a stable surrounded by cattle sheds, and a Baby born in a stable, God formed this bounded universe. He was, made flesh, and dwelt among us in a helpless little Baby. This Baby grew up to be both tall and wise and loved by God and man. Because He loved even the man that killed Him, became the "light of all men," the incarnation continued with all His life and death and resurrection makes possible the new creation.

The Incarnation completes what Creation began: Confusion yields and order shines most fair. A new creation world springeth forth at God's command!

For do most of the people who call themselves Christians today really believe that this Westphalian ship was too costly, too unsalvific? As the old Negro spiritual says, "Little Jesus child, they didn't know who You was!"

Nevertheless, God's mighty creative Word was made flesh! According to John, He was in the world and the world knew Him not; but to those who did receive the right to become children of God. The Word became a human being and lived among us; and we saw His glory, full of grace and truth—the glory of the only Son of God! The Incarnation means that when we see, experience, and know God, it is always by surprise as He comes in the unexpected commonplaces of humanity—in a child, a youth, a man, a woman, in all who accept and follow this Christ in spirit and life. I sought my soul, but my soul could not see. I sought for my God, but my God eluded me. I found my brother and I found my God! (Author Unknown)

God moves very near with power for a new and wondrous life not only in the common events of the roar of powerful machines, a jet plane, or a rocket, nor from a complex mathematical equation—though these speak of His greatness and order. He comes close to us primarily in our humanity. Yet, God is in all of these natural wonders: order out of chaos—confusion yields and order shines most fair; the beauty and mystery in the natural world of snowflakes, mountains, sunrise, and sunset; the design and wonder in the macrocosm and the microcosm—the limitless and the smallest. God's own fantastic bodies, so wondrously balanced for health and life! But the mighty God comes closest to us in human life, moving within us in the same holy Spirit Who came to Mary and Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, and to small children, to the weary, the blind, the sorrowing, and the imprisoned. The facts can only be described in words that sing and tell the truth which cold reason can only obscure. Someone has said that wonder is written into almost every line:

Mary's wonder and amazement at the angel Gabriel's birth of the Child to Joseph and Mary. What a surprise when Mary came to visit her. "And when Elizabeth heard Mary's greet ing, the babe stretch'd his hand and cried aloud, God's blessings are upon you above all women!"

The adoration of Mary in the Magnificat, one of the most beautiful songs in literature!

The surprise of the father Zachariah, whose powers of speech suddenly returned when he wrote "to the astonishment of all" the same name Elizabeth had already given her baby; "his name is to be called John!"

The last verse of the oratorio is a musical restatement of the first versions of Genesis:

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Then follows the tenor aria with the chorus: "Now vanished by the holy beam of the ancient gloriously shuddering blackness, The first of days appeared ... Confusion yields, and order shines most fair ... A new creation world springeth forth at God's command!"
When Is Preaching Preaching?

Preaching takes many forms. The approaches to presenting the spoken word to a congregation of Christian worshippers varies with speaking and with the social climate. The essence of preaching is proclamation. Regarding preaching as proclamation has not always marked sermon delivery.

The powerful preaching of the Protestant Reformation declined into lifeless lectures on theology. In the rigid formalism of the Church of England pastors were criticized severely for lifting their eyes from their written manuscript. Little wonder that the extemporaneous preaching of Whitefield and Wesley shocked the staid ecclesiastical leaders.

Peter Cartwright represented the ideal of preaching on this American frontier. Standing six feet and three inches tall and ruggedly built, Cartwright enjoyed a sermonic battle with the devil or a sanctified scuffle with a ruffian who attempted to disrupt his meetings. He appealed to Abraham Lincoln, who stated: "I like to hear a man preach like he was fighting a swarm of bees."

Dwight Moody introduced the homespun, down-to-earth Bible-story-type of preaching. Billy Sunday popularized acrobatic, or athletic preaching. In his preaching, Billy Sunday often removed his coat, vest, and tie, becoming "a preacher in perpetual motion."

In the early 20th century, preaching highlighted the pulpit orator. The sermon became a religious oration. Due in part to the impact of theological liberalism in the twenties and thirties, the sermon often became an essay on social issues or a homily on human growth. Harry Emerson Fosdick became the foremost preacher in popular appeal in the thirties and forties by stressing life-situation, or problem-solving preaching. Norman Vincent Peale filled Marble Collegiate Church in New York City by an emphasis on "positive thinking."

Today preaching has no dominant form. Some prefer "sharing" to preaching. Others like to conduct a "dialogue" with their listeners. Still others are inclined to "preach their problems," hoping that a frank sharing of personal struggles will gain a spiritual response.

However it is done, preaching is primarily proclamation. In reality the preacher does not lecture, share, orate, dialogue, or entertain. He preaches. He proclaims. Preaching as proclamation trumpets the love, justice, and mercy of God. Preaching as proclamation states that man is a sinner needing a Savior. Preaching as proclamation may or may not include sharing. It may or may not flow in an oratorical stream, it may or may not entertain—it should always proclaim the wonder of salvation from sin and the grandeur of becoming a child of God.

Here's Thomas Hart Benton's 1949 impression of the Wednesday night prayer meeting.

What picture would you draw to depict the midweek service at your church?
Ingredients for Meaningful Midweek Services

WHAT MAKES THE MIDWEEK SERVICE WORK?

by Gordon Wetmore
Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, Missouri

A Christian congregation needs a regular time to gather for the understood purpose of experiencing the interdependence of individual Christians in the body of Christ. It needs to revitalize these connections through some unification of purpose, instruction and sharing real-life incidents. The midweek prayer meeting is one kind of service.

I assume that your church is accustomed to a midweek service involving group singing, testimonies, and some kind of spoken word. I also assume that the service has been handled by the pastor and you try to make it different from the Sunday services. I assume that small-group programs such as Bible studies and prayer groups are neither in competition with the traditional midweek service nor do they replace the midweek prayer service.

The midweek service was a well-established tradition when today's holiness denominations came into existence. It was already valued as a gathering of concerned Christians for prayer. Personal life-styles and social conditions have changed significantly since the holiness movement began. The essential nature of the church, however, as a network of supportive relationships between regenerated people, has not changed.

The midweek prayer service is distinctly different from the Sunday services. The Sunday school and training hour focus on Christian education and discipleship. The Sunday services build the biblical matrix of worship around the expressions of proclamation, praise, and evangelism. The midweek prayer service, then, provides a strategic opportunity for prayer, instruction in the Scriptures, and the sharing of life experiences.

I suggest three basic ingredients for the midweek prayer service. They are simple. They are profound. They are timeless.

They are people, Scripture, and prayer.

The pastor has the joyful assignment of working under the anointing of the Spirit to take these ingredients and shape a meaningful experience for his congregation.

Prayer
We will begin with the ingredient of prayer. There is something encouraging and inspiring about listening to a fellow Christian pray. Each one prays as he lives out his special concerns and hopes come through in prayer. I am encouraged and strengthened when I listen to a fellow Christian express a concern in prayer that I also have been feeling. It can relieve the all-too-human tendency to feel that I am the only one bearing that kind of burden.

The sound of a prayer expressing our common needs inspires others to get to the throne of grace.

Every Christian wants involvement in the church. The church owes to each one of these persons both spiritual support and a place of service. Prayer does not force the attendance of each of the church, but certainly may provide a meaningful place of involvement and service. Something happens to a Christian when he expresses himself either audibly or in silence in a prayer meeting.

There is an appreciation for group prayer that comes in an experience of listening to others pray and feeling a part of their prayers. We talk much about prayer. There are many books written about prayer. The fact remains that the only way to learn to pray is to pray.

If we have lost our appreciation for a dynamic place of group public prayer, the problem is not in the value of prayer itself. The answer is in the rediscovery of the power of praying together.

We are called to be intercessors. The prayer meeting as well as the risk of developing a conductive setting for bearing one another's burdens. Bearing sin is the burden of every Christian. The only one that person to seek you out to be a friend in time of need. To pray as a group is an memorial of the injunction which Jesus left to love one another as Christ loved his disciples.

People
People are another basic ingredient in a midweek prayer service. Authentic Christians sharing in a midweek prayer service are living illustrations of what God is doing in the world.

Successful prayer meetings will involve the people who are active in the church. Christians who bear the burdens of the Church have the most to say about God's work in their church. We often believe that the prayers of God's people are his own. We must estimate the words of the familiar face. Your own folk who are experiencing God's grace have much to say. The basic midweek prayer service will provide for and encourage sharing of their real experiences. When I listen to a friend whom I have known for seven years, I marvel at how his words are coming. The pastor may thoughtfully request another who is in a special place on their pilgrimage to pray in a midweek service.

The midweek prayer service as well as the smaller group provides the setting where there can be a development of prayer for one another's needs. A Christian who attends only Sunday services realizes he has superficial relationships with other members of his church.

We train our people in part through things that happen to them in our worship services. We are taught to receive strength in the Word of God through preaching. We are taught to praise in the midst of the people. There is the same way an appreciation for the interpersonal nature of the church is taught in a dynamic and vital midweek prayer service. Other group activities such as Bible studies, prayer groups may emerge from the appreciation of the strength and healing of the midweek prayer service.

Think of the word enfleshment. Perhaps the most effective descriptions of the real nature of the church are found in us, the people of God. My willingness to share in the prayer and testimony of the midweek service can be a living model in the development of other Christians. You may win others of less than helpful "modeling" in services gone by but that does not disprove the constructive value of Christian modeling in a midweek service.

I have vivid memories of the "sharers" in the midweek prayer service. As a young Christian they were heroes as they would stand and testify and lead in prayer. I would wish that somehow I could be as free. As I grow in the faith I came to see them as ordinary people who sensed the real value of sharing in the midweek service. As a pastor I now see those same people as being part of the spiritual backbone of the church. They had been nurtured by the Spirit to an appreciation of sharing their lives in the midweek prayer service. That kind of healthy "sharer" still is an effective model.

Scripture
Consider also the basic ingredient of Scripture. An exposition of a biblical passage or at least an extensive reading of the Scriptures is foundational to the midweek prayer service. It provides the stabilizing force. The Word (the living Christ) is present in at least three manifestations in a midweek prayer service. There is the expository Word directed by God the Spirit in public prayer. There is the expository Word that the testimonies reveal how the guidance of God has resulted in concrete Christian action. Thirdly, the pastor is responsible to either IX read himself or to have a self or provide for the training in the Word in the basic midweek prayer service. The oral nature of the service provides a forum for practical applications of these together is that the prayers and confessions of the Scriptures will result in the developing of hunger in the lives of Christians to get themselves more deeply into the Word. And so the midweek service nurtures new channels of Christian growth.

It is hard work as every pastor knows. It is worth every bit of the effort, however. Perhaps the reasons why some of our people are not better grounded in the Word is that they have not been instructed in systematic Bible study such as can be taught in a creative Wednesday night service.

There is a call to revive the basic midweek prayer service. Indeed, in planning for the year your own church calendar should contain special Wednesday night services that meet departmental and programmatic needs. Occasional Wednesday nights may be given to a training program. The point is that the midweek prayer service that is foundational in the training and developing of life-long group prayer.

Group prayer, personal sharing of the life of God in our lives, and group nurture in the Scriptures are musts in the corporate life of the church. No novel ideas, films, or cute programs can or should replace the biblical basics.

A good midweek prayer service is something like a well-prepared and nutritious meal. Begin with the basic ingredients of whole-some food which God has provided. God has also given us the good sense to prepare the food in an edible and conducive setting. This, indeed, also applies to Sunday services, but, in a special way, it applies to the midweek service.
THE MIDWEEK SERVICE AS AN ARENA FOR TRUE FELLOWSHIP

by Randy Michael

The young couple sat in our living room. They told of having been raised in the church, faithfully attending all services and activities, but that there was something missing. They expressed a need for deep fellowship, a mutual caring for each other and the things of the Lord. They wanted to know some Christians intimately, not just many superficially. What did they want? Fellowship—as described in the New Testament and provided in Jesus. Dr. Smiley-Blanton’s book Love or Peril could be paraphrased: "Fellowship or perish. We need deep fellowship or we die. The young couple was speaking of their death—and their desire to live: through fellowship in their Savior.

THE NEED

Reuben Walsh was right: we really do need each other.

An astute observer of the American scene, John Rockefeller III, in The Second American Revolution, writes: "I see the central meaning [of the Second American Revolution] to be a desire to achieve a person-centered society, instead of one built around materialism and large impersonal institutions which breed conformity rather than individuality and creativity.

Ivan Bozanic and Geraldine Spare, high-minded "people-persons," observe: "Like men in previous ages, ours suffers from a gradual erosion of the quality of human relationships. . . . Urbanization, automation, mass transportation, and communication media contribute to this erosion. The current wide popularity of encounter, marathon, sensitivity meetings testifies to modern man’s realization of the erosion of personal relationships."

This need for personal relationships—for fellowship—is an enduring, God-created need. The extra-ecclesiastical efforts described above are a cry for help. The church needs to hear this cry, both from the world and from its own members. What did the early Christians do, immediately after the birth of the Church? Answer:

- And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42, NASB).

They were continually devoting themselves to fellowship! We should not neglect any of these things which they devoted themselves, and for this article let us focus on fellowship. It played an integral part in their lives as Christians.

THE NATURE

The word fellowship triggers many varied thoughts and pictures. The key concern needs to be the nature of fellowship as revealed in the New Testament and provided in Jesus. Heb. 10:24-25 helps us understand fellowship:

Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own meeting together, as in the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near (NASB).

The purpose of our "assembling together" is not "assembling together!" The "assembling together" is a means not an end. It is a way by which we, as members of the Body of Christ and therefore of one another, can be in contact with one another to "livelong together, as in the habit of some," but encouraging one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near (NASB).

What do we know about the life of fellowship in spiritual things today? Is it not an amazing thing that some real Christian people—and I am not questioning their Christianity—when they get together, talk about everything except their Lord? They talk about the weather, they talk about politics, but they cannot talk about the Lord.

There are a number of reasons for this lack of fellowship. One is that our people do not provide for the facilitating of fellowship. We have come to think that our assembling ourselves together is our purpose. So, we come and sit, facing front, not each other. How, then, can we facilitate fellowship? One way is better use of the midweek service.

THE NAVIGATION

To navigate midweek is to follow a planned course of action to a specific destination. The foregoing sections were to describe the specific destination, there are various ways to that end. The utilization of the midweek service is a natural channel to navigate toward that destination. However, there are some shoals and shifting winds of which we should be aware. Let me offer a few suggestions that might help you navigate the ship of your local church into fellowship.


2. Read some books on the nature of the church and fellowship.

3. Become involved in a fellowship group yourself.

4. Begin fellowshipping as a church board and staff.

Utilize staff time for some caring fellowship. Begin board meetings to distribute books on the nature of the church and fellowship and have a potluck dinner at which time you will discuss the book, utilizing a reading guide you gave with the book: What is the author’s main point? How do the author’s quotations really "grabbed" you or challenged you? Two or three things you would like us to try as a board/church, or think we need to work on.

5. Have a church board retreat for the purpose of fellowship.

6. Spend a number of weeks in the midweek service teaching from the New Testament on fellowship and structure some fellowship experiences.

7. Select a group of fellowship facilitators from faithful midweek attendees or among other church leaders. Meet with them for fellowshipping and help them to facilitate the small group fellowship experiences in the service. More than eight in a group is too many!

8. Utilize well-planned fellowship guides—especially in the initial phases.

For instance, one time I taught from Romans 16 about Paul’s affirmation of the people he met. I asked about each person who had something to contribute to others, that Paul needed others. We broke into small groups and with the help of facilitators we had a time to tell each other in our groups what their lives had taught us and how we had received them. On another occasion, utilizing the teaching of the 5,000 loaves, we were to select the character in the incident. We then had some private time for each person to meditate on the incident. They were to select the character with whom they would most identify, think of how that person faced his problem, and how he went through their mind. We then got together in our small groups, shared our identification and why and formed a personal prayer request accordingly.

(Continued on page 55)
TEN SUREFIRE WAYS TO KILL

by Harry A. Rich
Pastor, Metropolitan Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, Kansas

1. Never change the format.
Boredom will take over and your prayer meeting will die a normal death. Variety is the spice of life. If you change things you might revive interest and that would never do. If someone complains about the sameness, or suggests something new, you must quickly reply: "But we've always done it this way." If said convincingly enough they will probably take the hint and see they are not wanted in prayer meeting.

2. Never bother to advertise or promote what you will be doing on Wednesday night.
It probably isn't important anyway. Besides, if they want to come, they will come. The others already have TV programs or activities to take up their time for that evening. There is no use giving them a guilt trip by suggesting they should be in the house of God.

3. Do not waste time preparing for the service.
After all, it is just prayer meeting. Your time is too valuable to waste planning a message or a study for just a handful of people who have learned not to expect much on Wednesday evening.

4. Do not use any audiovisual helps.
People might think that you are trying to teach them something. Besides, audiovisuals are for kids. Old-timers would feel that you would be insulting their intelligence if you used a transparency projector or mimeographed a study guide. If you use a short film to provoke discussion or thought, some old-timer will remark: "If I wanted to see a movie I would have gone to a theater, or stayed home and watched TV." Stay away from chalkboards or flip charts. Chalk and color markers are hard to get out of clothes. One must be careful.

5. Never plan any special music for prayer meeting.
It would cause your musicians to practice and to be in prayer meeting. Your better singers would be offended if you asked them to sing to the small crowd and your poorer singers will feel they are not good enough for Sunday services. Think what a lot of hurt feelings that would cause. The safest thing is to have no special music on prayer meeting night.

THE MIDWEEK PRAYER MEETING
6. Make sure you do not let anyone participate in the service or take part in discussions.

They might not agree with something you have said. That would put you on the spot. You want to avoid that at all costs. After all, if people get to disagreeing with the preacher you can never tell where that might end. Keep a firm hand at all times in prayer meeting.

7. Never involve the young people in the meeting.

After all, they have so little offer it would only be a waste of time. They could more profitably spend the evening whispering to a sweetheart, writing in the hymnal, or doing something constructive like staying home and watching the Wednesday night movie on TV. Besides, if you eliminate the young people, when the old folks die off there will be no one to keep the prayer meeting going.

8. Make it a prayer meeting in name only.

I know it's called prayer meeting, but really, do people come to pray? It should not be necessary to teach your people to pray, to take prayer requests, or to call on several people to pray short prayers. You might embarrass one of your board members by calling on him to pray on the spur of the moment when he left his prayer at home in his other Bible. The preacher should do all the praying. That's what they are paying him for. His prayer should be long and rambling. That always helps to turn some people off.

9. Never ask for suggestions on how to improve the prayer meeting.

Some bright person might just ignore the whole issue again with a sensational idea. Then it would take you another year to get it killed. If someone does give a suggestion, then refer it to a committee where it can gather dust until it is forgotten. You do not need feedback of any kind to help you. You know what you are trying to do and with a little luck you will succeed before long on your own.

If you faithfully follow these 10 rules you should have no trouble keeping your crowd down to the size where you could bury the prayer meeting for good. Then you could stay home and watch the ball games like the rest of the members. The practical advantages of restoring a Wednesday night for your own interests are so numerous you will undoubtedly put these rules in operation without further delay.

I wish you miserable failure in your undertaking.

10. Testimonies should never be allowed.

Testimonies are sure to be interesting only to the one giving them. Why they should be allowed to take up valuable time and make the service longer is beyond me. Some people who are used to testifying may stop coming, but of course we must follow our rules. What are rules for anyway?
Could the Midweek Service Supply...

**The Missing Link in Congregational Life?**

by Tom Nees
Pastor, Community of Hope Church of the Nazarenes, Washington, D.C.

W hose two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them," said Jesus (Matt. 18:20). This may be one of the most misunderstood and misquoted verses of scripture. How often has a pastor looked over a smaller than expected or hoped-for group on a Sunday or weekday and tried to reassure himself and the congrega- tion with these words? Even though our disappointment would lead us to think that it is hardly worth the effort to conduct a service for so few, we go on—certainly there's a point to persist. With this verse we seek to salvage something when our own plans have failed.

For years, I never considered another interpretation of a writer or giving direction for spiritual development suggested that the presence of Jesus can be known in a special way to a few people who have gathered together to be accountable to one another for their spiritual lives. Indeed, the writer was not talking about a chance meeting of a few faithful saints. The more the story is meant as consolation for those moments when Jesus is not in your life, it is a unique way Jesus offered to make himself present to groups of people who would be accountable to one another for their spiritual growth and corporate commission.

In this verse may be a clue to a missing link in our congregational life. We have emphasized the indi- vidual responsibility to believe and have experienced moments of conversion and entire sanctification. Hardly a message con- cludes without a call for individual decisions to follow Jesus in dis- creet. The emphasis is on the individual. At the same time, individual Christians are urged to gather regularly for what may be referred to as "cathedral experi- ences." In these settings services are planned in which people are arranged in groups where they listen to a presentation by a minis- ter or teacher. The assumption is that the larger the group, the more effective the presentation or program must be and the more obvious the presence of the Lord. This is what is going on in an inspired group of people brings excitement and anticipa- tion, but it may in fact prevent the kind of meeting which Jesus promised in the verse. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name..." points upon rows of people in a sanctuary does not provide the setting for the kind of encounter and communication which Jesus was speaking.

While not discounting the im- portance of individual decision and the value of larger cathedral experiences, there is something more to Christian community which is vital and often missing. It is a link which could give meaning to churches large and small. An example of this link is found within the Wesleyan movement during the 18th-century Evangelical Revival under the ministry of John Wes- ley. It is interesting to compare the fruits of the two controversial evangelists; George Whitefield and Wesley. Unlike Whitefield, Wesley's ministry was preserved because he organized converters into groups with trained pastoral leadership. Variously referred to as "classes" and "bands," these groups were small, about 12 in number, and met regularly for prayer, study, and confession to one another about individual and group needs. People who attend- ed the Methodist "Societies" were directed into these smaller groups. The real strength and vitality of the Revival was neither Wesley's open-air preaching nor the Societies, but these smaller units to which Wesley devoted most of his time and attention.

Wesley didn't invent the idea. He borrowed from others of his time, primarily the Moravians. In fact, the New Testament seems to indicate that the first-century Christians met in house churches and share their lives together. The absence of church buildings was not the pe- nance of church building itself, even though it seemed. It was in part, at least, the reason for the rapid growth of Christianity. In our time there is widespread interest in small groups of Christian believers. I was instructed to begin writing out weekly spiritual reports of ten to fifteen members of a congregation in order to gather together for mutual support. Most of this interest and effort has arisen out of the organized church and is often viewed with alarm by church leaders who fear competing claims on membership time and loyalty.

Because we had the opportu- nity to begin a new congregation in 1975, and with our special interest in the ministry to the inner city, we invited the leadership of Hope Community Church in the Nazarene denomination to join us with a conscious attempt to adapt the Wesleyan model of group ac- countability from the beginning. Each member has been in a "mis- sion group" where members assume accountability to and for one another. Groups are identified by particular tasks which the groups take on, with each member of the group prepared to clarify his or her own gift for that corporate mission. More im- portant than the particular task, however, is the commitment to a community where spiritual growth is nurtured. The groups accept certain minimal obligations which include spending one hour each day in prayer and meditation. The group decides on its own daily Bible readings and teaching materials to be used there in prayer each day. Each one is to keep a spiritual journal, recording from the Scripture or whatever notes are helpful and to report with some regularity to a spiritual di- rector, a person who is able to hold up the mirror of accountability upon personal and corporate disciplines.

Accountable for spiritual growth and accepting spiritual direction is certainly the most formidable task that we have for people. While we talk about spiri- tual growth being a natural part of Christian living, few of us have really taken seriously the accountability needed for spiritual growth possible. It is assumed that attending church services once a week, participating in the organ- ized life of a congregation will stir and strengthen the spiritual development. Several years ago, in my first experience of organizing a mission group, I was instructed to begin writing out weekly spiritual reports of ten to fifteen members of the congregation in order to gather together for mutual support. Most of this interest and effort has arisen out of the organized church and is often viewed with alarm by church leaders who fear competing claims on membership time and loyalty.

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Spiritual direction can take many different forms. Most of us would not accept the direct con- frontational approach John Wes- ley expected his followers to adopt. Nor are we interested in monastic regimentation; it is more often a form of listening. A spiritual director is one who can listen without giving too much advice, helping one to hear his own faithfulness to personal commit- ments. My spiritual director is a layman I've known for eight years. He knows me quite well by now. In this relationship he is, my pastor and prophet. He is present both to comfort and to challenge. Rather than writing out reports now, we meet every other week for an hour together. One of our notions is that only those who are accountable to a spiritual di- rector are to offer direction to others. Only by being accountable to another am I able to be a pastor/prophet to others in the congregation.

We are not satisfied that we have refined a reproducible model for ourselves or others. Certainly the Wesleyan example must be adapted for our times. We believe, however, that some of the important principles of spiritual growth which the Christian community are involved here which must be a part of our lives and in some way are funda- mentally the same. The question is often asked, "Is it impossible to prevent spiritual growth and decline?" One of our notions is that only those who are accountable to a spiritual director are to offer direction to others.

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I started during our building program. While our new sanctuary was being built, our prayer service was held in a small Presbyterian church.

One evening while conducting the service, I realized that too many people had come out of a sense of duty. Frustrated by the thought, I stepped down to the center aisle and asked, "How can we best use our time this evening?" Understanding my desire to break from the norm, the people began to respond. One burned lady spoke up, "You can pray for my husband." Instead of waiting to collect more prayer requests, we immediately prayed. Soon others were making requests. We continued to pray after each request, always asking a friend nearby to lead in prayer.

The news of a productive prayer service traveled fast and by the next week our Wednesday attendance to prayer service had doubled. In a few weeks it became necessary to move into a large fellowship hall. Something wonderful had happened. Now many people were coming on Wednesday evenings because they wanted to come. All other services were now being affected because of prayer. Revival had come to Lakeland First Church of the Nazarene through the Wednesday prayer service.

I see the overall number of people at prayer services and the benefits it has brought to the church. The numbers of people attending have increased, and the atmosphere of prayer has improved. The Wednesday prayer service has become an integral part of the church's life, and it has become a regular feature of our worship.

1. A firm conviction that group prayer is a good investment of time.
2. Giving the group the responsibility of determining the direction of prayer.
3. The understanding that each person's prayer request is important.
4. The feeling of oneness permitted by the seating arrangement.

We are sincere in our approach to group prayer the Holy Spirit will surely be present in our meetings. We believe Wednesday Prayer and Share to be extremely important. Our people are genuinely lifted and faith is restored. We enter Sunday's services with great confidence, knowing there has been a great investment of prayer. I've found that there is a direct relationship between Wednesday Prayer and Share and the spiritual atmosphere in our sanctuary on Sunday mornings.

I sense a desire on the part of many to "get back to basics." A real prayer service is a good place to begin.

The Wesleyan Roots of the Midweek Service

by Rob L. Staples

Professor of Theology, Nazarene Theological Seminary

We analyze the 20th-century theological offspring of John Wesley, who had high regard for his significance. A close examination of his organizational structure, so well adapted to his day and so successful in promoting the church's mission, is crucial to understanding the Wesleyan/Methodist tradition.

Today, the modern holiness movement has kept alive the doctrine of holiness. And, thanks be to God, we have, among us, countless "living witnesses" of the experience of holiness. The task, however, is to maintain the balance of holiness and perfection in our movement. The Wesleyan Methodist heritage we are called to live out is a Wesleyan-METHODISM. Without careful consideration, we might end up with a new methodology that is not true to the Wesleyan tradition.

The bands and classes were the two major instruments in Wesley's "guidance system." The bands consisted of not fewer than 5 nor more than 10 persons, and were segregated according to age and sex. It was the class, however, rather than the band, which became the most enduring witness for the growth of the early Methodist movement and for the spiritual nurture of its individual members, although the functions of the bands and classes were essentially the same—"mutual edification, discipline, and discipline in such groups of Christians who were enjoying mutual Fellowship." There were two classifications, however. First, the classes were segregated, as were the bands. "Men and women, old and young, without distinction, met together in them." Secondly, the bands were somewhat more exclusive in that they were composed mainly of those who desired an even closer and stricter fellowship than that provided in the society as a whole. A fellowship in which they 'could not only seek strength for their faith, but also speak without reserve of their remaining spiritual struggles and temptations, without fear of confusing their friends.'
backsliding into former sins. This did not include everyone in the society, the only admission requirement for the class was a desire to confess one's sins and to be saved from them. On the other hand, Wesley's method was regarded as too old-fashioned by many Methodists and the class was divided. Thus, the class could be a means of both evangelical outreach and of nurture for new Christians in a way that the band could not.

Whereas the concept of the band was adopted from the early Christian church, the class was an innovation. Even Wesley's class meeting, simply as a device for paying off a debt on the property of his church, was to gather the members together in a more deliberate and effective manner. The class meeting was to be a place where the members could gather to study the Bible, to share their spiritual experiences, and to help one another in their spiritual growth.

The class meeting was a regular gathering of the members, usually held once a week. The purpose of the class meeting was to help the members grow in their faith and to help them understand their spiritual needs. The class meeting was also a place where the members could support and encourage one another. Wesley believed that the class meeting was a necessary part of the Christian life, and he was determined to see that it was established in every church.
admonition. The prayer meeting affords our people a time to help one another in prayer. How reassuring it is to know that our brothers and sisters in Christ help lift the heavy burden while praying around the altar of intercession.

Moreover, prayer has the effect of uniting God’s people. The church, faced with a problem of internal strife, will do well to bridge the gap by coming together in prayer. Around the throne of the Father the children of God discover a new sense of mutual interests and united mission.

The spirit of revival within the church can be fostered through the prayer meeting. Every movement of spiritual renewal begins with a prayer emphasis. It may be only a few who gather for prayerful prayer, but, when the Holy Spirit melts the hearts in prayer, love and unity prevail. And this unity becomes the foundation of growth and revival.

III. Pastor and People Must Learn to Pray.

The midweek prayer meeting can become the most formal service of the week. This may seem strange to some, but it is nevertheless, a fact. By formal we mean that the service may follow a set pattern with little interest and little spiritual vitality. In other words, the people sing a song or two, someone leads in prayer, there is Bible reading and a few comments, a few testimonies, and then we go home. In many instances our prayer meetings should come in for an overhaul. Let us consider some practical suggestions.

Don’t let it become a preaching service. The midweek church service was never designed for the preacher to mount the pulpit and preach a full-length sermon. The class meeting carried the idea of people participation. While the pastor usually leads the service, there should be a strong emphasis on midweek prayer. A 10- or 15-minute message, based on a Bible passage, is far more appropriate for this midweek service than for the pastor to present a full-length sermon.

- Call for prayer around the altar. While there is no totally right way, there seems to be significance when a group of people kneel together at the altar. As the pastor or the leader at the altar is the focal point for prayer in the church. It may be compared to group dynamics, such as a team playing together on a field or an orchestra playing together in a musical presentation. So it is that the church experiences a sense of spiritual communion when kneeling together before God.

- Make the testimony service meaningful. Additionally, testimony time is very important. It can become a free “talk show”—sort of an “air-your-opinion” act. Some have known how to take advantage of their freedom. Others tend to dominate the time with lengthy verbalizations of trivia. But, this is not a valid reason to discard a traditional practice which has been a part of the church for thousands of years. Frequently, the expression of a life situation provides encouragement to a fellow Christian who may be passing through a similar experience. The Pastor or prayer meeting leader is responsible for finding this gold nugget in the “power” part of the “Hour of Power.” The other part is easy.

I. The Pastor Must Be a Leader in Prayer.

It may be true that if the pastor is responsible to lead his people, but it is true, nevertheless, if the pastor is to expect a praying church, he must be a praying pastor.

It is essential that the pastor develop and maintain a spirit-filled prayer life. We must confess that the pressure of a crowded schedule is the greatest threat to the pastor’s devotional life. Determine a few minutes each day for private prayer. Make an appointment with God just as you would make an appointment with a parishioner. Keep that appointment faithfully.

The private devotional life of the pastor will reflect itself in his public prayer. The uncouth and sincerity of the shepherd as he leads his flock in group prayer will testify to his Spirit-filled life.

II. The People Must Unite in Prayer.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens” is the biblical

The growing church begins on her knees.

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For Advent:
The Christmas Statement of the Son of God

Scripture: Matt. 1:1-17

Introduction: Who and what a person claims or identifies with in a creden- tial statement such as this genealogy speaks volumes.

1. Tamar, the Seducerness (Genesis 38)
   Tamar, the Mother of the Red Light District (Joshua 2:6)
   She was probably the first, or one of the first, harlots to mark her win-
   dow with red.

2. Ruth, the Moabitess (Genesis 19, 20:30-37, also Ruth 1-4)
   There is not much about Ruth (except her scheming dating and court-
   ship practices) to date him. But it was a Moabi, a nationally hired by
   the Jews because of the incestuous national origins of the former.

3. Bathsheba, the Adulteress (2 Sam-
   uel 11:2-12)
   She was not blameless in the affair
   with David.

4. A Question to Ponder
   If Jesus, knowing the dreadful past of these people, still reached out
   identifying with them in His own cre-
   dential statement, is there any failure or sin in your past that could cause
   Him to reject you?

Conclusion: "And every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself,
   even as he is pure (1 John 3:3).

An expanded adaptation (and corruption of) Paul Merrill Bass-
  s's argumentative sermon on Tamar and Judah, and David and Bathsheba.

For Christmas:
Mary's Amazing Acceptance

Scripture: Luke 1:2
Text: "Be unto me according to thy word (1:13)"

Introduction: 1. Remember Mary as a parae-
   llet to Eve. Just as a woman played a
   key role in the fall of humanity, so a woman plays a key role in retem-
   per.

2. We remember Mary for her favor with God. The angel Gabriel
   said she was "mighty favoured" and "blessed".

Mary's Acceptance

Scripture: Luke 2:15-20
Introduction: "Twas the night before Christ-
   mas... But what about the day after?"

Thud! An emotional vacuum crash-
  es in.
On the day after Christmas the shepherds went about their busi-
   ness, too must do. But they did not go back where they were. They returned,
   glorifying and praising God! We, like that.

For the New Year:

Three Wishes For The New Year

Scripture: 2 Cor. 1:3, 12:1-3
Introduction: My last New Year's wishes for you include a wish for

1. Enough Failure to Make You Suc-
   cessful
   b. Productive Failure in the life of Peter.

2. Enough Tears to Keep You Ten-
   der
   a. On the Sahara desert there are no rainstorms—but there are no rain-
      storms.
   b. God can make your tears bene-
      ficial for others.

3. Enough Hurts to Make You Help-
   ful
   a. Helen Keller.
   b. Cor. 1:4
      "Twenty years ago when I was a student at St. Venerable Theologi-
      cal Seminary, a young preach-
      er spoke from this outline in chape-
      l)—the name was Eagle.
      St. Peters. I have since beheld-
      vailed at least two graduating
      classes and three churches with
      this outline.

The Good Example of
Blind Bartimaeus

Scripture: Mark 10:46-52
I. He Had a Great Need—And He Knows It
   "Blind, Bartimeus... sat by the highway
   side begging" (v. 46).

II. He Had a Great Opportunity—
    And He Seized It
   "He heard that it was Jesus" (v. 47).
   "He cried the more and a great deal" (v. 46).

III. He Had a Great Prayer—And He
   Prayed It
   "Jesus... have mercy on me" (v. 47).
   "And Jesus was moved with piti-

IV. He Had a Great Faith—And He
   Exercised It
   "Lord, that I might receive my sight" (v. 52).
   "Thy faith hath made thee whole" (v. 52).

V. He Had a Great Testimony—And He
   Gave It
   "He returned Jesus in the way" (v. 52).

Copied from W. M. Erickson who got it from a Lutheran
preacher whose name I can’t remember.

How to Live it Up

Scripture: Luke 14:24-25; Matt. 16:24

1. Count It Up
   "Which of you... shall not hand
   down first, and count the cost..." (Luke 14:24).

2. Give It Up
   "Let him deny himself" (Matt.
   16:24)
   "Whoever... forsaketh not all that
   he hath... shall not be able to
   save his life" (Luke 14:25). See also Luke
   19:21.

3. Take It Up
   "... lay up for yourselves treasures in
   heaven..." (Matt. 16:24).

4. Keep It Up
   "... take up his cross" (Matt.
   16:24).

5. Borrowed” from a Lutheran
   preacher whose name I do not
   remember: G. K. Bower.
How to Make the Midweek Prayer Service Popular and Profitable

By C. E. Cornell

There should be good fellowship that will make the tired soul rejoice.

When we write that title, we at once lay ourselves open to criticism. But we hope the reader will not be too hasty in the criticism. The “good” is in the doing. You know, the thing. Other pastors have tried this plan that we are about to suggest and they found that it works.

To have 25 percent of the membership of the church in the weekly worship service is almost impossible. The only called prayer meeting is still a little unusual in this age of many attractions which counteract the appeal of the church. Yet even a 5 percent attendance has been experienced. To interest and hold the young people of the church in prayer is of utmost importance. Nothing else is quite so desired, and that is quite within the possibility of the average church.

No cut-and-dried program will work. No plan handed down will suit. No method employed by one pastor will be successful unless there is a personal interest on the other. Maybe no other could use it.

However, there are certain well-defined principles that are easily recognized and of these we want to write in a few short sentences.

First of all, there is the matter of announcement. Just a statement that “we will have a prayer meeting” will not do. That is a fact. We are to have a prayer meeting, but we are to have more than that. The best, most attractive announcement possible should be given the midweek service. This meeting should be so planned that all will be interested. The young people, let them have a part. The mature saints will usually get their share of it. But the “rank and file” of the membership should be brought into active participation. The announcement may indicate this and particularize, mentioning names perhaps, and something of the program.

Then there is the element of time. The service should be brief. One hour is a good measure. In hot weather, less. Keep faith with the folks, and let them know that you begin on time and close on time. Let no “long-winded sermon” spoil your meeting.

The service should be happy, bright, cheerful—three adjectives much alike, but suggestive. The service should have lifting power. There should be the good fellowship that will encourage, make the tired soul rejoice. There should be the dynamic of spiritual power that will send the members forth to a better service for the Master all the rest of the week.

Now about the service itself. We have said it should be brief. But there will be time for all that is needed. Here is a good tried and proven plan or order that may be varied to suit, and from time to time.

Starting on time—the exact minute—have a lively song service. Ask someone who is capable to lead it. Probably different ones at different times.

Use bright hymns and songs, songs of Christian experience. Don’t just sing and sing all you’re worth, use a little sane comment on the verses and have a story quieted—prepared beforehand.

Then call on the people for scripture verses and testimonies—growing out of the hymns. Take 20 minutes for this opening part.

Then if there is “the King’s business” to be done, have it prepared beforehand, and do it promptly.

Another song, then call on one of the laymen for prayer. Then sing again, and after that ask all to stand and request a number of very brief prayers. They will not be so long if the people are standing. Make them gather around some subject, or interest, or incident; and group, or individual who is sick or needy.

This will take another 20 minutes most likely. Watch the time, that it does not slip away from you.

Then the pastor’s message, and close with the pastor’s prayer, leaving the message and the prayer as the closing thought of the meeting.

That sounds a little mechanical, but do not make it so. Let there be spontaneity about the whole service, but let there be such careful preparation that you will not be taken by surprise and say (perhaps inside) “What shall we do next?” Use groups, use the young people, use the singers, use the lantern, use pictures, use music. Do everything to make it interesting and varied.

If there is any service in the week that needs preparation it is the midweek service. We advise more careful preparation for this most difficult service. It will not do to pick up the Bible at the last minute and hastily run through some parts of it and look for a scripture to read, and then make offhand comments.

The expository method is undoubtedly best. Not too rambling and disconnected and general, but careful analytical explanation of the Scriptures. The people want to know the Bible. It is the most interesting Book in the world, and the one Book least known and little understood. Make its truths live, and the people will hang on your words. We have found that a good plan is to study the Bible by books in the midweek service. Take a chapter (don’t try to read it all in the meeting) and point out the great truths, doctrines, and visions that are there. Take a single text and open it up and let the light shine on it and through it. Ask “What does this chapter mean?” “Of which is the writer speaking?” “What great texts connect with this one, can any of you give me one?”

Close on time. Even if you are not through with your speech. The people will come again for more, if you interest them. Insist on everyone shaking hands with everyone. Be yourself an example. In greeting everybody present personally. Don’t stand off in one corner and talk to one person. And you will find that you do not need to have church parties, suppers, get-togethers to bring the people out to prayer meeting. They love to come when they find help, comfort, strength, cheer, and good fellowship.

They love to come when they find comfort, strength, and good fellowship.

—June 29, 1929
WHO CARES ABOUT THEOLOGY ANYMORE?

By C. S. Cowles, Professor of Religion at Northwest Nazarene College

The trouble with preachers," volunteered the superintendant of schools sitting next to me, "is that they preach too much theology. They ought to be more practical—get it down to where we live.

Many would agree. "Holiness is more than a doctrine," declared an ecclesiastical leader recently. "It is a life to be lived." The implication is that doctrine is divorced from life.

To Ruth Carter Stapleton's spiritual mentor, Norman C. Elliot, says she believes she has no need for theology at all. She can happily blend her charismatic Christianity with other systems of belief. She feels that religious experience is more important than theological speculation. "I don't believe that Christians are divided over theology," she says. "They are divided over issues of life."

It is interesting to hear her say this. "It is easy to believe that Jesus was just a man. . . . And I believe that through the Holy Spirit, God can be in me just as he was in Jesus" (emphasis added).

In short order she dismisses the historic gains of the Protestant Reformation, undermines the very basis of Christian missions, and undercuts every definition of orthodox Christian faith throughout 2,000 years of church history. But who cares? HARDLY anybody on the contemporary church landscape.

It is not my intention to cast undue aspersions on any kind of doctrinal or theological discussion. "Doctrine divides, but Christ unites" is the oft-quoted phrase. But who should be the judge to decide whether one doctrine inadvertently slip into the conversation, the personal evangelism of a talented preacher is a good question, but why don't we hold it for the moment and come back to it later? (knowing they will have long forgotten it by then) or do we get through the gospel plans for my life, why did he let me live for so many years of his life?

Questions like "if God really loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life, why did he let me live five-year-old son die of leukemia last month?"—questions that challenge the ground for faith, inserts doubts, questions against Jewish Christian by insinuating the unorthodox gospel of the Word: Nazarenes, Baptists, conservative Methodists and Presbyterians, Missouri Synod Lutherans, charismatic Roman Catholics, lapsed Lutherans as all Protestants.

Second, theology is unproductive in evangelism. One of the first tasks of soul winning is to avoid making any kind of theological discussion. "Our mission is to make people Christians, not theologians."

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It appeared to be the widest and most traveled fork. Furthermore, we saw two other hikers already some distance up the trail. Once we set out, our wide trail narrowed, and then disappeared altogether. After clawing and bushwhacking up a steep part of an hour—hoping to find the trail again, we finally found ourselves blocked in at the base of a box canyon with unscaleable perpendicular granite walls. By this time we had caught up with the hikers who were ahead of us. Grudgingly, we admitted that we had been given a false steer, and carefully began to pick our way back up the valley.

My friend, Jimi, stumbled and rolled end-over-end down the hill over jagged granite slabs. I raced to his side. Incredibly, he escaped with only minor cuts and bruises. After patching him up, I went through the humiliating procedure of digging the map out of my pocket. Sure enough, we were going in exactly the opposite direction of Evolution Valley. Even if we had rock climbing gear to scale those towering cliffs, there was no way in a thousand years that we could ever have gotten to our destination going in that direction.

"There is a way which seems right to a man," says the sage, "but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12, RSV). All roads do not lead to the same place.

As Aristotle pointed out, there are an infinite number of ways of missing the target, but only one way to hit it. There are many ways to be wrong, but, only one way to be right.

All Christian theology stands or falls upon the truth that is revealed in the person and work of Jesus who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6, RSV). If Jesus is uniquely, fully, and finally the Son of God, then the compelling task of theology is to measure everything in the realm of human experience against that standard of reliable truth.

The closer I get to people, the more impressed I am by their quest for truth. They are hungry for something more than pious platitudes and simplistic slogans. They are asking hard questions about complex issues, and they want to be taken seriously as mature seekers after the deep things of God. I am feeling them to be patient when together we confront those mysteries beyond which the human understanding cannot go. Nevertheless, they are restless to learn and grasp all they can about the profound implications of revealed truth. And most of us want to work through the faith given to them by the fathers until it is their faith, their conviction, their confidence. They want to say with Luther, "Here I stand..."

I am a missionary, a missionary for the Church of the Nazarene in Italy. And I am proud (sanctified proud) of my title, "missionary." Some of you, however, keep saying around with my word. And that bothers me. Not just for my own sake, but also for what we might be doing to the worldwide mission of the church.

"Missionary" is a word that has been used to label a specific calling and gift in the Body of Christ. It does not mean just isolated or difficult or even far away. Rather, "missionary" has to do with cross-cultural evangelism. It has to do with pioneer church planting in those 170 cultures on our planet which remain virtually without churches among them.

Of late, an increasing number of people, who really ought to know better, have been trying to transfer some of the imagined "romance" of missionary to the pastorate or to other types of ministry. And that attempted transfer does bother me.

Undoubtedly, the word missionary has been too glorified in the past. And some pastors and other people ministering in really difficult situations have received less than their due. But let's not dilute and run a good word in our attempts just to even up the "gory."

I've also heard the word missionary applied to every Christian. And I'm beginning to feel that as a college student I've even preached some sermons on that very theme. But that's wrong, not every Christian is involved in cross-cultural evangelism or in pioneer church planting. According to Acts 1:8, every Christian is, or should be a witness. But not necessarily a missionary.

Most believers just wouldn't function well in a missionary situation which would force them to live with and minister to people whose culture and perhaps even language may be radically different from their own. Just as not every Christian is a pastor or an evangelist or even a teacher, so not every Christian is a missionary! No adequate analysis of the functioning of the Body of Christ will allow for that broad a definition for missionary. Using the somewhat exotic label of missionary to motivate Christians to be effective witnesses is a mistake.

All of this is not to say we don't need more missionaries. We do. Lots of them. Our own Nazarene missionary force needs to be drastically increased beyond the size where it has levied off for the last few years.

While modern missions have had astounding success, there are still huge groups of people without the gospel of Christ. Astoundingly, more people today are unreached by the gospel than ever before in human history. This is one reason that began his missionary journeys.

Most of these people will never be touched by the evangelistic efforts of local churches. You see, the truth is: even if every Christian in the world were to win his neighbor to Christ, there would still be over 2 billion non-Christians left. Those 2 billion people are hidden behind the closed doors of culture, behind Holy Spirit-called-and-gifted missionaries using missionary methods can reach them. That's over half the world who may never experience the hope of the gospel.

So you leave my word alone. Missionary is a valid, specific calling in the church; not a common umbral term for all Christians. The missionary concept is the church's way of ensuring that we're concerned not only about our neighbors—but also about the people looking behind complex cultural barriers, people among whom churches must still be planted!
"God needs never leave us off making; as it is the property of fire to burn and of snow to chill, so it is of God to create."

—Dante

"The fact that the name of Jesus is invoked does not mean that a prayer is real. It means I must pray in such a manner that I dare name Jesus in my prayer, that is to say, think of Him, think of His holy will together with what I am praying."

—Soren Kierkegaard

"If there is no God, and everything is permitted, the first thing permitted is despair."

—Francois Mauriac

"There are two kinds of people—those who bring gifts to God in order to secure His blessing, and those who adore Him because they are already secure in His blessing."

—Karl Olsson

"Brown bread and the gospel is good fare."

—Matthew Henry

"We promise according to our hopes, and perform according to our fears."

—La Rochefoucauld

"The devil did grin, for his darling sin is pride that despises humility."

—Cervantes

"To show an unfeigned sorrow is an office which the false man does easily."

—Shakespeare

"A man's ignorance is . . . his private property and as precious in his own eyes as his family Bible."

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

"That man is admired above all men, who is not influenced by money."

—Cicero

"Theology forgets that the wind of the Spirit blows where it wills. But theology now supposes it can deal with the Spirit as though it had hired him or even attained possession of him— as the premise of its own declarations . . . (Such) a theology can only be unspiritual . . . Only where the Spirit is sighed, cried and prayed for does He become present and newly active."

—George MacDonald

"The word 'Jesus' is not to be uttered in an institution of the midweek prayer meeting was here to stay. But today some are beginning to wonder."

—C. S. Lewis

"A good conscience is the most difficult to maintain, I believe."

—James W. Schlater

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"Anger deprives a sage of his wisdom and a prophet of his vision."

—The Talmud

"The New Testament, given a fair hearing, does not need me or anyone else to defend it. It has the proper ring for anyone who has not lost his ear for truth."

—J. B. Phillips

"Religion is the lifeblood of the full soil, the deepest necessity, the most impenetrable hunger of man."

—Thomas R. Kelley

"The Lord, I do fear Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year. My soul is all but out of me."

—Edna St. Vincent Millay

"Every prayer reduces itself to this: Great God, grant that twice two be not four."

—Ivan Turgenev

"The proud hate pride—in others."

—Benjamin Franklin

"Over-dering is as great a vice as over-listening."

—Ben Jonson

"Sweet is the remembrance of troubles when you are in safety."

—Euripides

In the past, most of us have just naturally assumed that the institution of the midweek prayer meeting was here to stay. But today some are beginning to wonder.

 Fascinating, one pastor, speaking about his own church, bluntly admitted: "The midweek prayer meeting does not seem important to the people." Another pastor in a large eastern denomination area said, "Out of three weekly worship experiences in our church, I have found that the mid-week service is the most difficult to maintain in a sustained momentum."

 Still, there is the increasing tempo of modern life, the distances people live from the church, and the wear and tear of business and professional life upon our people, which make the midweek prayer meeting more difficult to sustain.

 Everybody is in favor of the prayer meeting. In speaking of the prayer meeting, one church member said: "The prayer meeting is still indispensable to the life of the church."

 Pastor makes a prayer meeting his own: "The midweek prayer meeting is still the key service in a Christ-centered, total-worship church. My prayer meeting venue is still the backhouse of my church. As the prayer meeting goes, so goes the rest of the church."

 "We feel that the prayer meeting is the life of the church and its bloodstream."

 One would like to believe that anything so important would continue to thrive and prosper on its own momentum. But such is not the case: Like every other worthy cause in the church it requires action, discipline, and perseverance to maintain a vital and dynamic midweek prayer meeting.

 Perhaps we need to hear C. S. Lewis's words: We have a tendency to think, but not to act: We have a tendency to feel, but not to act. If we go on thinking and feeling without acting, we are undone.

 The fact that there are churches with vital, powerful, and well-attended prayer meetings makes us believe that it is not unprecedented to expect the midweek prayer meeting to flourish elsewhere. We must admit that many have stopped attending. Others continue out of a sense of duty or guilt. Yet we all give full acknowledgement to the value, the influence, and the power of Spirit-filled and Spirit-directed prayer.

 What is the key to successful, dynamic prayer meetings? Is it programs? Is it special talent? What can be done to turn singing attendance and formulas into vital and Spirit-animated times of breakthrough?

 The answers that I will attempt to give you are not mine. They come from a number of successful pastors who are grappling with and many other persons of pastoral ilk.

 One pastor frankly admitted: "The pastor is the key. As pastor, I must be 'renewed' and prepared to be 'renewed.'"

 "There is a great starting place—the pastor. His own concern, his predestination, and the sense of the importance he attaches to this meeting make the difference! If the prayer meeting is important to him, the people are more likely to respond and attend with expectancy."

 Some years ago, I knew a pastor in a medium-sized church who became excited about prayer meeting attendance. He challenged his people to have 100 people in prayer meeting for six weeks. His emphasis generated enthusiasm. He followed through to the end. It produced results which benefited the whole church.

 But there's more to prayer meetings than the number who attend. The Bible and the pages of history are studied with the victories won by the "two or three"
who are gathered in His name as well as the individual who was willing to be counted in the group.

Here's a discovery made by one pastor: "It wasn't until we had a group of people who were committed to praying together that the church began to grow."

Another pastor says, "We need more-prayerful church meetings."

"I've been impressed by the number of pastors who believe that a successful prayer meeting must have 'a good in-depth message from God's Word.' The people 'need and want to be fed.' Another pastor said, 'We stay close to the Word, and as we do this the trust grows; as we get away from our spiritual growth, it begins to sag almost immediately.'"

One pastor feels that the prayer meeting is an "opportunity to look deeply into the Word... an opportunity to share burdens with each other... an opportunity to share blessings that God has bestowed."

Here are a few suggestions recommended by pastors who have found prayer to be the most popular and effective way to engage their congregation:

1. In the year 1979, as a pastor's program, I had highlighted Total Commitment and the Prayer Life of the Church—home and individual. In our Wednesday night program we were having much more prayer and about a 12-minute sermonette with an outline. This is pretty standard in our church, rather than a keynote discussion. Also, we use the after-service time for prayer special

2. "I try to use the same program. Right now we are going through the book of James, verse by verse. After the reading, we pray around the circle, taking a year to go through the biblical theology of James."

"I give it all the authority and take about a year to go through this, trying to put it down on the 'bottom shelf' to make sure they know the basic Christian beliefs. Laymen tell me they appreciate something more than the usual 'peppings' and need to get their teeth into something solid. Once is a white, I give a short oral quiz on my sermons from the previous Sunday in an attempt to put the service in context."

"What was the topic, text, main points, etc.?"

3. "The prayer meeting must have four essential elements:

a. Bible study must be made alive by involving those who are present. Questions should be asked and discussion be encouraged. The Scripture must be relevant and practical to modern living.

b. A sufficient time should be given to the sharing of blessings and victories. People should be encouraged to know that others minister to share and rejoice in their victories. Sharing also includes burdens and needs which will give a spirit of caring and helpfulness.

c. The third element is that of prayer. Someone has said, 'the real church is the prayer meeting.' It is essential that the people of the church pray together. This is the common practice of the Early Church. The more individuals who can actually pray, the more meaningful the service can be. Some times the group can be divided into smaller groups to facilitate more participation in prayer.

d. The fourth element is that of praise. Songs and choruses should be lifted and full of praise to God. Time should be taken to sharp us words and make the singing meaningful and expressive of praise and thanksgiving."

What about the midweek prayer meeting in your church? Is it alive and well? It can be with your planning and concern plus the enabling power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Here is the perfect thought of one who carries a genuine burden for the welfare of our church. "I do hope our Neighbors will not forget the lessons from history. One of the last sentences that the Methodist church left off was the midweek prayer meeting."
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"We are holiness people and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is not a new thing with us. Now, when the attention of the Christian world is focused on the relationship between spiritual gifts and church growth, we can be contemporary by simply being what we are... A powerful dynamic comes into the life of a church when spiritual gifts are studied. A fantastic resurgence of energy occurs when Christians discover their own essential usefulness to the Body of Christ." (Introduction and Chapter Six)

- Dr. Raymond W. Hurn
Executive Director
Department of Home Missions

"The Holy Spirit does nothing in the church or the world apart from the person and work of Christ... Whenever we speak of the fruit of the Spirit or of the gifts of the Spirit, we are talking about the Lordship of Christ being demonstrated through the ministry of the Holy Spirit... The New Testament is absolutely clear on this point--the evidence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is to produce the fruit of Christ's life: holy love." (Chapter One)

- Dr. Albert Truesdale, Jr.
Assistant Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Christian Ethics
Nazarene Theological Seminary

"All of the gifts have a capacity for focusing directly on the outreach task of the church in one way or another. In a very real sense, all Christians are called out of the world to become members of the Body of Christ in order to be sent back into the world as witnesses of the gospel... Paul rules out the use of 'languages' or 'languages' in ways that block communication." (Chapter Five)

- Dr. Paul Orjala
Professor of Missions
Nazarene Theological Seminary

"There is no question in these discussions of the gifts of the Spirit but that the primary responsibility of the recipients of those gifts is a contribution to the Body... The unity of the Body of Christ comes from the effective operation and manifestation of the Spirit. The diversity is not denied, but it is caught up in the highest concept of the priority of the Body... In the highest and richest sense, the fellowship of the Body of Christ is the most powerful unity available this side of the Second Coming." (Chapter Four)

- Dr. Morris Weigelt
Professor of New Testament
Nazarene Theological Seminary

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3. Assist the evangelist in attending District Assembly, General Assembly, and other conferences, such as the Grass Roots Gatherings, where the evangelist is involved.
4. Place the name of the evangelist on the church letterhead and/or bulletin as the "Minister of Extension," serving the Lord as a full-time evangelist.

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The New Shape of Ministry

by Robert G. Kemper (Abingdon, 1978, 142 pp., paperback, $2.75)

The author says no one is actually taking responsibility for the "shape of ministry," but that pastors should seize the chance to determine their own destiny. He contends that if pastors do not take charge of their profession, others will.

Kemper discusses the pastor's job description, standards of admission to the profession, the content of continuing education opportunities, pastoral placement, ministerial salaries, and the definition of success.

The style is provocative and unique.

The author calls a conversion of clergymen to which the reader is invited. He submits seven resolutions and asks the reader to help him determine if these are important and legitimate areas of concern.

Some of his statements will arouse your indignation, but a few of them will bring a chuckle. Example: "The problem of the lay constituency is so enormous that one might be tempted to say that it demands too much of the clergy. Quite the contrary, the problem is that lay persons expect too little because they know too little. If lay persons had as much knowledge necessary for effective church leadership there would be no need for clergy. The simple fact is that they are not skilled, and that is why churches have clergy." And, "I genuinely believe that if clergy would love their profession, not only would there be more continuing education, but also a new and very creative partnership between the profession and those who help it grow."

One more, "What definition we give, whatever path we follow, the common truth about placement systems is that they are asked to do more than they can deliver."

This is an explosive little book. If its author's propositions are ever taken seriously—look out. It could start a revolution.

—W. T. Dougherty

Sermons for Celebrating

by Landrum P. Leavell (Broadman, 1978, 136 pp., paperback $2.75)

The book Sermons for Celebrating offers an exciting difference in special-day preparation. The author lives among his people, speaks the language of the workaday world, draws illustrations from daily experience, and very simply expressed, challenges every reader to do his best. The worth of this book is not so much in its titles or subtitles, but in the kernel of truth abundantly present throughout the text and in the field of the text. For example: "We have not yet grasped the relationship between affluence and discontent."

"The menace of mediocrity threatens us continuously."

"When God wanted the world to know all we are capable of knowing about him, he didn't send a prophet—He came himself." (John 14:9)

Further enhancing the usefulness of this book to the minister is the wealth of practical, usable illustrations. As one starts reading this work, the author's skill in illustrating his point catches one's attention immediately, and he does not talk of marginal notes for future reference.

Pastors know that preaching special-day sermons is not always easy, especially when we desire a fresh new approach to the seasonal emphasis. I feel this book will greatly help in this effort.

—Oval L. Stone

Grace Unlimited

by Clark H. Pinnock (Bethany, 1975, 268 pp., paperback, $4.95)

This is a first-rate book. It is a theological "sign" in much the way that Shank's Life in the Son was, only more so. Grace Unlimited reveals a vast crack in the monolithic face of Calvinism.

The authors include some of the most respected names in evangelical scholarship: Clark Pinnock, I. H. Marshall, David Gimes, Vineo Grounds.

The general movement of the book is the abandonment of classic Calvinist positions that have been condemned for centuries. There are chapters on Universal Salvation, Conditional Election, Pre-destination, Wesley, and Arminians.

The message is the same throughout: that Calvin was wrong and Wesley was right.

All of our ministers should read this book, and a scholarly statement of positions we have always held.
STAFF MINISTRIES

MAINTAINING CHOIR INTEREST THE YEAR ROUND

by Dale E. Kendall

Minister of Music, First Church of the Nazarene, Bradenton, Florida

The adult choir, whether in a small or large church, can be a "burden or a blessing for those who have the responsibility of leading this ministry every week. Keeping volunteers motivated to participate in your choir program can be a task that is tougher than you are. Too often, the choir work becomes a drudgery for its participants or a ninth project that "just happens" in its schedule. Keep in mind when working with a choir how you would like things to go if you were singing yourself. If I am convinced that, with a great deal of planning, prayer, and preparation, the adult choir can be the most exciting part of your music program.

If we are going to get volunteer adults to really commit themselves the year round to the choir, then we have to make it worthwhile their time and energy. Having fresh music on hand creates excitement. Would you want to eat the same kind of foods at a gala event every time? Does anyone have some ideas as to how to keep volunteers motivated to participate in the choir program? We begin with an introduction. There is no one sure way to motivate volunteers to participate in the choir program, but make use of posters, phone calls, and letters.

While we do invite people the year round into choir membership, one of the advantages of a saturation month for recruitment is that you can tell your congregation that you'll invite them on only once about joining the choir. They will come to understand this as a once-a-year promotion. You will have a new sense of purpose to yourself and friends because the constant "bugging" of people will stop.

There is no sure way to motivate volunteers to sing in a church choir. What works in one church will not necessarily work in another. You need to search for the best methods for your church.

A social activity every two months or so is a good way to keep up morale. It doesn't have to be a gala event every time. Just remember to have some type of planned activity where choir members can interact. Perhaps preceding or following a rehearsal.

Can the choir take a trip to a neighboring church for a concert? Or, how about the choir on television along with that ensemble or school?

Involving an outside director to appear for a choir clinic can prove to be an exhilarating experience for choir members. This will help you implement things you have been trying to get across to your choir for months. If your guest director is a composer, your choir members will "turn on" to performing pieces and songs that inspire them. The personal interaction and inspiration for the singer and listener.

Personal notes of appreciation are always well received when sent to choir people. It is good to let the choir know that they are important. Yes, even that choir member who can't carry a tune in two buckets, much less one. People respond to words of kindness and encouragement.

I use a special card which conveys appreciation, recruitment technique, or gentle pressure on abstainers. These cards may be obtained by writing: Attendance Builders, 615 Water Street, Kerrville, TX 78028.

Choir members come in short, tall, fat, skinny sizes. They have quiet, loud, sometimes harsh personalities and voices. We must accept them as people, and love them as Christ himself loves us.

One of the lessons in my five years of ministry was a choir retreat. Our choir people returned from a great spiritual weekend united and revitalized. The small investment of money it cost the choir members produced dividends for the church and furthered the lives of everyone who attended the retreat.

At the end of this choir year, we plan to have a banquet just for choir members and their spouses. This says to choir people, "I'm really important." It tells them in a special way, "Thanks for an outstanding job." There is never enough money in the music budget. Our choir people enjoy doing a Pancake Breakfast annually to raise funds for the music department. Nearly everything is donated by local merchants. The choir decides with great difficulty how to allocate the proceeds. In addition to being a fund raiser, our choir views this happening as an outreach.

Our choir has a spiritual pulse that must be monitored carefully. Promote spiritual deepening lest your members "grow cold.

Methods, tools, and techniques all have to be used of the Lord to be effective. None of the above ideas are meant to substitute for what He alone bestows.

EVANGELISM

First in a Series On:

EVANGELISM IN THE EIGHTIES

by Hugh Gorman

Evangelist, Melton, Saskatchewan, Canada

Can it happen in the 1980s?

Three thousand men permanently raised their voices in the name of Jesus. Three thousand sinners converted into saints! Three thousand new-made saints enabled day by day to walk in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost! Three thousand of our brethren, weak, sinful by nature, open to the temptings of Satan even as we are, maintaining a life in the body which almost surpasses belief, so it is marked with goodness and purity! Pentecost! Can it happen again?

What are the prospects for Pentecostal revival and holiness evangelism in the eighties? They're as bright as the promises of God! Revival evangelism is not a luxury for the spiritually elite, nor is it an option. It's absolutely essential, for without it the church will be lifeless and unable to perform the task for which she was born.

We need revival to ensure that our churches will be centers of holiness evangelism. That is God's remedy for cold services, empty pulpits, barren altars. It's the best way of letting the world know that God and His Church are alive and doing well. The world is populated by people who need to know that through the ministry of the Church, God can heal the hurt in their hearts. Revival evangelism is a part of that answer.

The Church can have exciting revival evangelism in the eighties! In the word of God there are hundreds of promises referring to spiritual renewal.

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What God did in Asbury and Saskatoon in the 1800s is by Hugh Gorman. He prayed as he'd never prayed before for 10 weeks. He exhorted his heart and read the Word, saturating his mind with spiritual renewal. God touched his heart and gave him the assurance that they were going to have revival at Elk River.

As Pastor Sam Brown took the message of God and the burden of his heart to the church board, in the meeting God method and revived the hearts of every board member, giving them a desire to see greater things. They yielded themselves to God and looked to Him for the blessing.

God didn't disappoint them. As Pastor Brown preached, the word of God came and for 13 weeks there was continuous revival. In every service the altar was flooded with seekers. The church was full and people came from afar, filling the church. Hundreds experienced revival. That's what God can do in the eighties.

Here is the Word of God for us just now: "Drop down, ye heavens, and let the skies pour down rain upon the earth, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; that the souls may see how great is our salvation! (ISA 45:8-9). Revival is the will of God for His people in the eighties!"
In studying the Torah remember that it was always believed to contain the basic revelation of God to early Israel through the patriarchs and Joseph, and then through Moses in the experience of Exodus. But it was also understood by later generations that the revelation of God to those early persons was relevant to and binding upon them as well. The Prophets are the 15 books which bear the name of a famous prophet of Israel or Judah: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 "minor" prophets. It must always be remembered that each message from these books has arisen out of a specific time and situation and that the message must have been appropriate primarily to that time and situation. People of later eras recognized applications of the message for their own times, these messages must always be interpreted in light of the original setting and meaning. What is commonly called the "Historical Books," comprise the third major section of the Bible. A better term for this section would be the Deuteronomistic History. Many scholars prefer to emphasize the strong ties between Deuteronomistic and the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings rather than to tie Deuteronomy totally to the first four books of the Torah. The subject matter of the Deuteronomistic History interprets the events of Israelite history from the era of Joshua to the first few years of exile in Babylonia. And from early times, this Deuteronomistic History was classified as part of the section of the Old Testament known as "Prophets." This means that ancient Israel believed the work of interpreting history theologically fell within the province of the prophet, and such an understanding should inform our view of prophecy as well.

The fourth major section from which you may see a sermon unit is the Writings. Included here are the books not previously named. In literary style, function, format, and purpose these books vary greatly and each one must be understood in its unique terms before you can grasp its message to the ancient people.

The second problem to be solved by step one is the selection of a specific passage which will form the basis for the sermon. Remember that chapter and verse divisions are not always reliable in determining proper divisions of thought and subject matter. Many modern translations divide into paragraphs, but often more than one paragraph should be included in a single unit of thought or a single scene. So you must learn to make your own division of the text on the basis of its content. Here is an example. The Jerusalem Bible divides Exodus 3:1-4:17 into 10 paragraphs. However, all 10 of these paragraphs deal with a single scene involving Moses with God on Mount Sinai. So you must notice other features which will help you determine where the paragraphs begin and end. Chapter two of Exodus ends in Egypt. The people of Israel are complaining to God about their slavery. God is said to have heard and been responsive to their plight. But Moses is not in Egypt any longer, and it appears that God will need to use other means to save His people. God begins specifically by identifying Moses as the subject of the narrative, rather than the people who are in Egypt, i.e., Moses, not in Egypt but in Midian. The dialogue which follows between Moses and God, rather than people, and by Moses is looking to the future, the story about a geographical shift, a subject change and a switch from talk about God to talk by God in person. When God speaks to Moses, the story has indicated movement from one scene to another.

Other times, we see a starting point rather than a continuation of what has preceded. But 4:1 is different. "Moses answered ... indicates that chapter four is going to continue something which began earlier, i.e., in the preceding chapter. And all the water turned into blood too, Moses and God are the focus of attention. They are still in dialogue. They are still in Egypt.

One can see that the narrative introduce a change of scene. The story moves from the moutain to the home of Jethro. The characters involved are Moses and Jethro (not God). Thus 4:1 is the end of the scene which begins at 3:1. Accordingly, Exodus 3:1-4:17 will constitute the basic passage from which you will attempt to preach.

You will soon notice to key words which are introductory as well as keys which are concluding in function. "After these things" will warn you to notice what comes "before." "Thus said the Lord" will denote a direct quotation of God by a prophet which follows immediately, "Says the Lord your God" will be seen as the concluding statement of a prophetic oracle or an intermediate phrase denoting that a continuation of the speech follows.

Learn to pay strict attention to changes in the cast of characters, relocation of a setting, abrupt changes in style of speaking, and from general saying to specific application. These clues will enable you to begin and end your message where the biblical text begins and ends.

Step Two: Establishing a Working Text
Suppose that you have decided to preach from Exodus 3:1-4:17. Having set the proper limits of your passage, the next job will be to decide which "version" you will study in your preparation of the message. By "version" I do not necessarily mean a published translation, but rather the text of the passage from which you will work in the study.

If you have some acquaintance with Hebrew, the fastest and most authentic way to determine a working version of your passage is to compare any good published translation with the Hebrew text. But even lacking knowledge of Hebrew, there are several things you can do first. If you have access to modern versions in basic agreement, it is safe to conclude that there are no major textual problems to untangle.

If the English versions differ, exercise extreme caution. Ask first whether the differences occur in the heart of the passage or are limited to differences of detail. Ask whether the differences may be resolved by understanding English synonyms. Perhaps the different words used are really the same in meaning. Ask what theological implications may be drawn from one translation as compared to another.

At the time you came to your critical commentaries for help in establishing a working version for yourself.

A "critical" commentary, addresses the original text rather than deriving devotional or homiletic thoughts from various other purposes. Kell and Delitzsch work is excellent for a discussion of the various elements in the composition of the text, though it is otherwise rather outdated and predates recent archaeological and theological concern. The Anchor Bible byAlter and many others, is helpful for one's understanding. The various volumes in The Old Testament Library are helpful at times they are too involved with literary questions to be of great value in theological exegesis. By no means basis a sermon upon a passage until you can assure yourself that you understand its plain meaning textually. If there are problems, dif-
Step Three: Identifying the Kind of Material

When you are confident that you understand the text, you are ready for step three. Ask a simple question. What kind of literature is this passage? It should always be remembered that certain literary forms generally are employed by biblical writers for specific purposes.

Exodus 3:1-4:17, the unit just delimited, contains what will be recognized as the "call" of Moses into the presence of God. Several features are evident within the body of the passage:

- A call of God (3:1-3).
- Voice of God (3:4-9).
- Commission to a Specific Task (3:10).
- Objections by the Human Agent (3:11, 13-4:10, 13).

Once these features have been noted, the general outline of the call is apparent in hand. But beyond that, once the call of Moses has been analyzed, the call of another or other Old Testament figures will be seen to conform to the same pattern. It is important to be aware of, if not dependent upon, the form given to the call as it is prescribed in the Bible. Therefore, when preach- ing about Gideon (Judg. 6:11b-17), Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1-10), Jeremiah (1:4, 10), and Ezekiel (1:1-3), one may profitably compare the "call" experiences of man with one another. Such comparisons and differences will appear, no one of which should be overlooked as incidental or unimportant theologically.

In addition to the "call" passages, look for salvation and/or doom oracles in the prophetic books; covenant laws (i.e., Micah 6:1-8), and messen- ger speeches introduced by "thus saith the Lord." What should you do in such cases? You should know whether you are dealing with a damnable or a saving oracle, whether the prophet originally expressed the needs of a physically ill worshipper or speaker of the prophetic word. Did this happen to Yehoshu’a to a Davidic king, in short, wherever you turn, you should know whether the message you are reading was written to comfort or to destroy. Once you discover what type or form of message or intent is involved (or perhaps several forms will be included in a single literary unit), you will be ready to take the next step.

Step Four: Determining the Function

I have already indicated the close relationship between literary form and theological function. In this fourth step, one specific question must be an- swered. What is the functional relationship between the thought of the larger unit in which it appears? Simply stated, we may ask the question, What is the relationship of this verse or these verses to what goes before and what goes after? That is the question you need to ask for everything else you will need to do with the passage.

Chapter one and two of Exodus describe the continuing process of God’s dealing with the people of Israel. Beginning with the call of Moses at a mountain peak, it even appeared that God had placed a savior for the people and a herald for the nation in the person of Pharaoh. But then Moses was forced to flee from Egypt to the land of Midian to escape the wrath of Pharaoh. He seemsingly wished to forget his past identification with the Hebrew people and presented himself in Midianite society as an "Egyptian" (Exodus 2:19), married, accepted a job, fathered a son, and took on all the earmarks of a man who was happy to settle down in peace far away from the struggles of a motley group of slaves across a river. God’s man was now out of the palace, out of a position of influence, away from the struggle, and happy about his new life. The story of the wilderness wanderer from the Hebrews still in (Ezek. 2:23) now foretold the escape from Egypt as an earlier example which may profit his contempor- ary preachers. Does he ever seem to have expanded it as a negative example? Does he take a minor role, or do you think he was a major argument to his audience of a later period? These kinds of questions must be raised and considered. Examine the context, then, and ask the im- pact which the passage has exerted upon the bib- lical reader in the first century and upon the reader in the second century. This step will often involve you in the New Testa- ment appropriation of the Old Testament text. Some notes of caution are necessary. Make certain that you match major point with major point and minor with minor. Be sure that you note the larger form and that it is not to be expanded, but rather to be reduced, when possible. Thus, for example, a chapter would indicate that this particular statement is not the major issue which the prophet wishes to address and that if you choose to isolate, which Yehoshu’a explains (11:1) as an act of love, is an act of covenant election of an entire nation from service to Pharaoh to service to Yehoshu’a. This basic understanding of the subsequent God-Israel relationships. But Yehoshu’a’s real concern in chapter 11 is to argue that the once sovereign God is sovereign still, free enough in his sovereignty in fact to choose not to act in anger and punishment but rather to have righteousness extend to all who seek God’s truth from such a text. Rather preach the word of God to these people and see what results. The passage is designed to occupy you for a long time. Indeed, no single doc- trine or spiritual truth is based upon a single text. To do so is to misunderstand what the Bible is. You can understand rather than those which are problem intrad.
Step Seven: Applying an Ancient Text to a Modern Congregation

Unfortunately, this is where some preachers begin. However, the established text has not progressed through the first six steps foolishly attempts to be relevant without being authentic. That is what makes the trouble of the first six steps a worthwhile investment. The seven steps are not interdependent. A golfer must have a correct grip, a proper stance, and a good backswing all at the same time. If he does only one thing properly, everything else will suffer. But once he has mastered grip, stance, and swing separately, there must come the time when he puts them all together in a unified and productive stroke.

Just so, each of the seven steps is important. But before long, you will find yourself working on more than one step at a time.

Let me return to Exodus 3:1—4:17 to illustrate. This text tells us that God cared, God heard, God became involved, God spoke, God disclosed himself and his free doing. God chose to show himself in ways, God chose a human helper. God listened. It further tells us that Moses argued, was frightened, and lacked some basic talents ("gifts") necessary for the business of saving and freeing enslaved people. But all of that is in the past tense. So the preacher must know how to translate into the present tense. His own view of the Scriptures will come to the fore here as he asks some pertinent questions. Does God still speak? Does God still care? Would God still listen to all the arguments a person might make in attempt to avoid responding to a divine call into-service? Does a person of today have the freedom to be afraid? But does he have the right to remind God of any lack of ability?

If the preacher believes that the biblical text is relevant to and authoritative for the modern situation, he has already discovered the message he wishes to communicate. But how is one to take a text as if God talks to a man or a woman in understandable ways. Don't hesitate to bring to God's attention evidence within your own human being that can adequately accomplish divine work in the world. And don't hesitate to God, after listening patiently until all possible objections have been raised and answered, choose to end the dialogue with a command. These applications arise directly from the affirmations the preacher has made about the text.

That is what makes them not only relevant but also authoritative. That is what makes them a serious biblical. That is what makes the trouble of the first six steps a worthwhile investment. The seven steps are not interdependent. A golfer must have a correct grip, a proper stance, and a good backswing all at the same time. If he does only one thing properly, everything else will suffer. But once he has mastered grip, stance, and swing separately, there must come the time when he puts them all together in a unified and productive stroke.

Just so, each of the seven steps is important. But before long, you will find yourself working on more than one step at a time.

I believe, however, step seven must always come last. And it must always rest securely upon all six previous steps. But steps one through six, done properly, will make step seven far easier than most people realize. The relevance of a text and its application to a modern situation will frequently explode upon your consciousness even as you begin to ask the chief questions in the preparatory steps. When this happens as a natural outgrowth of your study, you will know with great assurance that what you have to say is authoritative, and it will produce results. And your people will know that they listen not to you alone but to God.

Radio is here to stay. But the days when the whole family gathered around the radio are gone. Disc jockeys and newscaster Homestretch, Amos and Andy, and Ma Perkins: but we still spend much of our waking hours with this old friend in spite of the influence of its younger brother, TV.

We rise in the morning to our favorite DJ,92.5 while catching up on newsworthy events, and drive to work in the company of the local traffic coppler reporter. At home, the entertainment center transports us to "sister island."

Conversation during dinner pulses to the rhythm of background music from our "FM companion."

Why hasn't the church taken advantage of this effective medium? Most of us think we have, but we have much to learn about the powerful vehicle called radio. The seven steps is important. But before long, you will find yourself working on more than one step at a time.

We have a marvelous instrument of inspiration. The problem we face today in Christian radio broadcasting involves placing programs on the right station at the right time. Let's take a look at this issue in light of the various radio outlets available to the church.

The Gospel: On the Air, Everywhere

Most large cities and many small communities now boast at least one radio station whose programs center around the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many turn to this station daily for music and worship applications. Some of the programs aired help people, yet the greatest re-

Radio: Tool or Toy

by Randolph W. Sly

AM . FM • All Around

Any day of the week, a twist of the dial brings some type of religious programming. Stations sometimes interrupt their regular flow of music, news, sports, and weather for the "Christian show." Let's be honest and realize a significant segment of the listening audience will turn off the program, either by a switch on the radio or in the mind.

People select a station because of a certain style of programming. They react against abrupt changes. On a freeway we have to work the proper speed before we enter the mainstream of traffic. The Christian broadcaster, similarly, must be careful to fit his program into the"total package, style, and presentation of programs) of the particular audience. When the pre-}

press properly, the broadcaster can successfully enter the flow of programming and begin his travel- ers into truth, knowing he has many passengers.

Here's Our Chance

The radio ministries of today range from priceless to pathetic. The content and presentation of each broadcast represent two chief areas.

We must look seriously at these areas, keeping in mind the regen- eracy of our message and the responsi-

bility of using broadcast content. Guidelines exist for using radio effectively:

1. First, make sure God is leading you to a media ministry. The dy
names of broadcasting enhance self-reliance and ego-centered behavior, is a kind of motivation, which sparks many secular broadcasting careers, stales the downfall of any radio ministry.

Second, target in on those you want to 'Unchurched,' 'Shut-In'? The Christian community? Teens? Young Adults? Senior Citizens? Find your audience and keep them ever as your focus.

Third, locate a station that fits your intended audience. If you are aiming at the church community, set your sights on a local Christian station. If you want to reach a rock station, the "FM Companion" plays mostly background music and reaches many adults, young and old.

After you have selected the station, acquire a time slot to reach your audience. For example, if you are especially interested in speaking to housewives, don't accept a time late at night or early morning (before 6:30 a.m.). Such time segments cost less but a program purchased for the wrong time results in bad steward-ship. If you cannot get the time (hour, day, week, etc.) you want, don't start... wait for the right opening.

Fourth, don't hesitate to innovate. Let's say you're focusing on a teen audience. You're listening to a local rock station, and determine that a 15-minute preaching program feels out of place. The station's program director would agree with you. Begin to think of the alternatives, such as 60-second throat-burning messages, five-minute programs to follow the news, or a music program.

Listening to the community Christian station will probably reveal there are too many "preachers." So look for something else: music, call-ins, book reviews. The opportunities are endless. Desperately hungry Christians yearn to hear anything significant concerning their distinct life-style.

"Fifth, don't compromise your message. Integrity remains very important. Of course, we do not have licenses to say anything and everything, nor would that kind of freedom be appropriate. Broadcast laws must be obeyed. When it comes to the timeless truths of the gospel, we can't compromise to please the few who complain, whether station representatives or listeners. Radio constitutes an important form of communication; but the Christian can never sacrifice his message.

Communicating Christ's message today's world remains both exciting and crucial. We must look critically at the quality and content of programming we produce. Radio makes a vicious sadist, a poor slave, but a marvelous tool when used responsibly and maturely for the kingdom of God.

"Another nice thing about working for God. He has a great retirement plan."
I like to think that Timothy did not wait a single day after that letter from Paul reached him at Ephesus, but that he rose at once and, while the sun was yet up, he packed up the books and the old cloak in the house of Carpus, the house of Basileus, and the house of Nepos, and thence traveled by the Galatian Way across the plains of Philippi and through Macedonia to the Corinthian cities of Achaia, and then on to Bologna, and then up the Appian Way to Rome, where he found that Paul was under arrest in the house of the High Priest, and fetched him from there, the High Priest, and fetched him from there, the High Priest.

In the New Testament, there are certain things which will never be done unless they are done “before winter.” The winter will come and the winter will pass, and the flowers of the springtime will deck the earth with their beauty, but the leaves of some of our opportunities, perhaps the grave of our dearest friends, will never come back again. Even today which is coming on, this year which is coming on, autumn may be over, but next October they will be forever shut. There is some opportunity running now at the High Priest, and the High Priest will be on the way. There are voices speaking today which a year from today will be silent. Before winter or never!

I like all seasons, I like winter with its clear-cold nights and the stars like silver-headed nails driven into thevault of heaven. I like spring with its green growth, its flowing streams, its reviviscence. I like summer with the lily of gentle white in the tops of the trees, its long evenings and the agog of its birds' song. I like it in autumn. I like its mist and haze, its cool morning air, its field strewn with the blue aster and the goldenrod; the radiant lilies, the yellow leaves, and black, and pale, and hectic red. But how quickly the autumn passes. I am the perfect parable of all that fades. Yesterday I saw the forests in all their splendor, and Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

But tomorrow the rain will fall, the winds will blow, these hills will be stripped and bare. Therefore, every returning autumn brings home to me the sense of the preciousness of life’s opportunities—their beauty, but also their brevity. It fills me with the desire to say not merely something about the way that leads to life eternal but, with the help of God, something that shall move men to take the way of life now, today. Taking our suggestion from the message of Paul in the present, “Come before winter comes, and seize some of those voices which now are speaking so earnestly to us, and which a year from today may be forever silent.”

II. The Voice of Friendship and Affection

Timothy, when he heard that letter from Paul asking him to come before winter, had said to himself, “Yes, I shall start for Rome; but first of all I must clear up some matters here at Ephesus, and then go down to Mileas to ordain elders there, and, then, over to Corinth to celebrate the Communion.” When he had attended to these matters, he starts for Troas, and there requires in him to stop and go by land to the city of Ephesus, and thence to Athens, and one that is sailing around Greece instead to Thessalonian. He is told that the season for navigation is over and that no vessels sail till springtime. “No ships for Italy until April 9th.”

All through that anxious winter we can imagine Timothy reproaching himself that he did not go at once when he received Paul’s letter, and wondering how it fares with the apostle. When the first vessel sails in the springtime, Timothy is a passenger on it. He goes by land and by water to Thessalonian and hurrying up to Rome. There heseek's Paul’s prison, only to be cut short, perhaps, in prison; he asks, “Where is my beloved Timothy? Don’t you know that Paul was beheaded last December in the temple where he had to pass the door of his cell, Paul thought you were coming. His last message was for you. ‘Give my love to Timothy, my beloved son in the faith, when he comes.’”

How Timothy then must have wished that he had come before winter?

Before winter or never! "The poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always,” said Jesus. When the disciples came in, and was about to yield to it. He took his hand out to the ring to the ball for a waifer. When suddenly, as it an angel stood before him, a voice seemed to say, “This is your hour. If you yield to this temptation now, it will destroy you. If you conquer it, it is your master forever.” Obedey the angel’s voice, the tempter, and came of victorious over his enemy?

- That man was not unique in his experience, for to many a man there comes the hour when destiny knocks at his door and the angel warns to see whether he will obey or reject him. These are precious and critical moments in the history of the soul. In your life there may be that which you know to be wrong and sinful, and in his mercy God has awakened conscience, or has flooded your heart with a sudden wave of contrition and sorrow. This is the hour of opportunity, for now chains of evil habits can be broken, which, if not broken, will bind us forever. Now golden goals can be chosen and decisions made which shall affect our destiny forever.

We like to quote those fine lines from the pen of the late senator John J. Ingalls?

“Master of human destinies am I! Fame, love, and fortune on my footsteps wait. Cilles and lands I seek: I wander through the desert and deserts remote and, passing by Hovel and mean palace, palace, or fate, I knock unknown once at every gate! If seeking, wake, if sleeping, rise not before I turn away, it is the hour of tale. And they who follow me shall reach the stars, Moral’s darkest, and conquer every world! Save death, but those who doubt or hesitate, Condemned to failure, fortune or men. Seek me in vain and uselessly implore—”

“I am Arch, and I am not! and I, and I am not!”

We all recognize the truth of this in the things of this world, but in a far more solemn way it is true of men’s lives. The Spirit of the Spirit, that is a different thing, God has His moment. We cannot kindle when we will. The Spirit which worketh in the souls. The Spirit bloweth and is still, in mystery the soul abideth.

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town near the farm and, hurrying up the stairs, found his mother still living, with a smile of recognition on her face—the smile which, if a man has once seen, he can never forget. Under the table he had written her after the Sunday night service, her viscid and Hebraic voice heard again as she spoke to the River. The next time he met her in Philadelphia she said, "I am glad you preached that sermon, "Come Before Winter." Not a tear was shed, but that sermon was preached. Let us pray that the preaching of it tonight shall move others to do that which shall make their hearts glad in the years to come.

Two coming to the sleeping disciples whom He had asked to watch with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane; Christ awakened them and said with sad force, "What, ye cannot watch with me one hour?" When He came the third time and found them sleeping, He looked sadly down upon them and said, "The hour is come, and now is the Son of Man delivered into the hands of sinners. One of those three, James, was the first of the 12 apostles to die for His cause, and his brother, who was not a believer, today man a church. A man may hear this news with his heart's blood. Another, John, was to suffer imprisonment for the sake of Christ in the Isle that is called Patmos. And Peter was to be crucified for His sake. But never again could those three sleeping disciples ever watch with Jesus in His hour of agony. That opportunity was gone forever! You say, when you hear that a friend has gone, "Why, it cannot be possible! I saw him only yesterday on the corner of Smithfield and Sixth Avenue!" Yes, you say, but that same man you will never see there again. You say you intended to do this thing, to speak to him, to express appreciation and gratitude, or this or that kind, but now the vacant chair, the untold book, the empty place will speak to you always. Watch to which your heart can hardly endure, "Sleep on now, and take your rest! Sleep! Sleep! Sleep forever!"

III. The Voice of Christ

More easily forgiven than any other voice is the voice of Christ which now I hear calling men to come to Him, and to come before winter. I wish I had been there when Christ called His disciples, Andrew and Peter, and James and John. See how He spoke in Galilee, and I can only imagine what He was saying at the receipt of custom. There must have been a note not only of love and authority but of simplicity and sincerity in His voice, for we knew that they felt all and followed Him.

The voice of Christ, as you and I engage the mind and attention of a man is eternal life. Hence the Holy Spirit, the soul of just men made perfect. Who can sit still as He was sitting at the receipt of custom. There must have been a note not only of love and authority but of simplicity and sincerity in His voice, for we knew that they felt all and followed Him.

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Paul: A Model of Christian Holiness
First in a series of exegetical studies
by Morris A. Weigelt
Professor of New Testament, Nazarene Theological Seminary

SCRIPTURE:
I. Introduction
A. Confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world and especially toward you. (2 Cor. 1:12)
B. For I write nothing to you other than what you need to know and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end.
C. Just as you also partially did understand, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are, in the day of our Lord Jesus.
D. And in this confidence I intended at first to come to you, that you might twice receive a blessing:
E. That is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia, to pass your way to your place, in order to validate to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.
F. Therefore I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or that which I propose, do I propose according to the flesh, that with there should be yes, and no; but in the Lord is our acceptance.
G. But as God is faithful, our word to you not yea and nay.
H. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yea and nay, but is yea in Him.
I. For as many as are the promises of God, in Him who are yea. Wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.
J. Now he who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God.

K. Paul also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.
L. But I call God to witness you, my soul, that I spare you no more to Corinth.
M. I have much to write you, but I fear the enemy, but are workers with you for your joy, but in your faith you are standing firm.
(2 Cor. 1:12-24 NASB)

II. I. Basic Background Material
A. Paul is the author of 1 and 2 Corinthians in A.D. 58. Paul was a missionary for nearly a decade and a half in the Corinthian church. His love for Christ had only deepened and matured as he faced the problems of this stormy church.
B. Paul’s second missionary journey was difficult in itself. In 18 months during the second missionary journey, Paul had
C. an abundance of sufferings for the opportunity for God to give us grace and comfort;
D. In verses 8-11 of chapter 1, Paul describes the intensity of the sufferings he endured in Asia for the purpose of the Kingdom of God. He does not tell us what the sufferings were, but the suffering they were endured for the Kingdom purposes. The impossibility of survival which was so apparent led to an opportunity to live a life of holiness upon God.
E. In the paragraph which follows, Paul discusses the “painful or sorrowful” letter which had written to them in order to provide the proof of the punishment by the majority of some who had offended him. The beauty of Paul’s discourse is his application to this passage.
F. The immediate context is thus a context reflecting the intensity of the conversations between Paul and the church at Corinth. It reflects stress and misunderstanding and difficulty for everyone on all sides.

III. Flow of Thought
A. An examination of the thought processes of the apostle provides a pattern to guide specific exegetes.
B. This verse contains a variant reading. Some manuscripts read “holiness”, where other manuscripts read “sacredness”. Both words are Pauline words, but the context here favors “holiness.” Paul’s decisions are made in light of this moral purity which God gives. The word similarly is an understanding of a decision which is made in the light of the commandment, and by implication commands.
C. Both the sincerity and the holiness are from God and stand in specific contrast to earthly judgments.
D. The apostle is exercising an understanding of the wisdom which is bounded by the horizons of this world and anticipated in whole counsel of God.
E. Paul professes that his decisions have been made by God, for the holiness and sincerity which God gives, yes indeed, by God’s grace and not by earthly wisdom. Paul’s sincerity is integrity and holiness of God which do not vary. He notes at the end of verse 14 that his “better opportunity” to test the validity of this statement than anyone else, perhaps the Corinthians.
F. In verse 15, that he has written to them in complete transparency. What he has said and what he has done, he has fully explained, he has seen, he has hoped that the Corinthians will understand fully as they have other vagaries and perplexities. The basis which he has been making is necessary, for the man in the middle, for the encouragement of our Lord Jesus Christ.
G. The constant anticipation of the imminent Second Coming is the backdrop against which is set upon the life of the Christian.

H. Significance of the Travel Plans (verses 15-17)
A. In verse 15, Paul gives the Corinthians a better opportunity to test the validity of his statements than anyone else.
B. In verse 16, Paul has just stated his confidence, their confidence, they understand it fully, “in all the things by which this Kingdom of God has been understood, we understand it fully”.
C. So in such a confidence, they understand it fully.
D. In such a confidence they understand it fully, the God who brought those who have been anointed by God. The metaphor is used in the Old Testament of God with hosts, soldiers, and kings.
E. The third verb is in the perfect tense and is variously translated as either anointed or commissioned. The root of the word is probably connected with the idea of consecrated. The idea is that he has been consecrated to the work of God.

IV. Conclusion
A. Just as you also partially did understand, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are, in the day of our Lord Jesus.
B. For I write nothing to you other than what you need to know and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end.
C. Just as you also partially did understand, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are, in the day of our Lord Jesus.
insh.

The whole passage could easily be used in a proclamation of Paul as a model of Christian holiness at the moment of pressure. The introduction for such a sermon would include a reference to the situation which Paul is facing in this Corinthian situation and the temptation to respond to the accusations of non-believers as an attempt to mend his relations with them. Instead of such hard-line reactions, Paul's response is one of holiness in the midst of pressure.

The first part of the sermon would be verse 12-14, designating the testimony of his conscience. In this section contrast should be drawn between the two sides of God instead of worldly wisdom and making decisions by earthly wisdom in contrast to making decisions in the holiness of God and from God. The first section of the sermon could then end with reference to living transparently each day in the light of the immense work of the return of Christ in verse 140.

The second part of the sermon would dwell upon the faithfulness of God which flows through his obedient people in the midst of pressure. Paul here argues that God's faithfulness (which is a matter of nature and not decision) flows through His people. This faithfulness has been openly and unmistakably demonstrated in Christ who lives in us so that there are no doubt meanings in God's promises. But those promises have become and remain an everlasting yes, an inner affirmative, uncreated by negatives. The point of this section would be that the trustworthiness of God is our base of operations. That trustworthiness frees us from being defensive and upright and secure.

A third point would emphasize the guarantee of God's Spirit within us. Attention would be drawn to each of these major verbs discussed in the flow of thought above. Use illustrations to express the meaning and purpose of living in Christ through God's dynamic, creative, stabilizing power. This point could include the places in which we may face recrimination and misunderstanding and pressures of all kinds of sin, with transparency, sincerity and energetic defenselessness. Paul is a beautiful model of living the life of Christ in holiness and transparency because his decisions had been made in holiness and godly sincerity. Only in Christ may we truly become workers together for joy.

V. The Conclusion

A sermon on the faithfulness of God as the base for the life of the Christian could easily be created. Another sermon on the holiness of God's life and the holiness of God's people could be preached. Another sermon could center on verses 21 and 22, where Paul tells us as he is established and anointed and sealed and has the Spirit in his heart. This sermon might be proclaimed from verse 24, on the expression "workers together for joy.

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PREACHER'S EXCHANGE


THE MINISTER'S MATE

There's AN ANGEL

in MY BACKYARD!

by Janice Fish

Pastor's wife, Ridgefield, Washington

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THE SMALL INCONVENIENCES OF a parsonage next door to the church had seemed to grow out of proportion during the Christmas season, too many drop-in visitors before and after services, too many activities with children wanting to check out our back door, or needing to use our bathroom because "the one in the church is busy." I was beginning to feel the pressures too keenly, and, to think of our human need for shelter and God's provisions forus in a little self-pity on this cold, rainy Tuesday night.

The teens in our church had chosen this night for their live nativity. They had advertised, and worked very hard to get the shelter or fl0r bought ready. Some animals had been loaned a little black-and-white cat (from a Catholic dairy family); some had a horse, which was exiled back to his barn because he couldn't leave the hay alone; and a Basset hound named Ezekiel, who also was exiled, because he couldn't leave the goats alone. Some of our faithful ladies had come to fix hot chocolate at the church, and about 35 excited teens were taking turns dressing in the costumes, and taking their places in the live nativity scene. When I walked out to see how they looked, it was really so lovely. "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem" was being played on the public-address system. As I watched, several cars came, parked, and the families come close to see and pet the animals. The little ones who came to see were so impressed, especially when they heard the sounds of sheep in the darkness. In answer to their inquiring look, Joseph said, "It's the sheep in the fields, where the shepherds are working. They were the first ones to hear about Jesus' birth, but most of them had to go back to work now."

It was very moving, and the teens decided to make this part of their ministry to the community each year. I was proud of them, as I sat in my warm robe and slippers, watching cars drive in and out. Then, it was over... I went ahead with my laundry, which had been neglected too long... again giving in to thoughts of self-pity... dreaming of a cabin on a hill beside the sea... with no phone, no doorbell, and no people to be seen in any direction.

What was that noise in the backyard? A glance out the kitchen window prompted me to take a closer look... there was an angel in my backyard! His wings were too long, his halo had completely disappeared, his jeans and sneakers were hanging under his white gown, and in what is the world is he doing? He's putting on his coat in the back of our station wagon I couldn't believe my eyes. I started to laugh. (And it sure felt good, it had been too long since I had really laughed.) With the laughing, all my thoughts of self-pity flew out the door. It was the beginning of Christmas for me.

Now, there are advantages and disadvantages to the parsonage next door to the church, but I wouldn't ever want to feel sorry for myself about it again... after all, the next time the doorbell rings, it might be an angel!
DON'T EAT THE DAISIES — PLANT THEM

by Neil Hightower
President of Canadian Nazarene College

There is a great opportunity of doing useful work, and there are many people against me (1 Cor. 16:9).

The world would rather consume than conserve. Eating seems more exciting than planting. Many church leaders would rather fish than catch. A truly dried-in-the-wool fisherman never asks his fellow fisherman, "Are you fishing?" but rather, "Are you catching anything?" in the church an incredible amount of time is often spent on the mechanics, the approach, the delivery, but not little on catching and conserving. We must ask ourselves a basic question. What is our philosophy of ministry? Is it to build an organization or an organism? You can build an organization on digits, statistics, and methods, but you can build an organism—a Body—only on the living, pulsating needs of people. St. Paul enumerated the Church's philosophy of ministry very clearly in Eph. 4:12-13:

"His gifts were made that Christians might be properly equipped for their service. That the whole body might be built up until the time comes when, in the unity of the faith and of the common offense, the Son of God will arrive at real maturity, the head—Christ. As promises and development which is meant by the fulness of Christ."

Our service, the ministry of the whole Body, is to build people into the mature image of Christ.

Church leaders are faced with the very practical question, "How do I get people to quit merely fishing and to begin catching?" or, "How do I get people to move from a focus on yesterday to focus on tomorrow?"

Your immediate answer must be: "I, myself, will be willing to move from fishing to catching; from yesterday to tomorrow."

"Accomplishing that hurdle will be a major task, but let us assume you have done it. How do you motivate people to move instead of `{fishing'}?"

Grasp your mission. The greatest motivating force in the world is a sense of mission. Every national leader, every army commander, and every Olympic coach knows the tremendous influence of a captivating cause of mission. Jesus knew this when He established the Great Commission.

Our mission is not merely to make decisions but to make disciples, not merely to persuade but also to equip. We must be clear on this. Program does not generate the mission. It must support the mission. Money is generated by a mission, not for it. Money and people-commitment doesn't flow to the organization with the greatest need, but to the one with the greatest mission.

Imagine an overpowering vision. The church needs imagination, not just vision.

• Wit people by establishing personal relationships.
• Make the prospecting a foundation of bridges; but not the bridge.
• Affirm that the bridge is people-needs.

People-sensitivity, in essence, is walking in the other person's shoes.

Practice good listening. Leaders are "pitchers," to use a baseball concept. Good leaders realize that pitching is more effective if they know how to catch. This involves listening to persons.

Listen with your eyes as well as your ears. Listen to the nonverbal. Listen to the value systems underneath the language clothing.

Concentrate on solutions. The easiest thing for any group to do is list negative factors, or handicaps to any plan of goal. Leaders who want to motivate their followers will use their energy to create waters (solutions) instead of weeds (problems). We must cease feeding problems, and concentrate on opportunities.

We have the same positive viewpoint of our text, "There is a great opportunity, and many adversaries."

Church leaders with a vision have decided that maintenance work—a survival mentality—is not good enough for God's work. They will begin to imagine great things; their dreams will be bigger than they are. They will, because of this vision, begin to plan for tomorrow instead of yesterday. Their plans will have flexibility, but they will be focused on making disciples. They will concentrate on raising a mission, through a vision. This will attract men and money.

Develop people-sensitivity. Church leaders with a vision of a mission will not let themselves be viewed as encumbered, or machinery, but as sensitive humans. They will not try to be "little tin gods," but warm, approachable people.

They will practice good people-flow principles:
• Bring people toward you.

Others under the Lordship of Christ. As St. Paul says in Rom. 12:3, "Do not allow exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of truth that God has given to you all.""
A though John Wesley clearly identified himself and the Methodist movement with Pre-

testament teaching, his concern for the welfare of the soul, and his belief in the possibility of salvation by grace alone, he constantly attacked what he con-

sidered to be a basic flaw in the thought of both Luther and Cal-

vin. These reformers, in speaking out against the works-righteous-

ness of Roman Catholicism, had emphasize divine, sovereignty, and initiative in the redemption of humankind. But Wesley de-

tected in their theological descen-
dants a tendency toward spiritual laziness and moral laxity, symp-
toms of the age-old heresy of antinomianism. This "Reformed syndrome" was not so much an exacerbation of either Luther or Calvin, but rather a distortion of a solid theological truth by those who misunderstood the scriptURAL doctrine of salvation.

Among Wesley's Moravian friends, this syndrome appeared as a "doctrine of stillness," ad-
vocating that, since God's pre-
destining decrees could not be manipulated by human action, sinner's should wait quietly for salvation, waiting no attempt to draw nigh to God through prayer, attendance at services, or acts of repentance, only then that they obey the same as a passive attitude related to his parting company with the Moravians in 1778. There seemed to be a general dissatis-
faction of using all possible means to prepare oneself for receiving the gift of salvation. While recog-
nizing the primacy of God's pre-

destining grace, he rejected the complete separation from the world, he reminded his followers that they must work out their own salvation, as well, by deeds of repentance and love.1

The Calvinist expression of this syndrome centered in the idea of perse-

verance of eternal security. They concluded that if one was among the elect and was ad-

tended to the idea of God, no human action could jeopard-

ize their status and therefore disqualify them. Wesley correctly observed that this understanding destroyed one of the major incentives for the holy life and provided a rationale for a do-as-you-please approach to the Christian life. Using scriptural arguments, Wesley proved that human responsi-

bility was essential not only in attaining, but also maintaining the gift of grace.2

Luther's concept of simul justus et peccator (at the same time justi-

tified and yet a sinner) provided the theological foundation for this Reformed syndrome. By emph-

asizing that one's righteousness was only in Christ, and that all human efforts were meaningless and offensive to God, Luther opened a Pandora's box. Those who would "sin bravely but be-

more bravely." Wesley agreed with Luther that right-

eousness was imputed through Christ's atoning sacrifice, but also insisted that this righteousness was imparted to the believer, transforming the sinner into a new creation who must live out his or her righteousness or else lose the salvation attained by faith.3

Wesley resisted the Reformed syndrome of spiritual laxity by calling his followers to strive to-

ward their conversion. The principle of Wesley's theological under-

standing can be found in his command to the congregation in his letter to A. G. on "go on. 4 " In Wesleyan te-

nology, there is no place for slack-

ing under the excuse that "God will take care of it." The Christian life is a way to the Kingdom and every pilgrim on the way must keep moving forward through the various stages in the order of salvation, from repentance to new birth, to entire sanctification, and even bodily "new birth in perfection. 

Wesley warns those who would relax that "it is impossible that any should retain what they receive, without improving it."5 without panting after holiness. Each must press on to the goal and the goal is nothing short of perfection, purity of heart, and life.

But there is an equally danger-

ous "Wesleyan syndrome" that grows out of this call to "go on. A distortion of Wesley leads to an oppressive religious devi of joy in suffering in Jesus Christ. For if one preach perfectionism with-

out maintaining the Protestant fo-
cus of salvation as a gift of God's grace through faith, the Wesleyan emphasis upon human responsi-

bility and endeavor becomes exaggerated into an impossible demand. "Be ye perfect" is no longer a gracious invitation—it is a driving command, totally un-

attainable by any measure of human striving.

We can easily recognize the injustice of a father demanding adult behavior and intelligence from a six-year-old child. We can also see how the natural and psychological damage such a requirement would produce but spiritual damage caused by preaching a perfection based more upon human ability than divine enabling is equally devast-

ating to the child of God! This Wesleyan syndrome or distortion can lead first to a com-

pulsive spirituality... a constant struggle to do better because of feelings of inadequacy rather than confidence in Christ... a continuel feeling the whole of Wesley's theological under-

standing can be found in his command to the congregation in his letter to A. G. on "go on. 4 " In Wesleyan te-

nology, there is no place for slack-

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ARÉNA FOR TRUE FELLOWSHIP (Continued from page 11)

7. Have a special emphasis on fellowship. An outside resource person may have more "powerful" than groups who experience some-

thing new in a nonthreatening manner. The more it means to them, the more they will continue to follow up.

Developing the middle service into an arena for fellowship requires knowing both from study and experience what fellowship is and then discerning where to navigate from "here" to "there" so that those who need the fellowship do not fall overboard because the ship went too fast for them.

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THE CENTURY MINISTRY

THE PASTORAL OFFICE

by P. F. Breese (1838-1915)

Historical Introduction by Carl Bang, Professor of Historical Theology, St. Paul's Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri

This essay on "The Pastoral Office" was delivered by Rev. P. F. Breese on May 30, 1877, as an address to the Convening of the Methodist Episcopal Church to be in Large. It is one of the principal addresses that perhaps the principal founder of the Church of the Nazarene, was one of the most outstanding addresses at the three-day meeting of the four Annual Conferences of the state. The convention had been a decisive event for "mutual and godly caution" and for coordination of the work of the conferences. The papers dealt with administration, program, current issues, and spiritual concerns.

Breese had begun his ministry at age 15 in 1857 as assistant to his father, who was the minister of the Marlowe Church. He matured rapidly in spirit and effectiveness. At age 25, he was a pastoring elder and at age 33 a delegate to General Conferences. During the years, he edited a conference paper and had held office in most of the conference boards and committees, being particularly interested in the work of colleges and seminaries. His chief love, however, was the pastorate. And at the time of the convention of 1881 be was a member of the Church of the Nazarene.

His paper on "The Pastoral Office" was unique among those presented at the convention. Many of the papers were reports on church statistics and examinations of mission successes, but Breese's was different. He had to do with departments of the Church of the Nazarene, its world mission, its missionary societies, and educational institutions. Others dealt with public issues, which at that time were tempests, "dubious doctrines, and the press."

Breese's paper was preceded by an earnest but back-breaking appeal for the preservation of the idea of the pastoral office. His paper was followed by a second address by another minister on the pastoral office—an unappreciated talk on how to be a denominational functionary.

Breese operated on a plan. The pastoral office, for him, concerns the twin ministries of evangelism and education. It is the pastor's particular task to seek the salvation of those who are in that "borderland where the Church and the world meet and mingle." It is "equally important to be a teacher of the Word of Truth to the whole Church."

The church is, indeed, a university, with the pastor for president. The power and unity of pastoral evangelism and education stem from the pastor's own moral character as it is motivated by the spiritual power of the gospel. "A true conception of this work," he says, "can only be drawn from the work of the Son of God."

Sorts of the passions of Breese's own life can be seen between the lines. A pastor "may be obliged to do no other things," and duty may put the pastor in the base for all ideals, loved ones, providing for the aged and infirm. Breese was still in the midst of his involvement with Mexican missions, "for he had the care of his own aging parents. It was a situation that the undissembled Methodists did not do very well under. Breese makes it plain that when a pastor takes on such outside interests they must be, like Paul's tent-making, "not for bread and butter, but that he may preach Jesus Christ."

Now, nearly 100 years later, Breese's essay continues to speak with fresh challenge. The pastor is to be one who is thrilled with divine truth, aware of its unsearched depths, and sensible of its infinite glory, a large-hearted person, embracing all classes of people, and especially the poor and despised, able to bear crushing burdens because of a sense of common life with Jesus Christ.

The papers of the convention were published in Burlington, Iowa, in Proceedings of the Second Iowa Methodist Convention, Held at Des Moines Iowa, May 31, June 1 and 2, 1881, I came across this book while doing research on Breese in preparation for the H. R. Wylie Lectures in Theology at Point Loma College in 1977. I am indebted to the Library of the Iowa State Department of History and Archives for bringing this book to my attention and for making the essay available for republication.

I suppose it is the design that I should say a few things in reference to the work in which we are called as Christian pastors to do in the best conditions in which each pastor, in his own way, can do the work. The office is nothing more than it represents the work to be done, and each man, animated by the same spirit, must do his work somewhat in the same way, and the only difference is that I am not so difficult to know what to preach as to be in condition so that the Holy Ghost can preach through us—so in all our work the details of how it shall be done are not so important as to be in condition so that we may be an efficient agent through whom the Holy Spirit may work.

The work of the pastor embraces all departments of the work of the Christian ministry. While we sometimes speak of evangelists, and teachers, and pastors, so far as the aspects of the pastor embraces, in a large degree, all classes of work. He must do the work of the evangelist in which all men are gathered under his ministry. He must feed the flock of God with tenderest care, providing for the sheep that is lambing, and the ewe that is in labor.

In this day when there is a large border-land where the Church and the world meet and mingle, where those who are not Christians, yet perjured by Christian thought and Christian principle, sit in our sanctuaries and abide in our homes, and when just outside of this circle there are large numbers almost under the shadow of our church who are devoid of all Christian life, there must enter into the pastor's heart that much of the evangelism of his ministry must have a more or less direct tendency to save these souls. The pastor, who is always Christ-like, should seem to be a poor minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ that was not an evangelical. He is always a pastor, but he must have a more or less direct tendency to save souls. The mission is so filled with the light of divine love that no soul shall be lost. And even a special evangelist can take the place of the pastor and carry on his work.

He must also be a constant teacher. Every church is a school, and the church is fully as important a school as any. If not, why not be termed universities with the pastor for president. But he is everything else also. He should be a teacher of the Word of Truth as well as a teacher of the Word of Life. He must be able to teach the Holy Ghost to his church.

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enough to love them all. He will often be in sur- rounding difficulties and troubles sometimes where he thinks he should not have been placed. He must be so filled with the Christ spirit, with sweetness and humility he meets all the diffi- culties and trials of his work. He must know that God has called him to this work. There should be no haste or rashness in entering upon this office. In our Christian work and in our apostolic injunction to "lay hands suddenly on no man." This con- viction of the Divine call to this work should be so strongly impressed upon us. We obey the difficulties, trials and temptations in this work, which to overcome a man will need to feel God calls me to it. There are burdens to be borne of crushing weight, which are never to be laid down from one year's end to the other, and he needs to feel such a union with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heart that he can lay both the burden and himself in all-loving arms.

This work...is far above all worldly...power or gains.

There is often such a sense of humiliation in view of the utter inadequacy of our feeble efforts to meet the necessities of the occasion, that we would often lay down the work for stronger and better hands; I suppose my own experience is not dissimilar to others. I have often gone home on a Sabbath night feeling heartstricken over my inability to preach the gospel as it ought to be preached, and feeling I could never lock the congregation in the face again. A man needs, under circumstances like these, a clear sense of his call of God to the work.

Uncertainty is always an element of weakness, and never more so than in this most difficult work. There must be something of a conviction of the Spirit of God, and to which we are called. A man that has a low or inferior idea of the pastoral office, will not be likely to succeed in it. He who does not regard this as the highest work, that which of all others he loves the best; that which he would choose if all paths were open to him, has not the spirit of the true pastor. This work to him is far above all worldly places, or power, or gains. He may be obliged to do other things, but it is that he may do this.

Paul made tents, but it was not for the sake of the tent, but that he might preach the gospel, that was the great end, that was the one thing he had in view, all others were subsidiary to that. So with the minister of Christ he must turn sometimes to the making of the tent and the other, that those God has given him in sacred trust. He must not, that he may far more clearly see the Gospel, than those who are worse than inteilevolent. But it is not for the bread and butter, but that he loves Jesus Christ. This is not a work of convenience to be taken up and laid down as we may or may not have other work to do. It is no special sign that a man is called to the Christian pastorate because he has nothing to do, or has failed in other things. Man are called and sanctified to this work, and he who lightly lays it down for worldly emoluments or place, has little conception of it. Duty, high and imperative, the same voice that called him to do, it may bid him turn in part, or even wholly from it; caring for afflicted loved ones, providing for the aged and infirm, may compel him, but even then, it seems to me, it will be the sorrow of a true pastor's life.

A true conception of this work can only be drawn from the work of the Son of God. We must stand in the shadow of the Cross—must see that Cross lifted through the centuries, until it stands erect on Calvary, and as we gaze upon that dying Christ; and see the glory of the love of God in that marred face—walking here, the true pastor learns the value of men, and as Christ asks, "Whom shall I send?" he says, "Here am I, send me." And Jesus says: "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you." Receiving thus his commission from Jesus Christ, bedewed with his tears and bathed with his blood, it enters in and takes possession of his soul, and he feels that "Tis all my business here below to cry, Behold the Lambs."

There is ever before the pastor a vivid sense of the need of those to whom he ministers. To me it is one of the most overwhelming views of the work of the Christian pastor to look into the faces of those to whom we minister, and think of their need. There is that aged man, seeking the rippling influences of the gospel; there is the desolate heart of that bereaved woman, who seeks through the ministry of the Word some one to bear her burdens of sorrow, and care; there is the man of business, burdened half heartstricken, he waits to be led out under the fairer skies of unfeigned verities; the forsaken, forlorn, hopeless, as well as those full of hope, whose hope may be or may be not; there are the young and the old. Each one has his story; each one has his struggles, and needs to be helped. The word of the Lord is precious; it is his food of life, and we must never hear again; some that are in the valley of decision. And the pastor's words, whether spoken in the pulpit or home circle, more than the words of any other, are to be cherished, and producing an abiding influence moulding destiny. This will doubt- less bring a heavy sense of responsibility, but no man can be a pastor, either in the pulpit or out of it, who does not feel this responsibility, and who does not feel that "I must feed and strengthen all these, and reinforce them in their moral life." "Blessed is he that serveth the Lord, when he cometh, shall find doing so."
**SERMON OUTLINES**

**ADVENT: SEASON OF SUBMISSION**
Mat. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38

Introducing Advent: Advent is the season of preparation for Christmas. It is a beautiful, meaningful experience for us because of the help of some persons who experienced the wonder of Christmas with us.

One of the characteristic feelings of Advent is the reminder of a promise one who lived by the hope that God would fulfill His promises. The coming of Christmas each year still stirs hope in human hearts.

**With Simon as our guide we can understand better why Advent is a season of hope.**

1. HOPE FOR SALVATION—v. 30
   - Simon lived by the hope that God would see Simon’s work in Christ.
   - Hope for deliverance and freedom is common to us all.
   - Christmas offers the fulfillment of that hope.

2. HOPE FOR HEALING—v. 32
   - Simon lived by the hope that God would disclose himself to all persons.
   - Hope for knowledge of the truth is common to us all.
   - Christmas offers the fulfillment of that hope.

3. HOPE FOR GLORY—v. 32
   - Simon lived by the hope that Jesus would be restored.
   - Hope for becoming what we meant to be is common to us all.
   - Christmas offers the fulfillment of that hope.

Conclusion: Advent is a season of hope because Christmas answers deliverance, knowledge of the truth, the coming of God in His Son to save us. Let us lift the hope of this beautiful season move to believe and to receive that God is offering you.

—Richard Young

**ADVENT: SEASON OF HOPE**
Luke 2:1-25

Introduction: Advent is the season of preparation for Christmas. In this season, we may learn to value people who are not worthy of our love and who are not important to us.

We may learn to feel love for those who are not identical to us and who are not deserving of our love.

Conclusion: It is a season of hope because it is a time of deep personal and spiritual growth. We may find that we need to be more patient and understanding with others during this season.

—Richard Young

**THE CHRISTIAN OLYMPICS**

**TEXT:** Hebrews 12:1-2

**INTRODUCTION:** The Hebrews Christian to whom this Epistle was written were not finding in their Christian race the kind of Christian that God expected. They were not full of faith and living it out.

B. See the word “faith” as God’s word to us in the New Testament.

C. In Hebrews 11, the different methods of the Hebrews are explained.

**THE RULE**

**Looking unto Jesus.** Two words stand out in this verse: “Looking” and “Looking.”

A. We are talking about a generation of the eyes.

B. Looking is specific. Run with self-control, faith, in doing what he demands.

C. He is the Author, that is Filial Leader—the One who has gone before and will lead us into victory. To look or to follow any other is to fail.

IV. THE REWARD

A. Today it is a gold medal. To obtain this, athletes will be ever seeking to bring their bodies and souls in submission to the will of God. Yet only one receives the coveted prize.

B. As not for the Christian. The faithful do not receive the same public acclaim. Surely, the reward of righteous living is not a medal, but a crown.

C. Jesus declares that He has a purpose for every work He speaks to us. He expects us to listen and respond as He speaks.

D. His life is held up high for us to see.

—Leonard McNair

**AFTER CHURCH:**

**SERMON OUTLINES**

**JESUS SAYS, FOR NOTHING IS SECRET THAT SHALL NOT BE MANIFEST**

**Scripture:** Luke 6:16-18

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. Our lesson: the parable of the candle, following Jesus’ discourse on the tower.

2. This is one of His favorite illustrations.

3. It is Matthew 5:15 where He spoke of the candle as the Christian’s light.

B. He says, “Let your light shine before others.”

C. He lays aside the Hebrews, 11, the chapter in which he speaks of the race we are to run.

D. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief." (Heb. 3:12)

E. Run with patience. The same word that is translated “en-" in Hebrews 10:38 is translated "race" in Mark 6:12. A long distance race—many start, few finish.

**III. THE RULE**

Looking unto Jesus. Two words stand out in this verse: “Seeking” and “Looking.”

A. We are talking about a generation of the eyes.

B. Looking is specific. Run with self-control, faith, in doing what he demands.

C. He is the Author, that is Filial Leader—the One who has gone before and will lead us into victory. To look or to follow anyone else is to fail.

D. There must be a definite purpose for lighting a lamp.

E. Jesus had an important point to make with this statement.

F. The man of intelligence would not light a lamp without a purpose, surely an all-wise God would not do so.

G. The lamp represents the realized truth, and God does not impart truth purposelessly.

H. He means everything He says.

I. Jesus declares that He has a purpose for every word He speaks to us.

J. He expects us to listen and respond as He speaks.

K. His life is held up high for us to see.

—Leonard McNair

**AFTER CHURCH:**

**SERMON OUTLINES**
God's Justice—Mat. 2:17—3:5
“you have wearied” (2:17)

The word is Ónó'αム, commonly used to express the idea of making someone sweat or work very hard. Here it is the common expression, "you have wearied,” which have grieved God.

"in that you say” (2:17)

The preposition πρίν before the infinitive here functions as a temporal adverbial conjunction. Read, “when you say.”

"delights” (2:17)

Or, takes pleasure. This is the approach of being wearied or caused to toil over harsh words.

"Justice” (2:17)

Hebrew mishpâhah. This is the key word in the discussion here. The people appear to be saying that they desire to straiten His justice (or righteous judgment). In 2:5, God’s messen-
ger does come to the Temple for the purpose of judging (NAB “for judgment” should be read “for justice”); mishpâhah is used both places). However, His coming reveals all kinds of sin, immorality, and, particularly, absence of so-
cial justice among members of the community of faith. Thus the justice which the people desire (2:17) is that justice which is, as what God’s presence would reveal (2:17).

"my messenger” (2:17)

Hebrew mârâ̄lâ̄. Malachi, this book. Malachi was not a proper name but a common name, “my messenger.” The au-
thor of the book is unknown.

"the lord” (2:17)

This is not YHWH but Ónó'α, a common word for a nobleman or aristocrat, but also a general term of address for anyone. In this verse the “lord” (nâ̄o'â) is equalled with both the messenger being sent and “the mes-
senger of the covenant.” Thus it is not wrong to assume two beings here, first a messenger but then God himself. Notice the structure of the entire verse.

Behold I am sending my messen-
ger and he shall deal the way before me. Suddenly shall come to His Temple, the Lord whom you seek, even the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight. Be-
hind he is coming.

All referents are third person. Yahweh is speaking (indefinite form of the verse) about another one throughout. The double “behind” phrase provides a chiastic frame for the verse and serves to identify the coming one as messenger, lord, and covenantal herald.

"endure” (3:2-3)

KJV “abide” has been immor-
talized by Handel. But the mean-
ing of Hebrew kâ̄l here (naturally used to mean “comprehend” or “contain”) must be determined in parallel with the other expres-
sions. Clearly the idea being expressed is that no one can stand “when he appears,” no one can survive (in sin and equally specified in 3:5) in the fiery pres-
cence of this one coming to refine and purify.

"fullers’ soap” (3:2)

Lit., “soap of cleaners,” i.e., the strong alkali soap (including the professional garment cleaners). But these latter were not “laundrymen” in the modern sense as the NAB marginal note implies. Rather, their task was to cleanse garments so as to make them fit for cubic use. Notice the description of the garments of the preposition meta and the noun maphre (which means “cleaning”). The language of purifying over from one form to another.

The verb occurs only four times in the New Testament, always in the passive. Here and in the par-
allel passage (Mark 9:2) it de-
scribes a transformation that was outwardly visible. Luke, in his account of the Transfiguration, does not use the verb, but writes of Jesus, “As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning” (9:29).

In the other two places where Transfiguration occurs (Rom. 1:25-2 Cor. 3:18), it describes an inner, invisible, spiritual transformation. (See the comments there in Word Meanings in the New Testament.)

Regarding the transfiguration experience, Johannes Behm writes: “Before the eyes of his most intimate acquaintances, the hu-
man appearance of Jesus was for a moment changed into that of a heavenly being in the trans-
figured world. This is the an-
ticipation and guarantee of an es-
catological reality” (Theo-
logical Dictionary of the New Testament). The trans-
figuration of Jesus is the divine assurance to us that who are we who may be trans-
formed into his glory.

Matthew 17

Transfiguration (17:2)

The Greek verb is aimeromor-
phizo. It is compared in the preposition meta and the noun maphre (which means “cleaning”). The language of purifying over from one form to another.

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"Tabernacle” or “Shelter”?

(17:4)

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formed into his glory.

"listed” or "Wished”?

(17:12)

This is one of the 830 words in the King James Version that have changed their meanings since 1611. Today “listed” means “included in a list.”

The Greek word is thelo. It has two meanings: wish, expressing a desire; and will, expressing purpose. Of the 209 times it oc-
Clergy Quiz

1. Epiphany has been associated with:
   A. Baptism of new converts
   B. The 12th day of Christmas
   C. The ascension of the Magi
   D. All of the above

2. The theme of 2 Peter chapter 3 is to...
   B. B.
   C. D.

3. "Virtue, glory, honor, all things human and divine, are slaves to riches" comes from a book called Sатres. It was written by:
   A. Joaquín Miller
   B. Erasmus
   C. Francis Bacon
   D. Francis Bacon

4. The visit of the wise men is recorded in the book of:
   A. Mark
   B. John
   C. Luke
   D. Matthew

5. The first step in preparing to preach from the Old Testament, according to Charles Israel's article in this magazine is:
   A. Establishing a working text
   B. Selecting a passage
   C. Determining functions
   D. Making a theological affirmation

6. The theme of 2 Peter chapter 3 has to do with:
   A. The Second Advent
   B. Fiery trials
   C. Faithfulness
   D. The Christian and the government

7. Which of the following have written books on evangelism?
   A. George Swiney
   B. Robert Coxman
   C. Dorian Clay
   D. All of the above

8. Which of the following pairs would have the least to argue about if assigned to debate against each other?
   A. Sigmund Freud and Harald Glasser
   B. Seymour Hiltner and Carl Rogers
   C. B. F. Skinner and Abraham Maslow
   D. All of the above

9. Which of the following was a missionary to India?
   A. David Livingstone
   B. Charles Tracy
   C. Bo Beilinsky
   D. William Carey

10. Jesus is called "the heav'n born Prince of Peace" in which of the following songs?
    A. Joy to the World
    B. The First Noel
    C. Hark, the Herald
    D. Angels Sing

11. Which of the following does not belong in this list?
    A. Finley Edge
    B. Larry Richards
    C. John Sismonde
    D. Lois LeBar

12. A theology of Christian education founded on the idea of God as Educator, Jesus the Exemplar, and the Holy Spirit as Tutor was written by:
    A. Elwood Baner
    B. Randolph Grump
    C. John Calvin
    D. Lois LeBar

13. The "proposition" of a sermon has to do with:
    A. The thesis or theme
    B. The peroration
    C. The invitation
    D. The exordium

14. "A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing" came from the pen of:
    A. Eric Fudge
    B. Martin Luther
    C. John Calvin
    D. Thomas Fuller

15. The metaphor describing the transtypical character of human existence used in Isa. 40:6; 1 Pet. 1:24; and Jas. 1:10 is:
    A. A wind-blown cloud
    B. Grass
    C. A vapor
    D. A flame

Rating Scale
14-15 correct: Better than most
12-13 correct: A little better than most
9-11 correct: Most
7-8 correct: Worse than most
0-6 correct: Most worse