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THE

PREACHER'S MAGAZINE

—proclaiming Christian Holiness . . .

inside this issue:

BEYOND BITTERNESS

The Editor

DREAMS AND GOAL SETTING

D. R. Peterman

**PREACHING THAT PROVIDES
A BALANCED DIET**

Arthur Brown, Jr.

**JOHN WESLEY ON OBSERVANCE
OF COMMUNION**

Donald Wood

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SACRAMENT

David J. Tarrant

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CONTENTS

- 1 Beyond Bitterness *Editorial*
- 3 Servanthood: The Pastor Deals
with Resistance *C. S. Cowles*
- 6 Dreams and Goal Setting *D. R. Peterman*
- 8 Creating a High Level of Trust *Neil E. Hightower*
- 9 Mostad Played the Tuba *Carlos H. Sparks*
- 11 Preaching That Provides
a Balanced Diet *Arthur Brown, Jr.*
- 13 Pastor? (poem) *Stanley Sutter*
- 14 The Lord Does Care! *Arthur J. Stott*
- 15 John Wesley on Observance
of Communion *Donald Wood*
- 16 It's Easy to Feed a Preacher's Ego *Practical Points*
- 17 Guidelines for a Young Pastor *Earl G. Lee*
- 18 Pastor Jones, Superstar *Michael Sellers*
- 19 Seven-Day Week (poem) *Edward F. Cox*
- 20 Significance of the Sacrament
(sermon) *David J. Tarrant*
- 23 The Starting Point *C. Neil Strait*
- 24 Looking at Our Lord in Luke *Ralph Earle*

DEPARTMENTS

Wesleyana, p. 15 □ In the Study, p. 24 □ Timely Outlines, p. 28 □ Bulletin Barrel, p. 30 □ Here and There Among Books, p. 31 □ Preachers' Exchange, p. 32

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Beyond Bitterness



YE THOUGHT EVIL AGAINST ME; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20).

These words were spoken by a man who had every reason to be bitter, but kept calm in the midst of adversity. He had been hated by his brothers, sold into slavery, imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, and forgotten by those who owed him favors.

These were Joseph's words to his brothers, after the damage had been done and the tables had been turned. When they were helpless, and their victim had become powerful, they sought his forgiveness.

Forgiveness they received because this man Joseph possessed a trait of character which every preacher should cultivate. He was so committed to his faith in the God of his father, Jacob, that he had no time for petty grievances or personal rancor. He had found the secret for a life that is free from resentment, a life beyond bitterness.

Why, someone may ask, should today's clergyman be reminded of the afflictions of Joseph? He lived 35 centuries ago. His was another day, another culture, another era. So far as we know, he never pastored a church nor preached a sermon. But he did know the sting of criticism, the hurt of being hated, the feeling of failure, and the pain of adversity. He knew what it was like to be dumped into a pit without water, to be held under lock and key like an animal, and to be accused of deeds and motives of which he was not guilty. And it is a fair assumption that he had done nothing to deserve any of this.

We must not be carried away, of course, in our comparison of Joseph's case with that of today's pastor. The significant parallel we need to see has little to do with his long list of troubles as they may remind us of ours. Our concern is how he faced them. Seneca once wrote, "No man is hurt but by himself"; and in the final analysis, it is not what happens to us that matters so much as our reaction to it.

Joseph's secret of living beyond bitterness still works miracles for

those who know it. This is good news for today's "overseers of the flock."

Joseph had, first and foremost, *his faith in a God who is real*. He believed in God when he was at home, when he was enjoying the father's favors, and when he sensed no threat to his comfort and security. But he continued to believe God when he was exiled from home, when he did not have the companionship of those he loved, when his freedom was gone, and his very existence was threatened. In it all, God was still as real as ever, and Joseph knew it.

We are amused when reminded of Martin Luther's wife dressing herself like a widow in mourning and parading into her husband's study. When Luther asked her who had died, she made her point by replying, "God has died. At least, that is the impression I get when I observe your attitude and actions."

We believe in God. Certainly we do. But sometimes we may not act like we believe Him.

Joseph's inner strength came also through *his faith in a God who is present*. Theologians have a word for this. They describe God as being *immanent*, as well as *transcendent*. He is everywhere and over all, but He is here, too. He does not go away somewhere and remain aloof from us in our struggles.

Jesus taught us this lesson when He came and dwelt among us. He is our Immanuel, "God with us." Therefore we should know God even better than Joseph knew Him. So today we find it a source of encouragement to know that, 16 centuries before Christ was born, God revealed himself to Joseph as One who does not walk away from His own when they need Him.

Another aspect of Joseph's secret was *his faith in a God who cares*. And God does care. It matters to Him. He knows when we are hurting, and His heart is touched by our frustrations. This assurance made a difference when everything seemed to be going wrong in Joseph's life. When today's pastor remembers this, he can walk through the valleys and be strengthened.

But most important of all was Joseph's *faith in a God who is able*. What differences would it make if God is real, if He is here, and He cares, but He cannot cope with our problems? What a tragedy for someone to bear his burden all alone because he has lost his faith in a God who is the sovereign Ruler of this universe.

We Wesleyans have sometimes overreacted to our Calvinistic brethren in their emphasis upon God's sovereignty. We have insisted upon man's free choice. But we do not need to abandon the truth of God's sovereignty in order to believe in man's power of choice. God can do all things that it pleases Him to do, and let us not forget it. A clear concept of His mighty power helps us through the valleys.

There is a good word here for those who have experienced some setbacks and are tempted to permit bitterness to soil their spirits. The most difficult times are those when we know we deserve better, we are innocent before those who have questioned our motives, and we have done nothing worthy of the spite we see directed toward us. These things cannot hurt us—unless we let them.

God is here, and He cares. Furthermore, He has a thousand ways to help us through to final victory. In Christ we can live beyond bitterness.



CALL TO SERVANTHOOD

C. S. COWLES, Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Covina, Calif.

7. THE PASTOR DEALS WITH RESISTANCE

I SAT THERE SHAKEN. My carefully wrought program of imaginative and aggressive evangelism, worked out in mimeographed detail, had been picked to pieces by members of the board. Now it lay in shambles at my feet. My first reaction was to wrap myself up in a cloak of righteousness, retire to my study, and prepare another sermon on the subject "Why Revival Tarries." But my next and controlling reaction counselled the wisdom of backing off and taking a whole new look at the matter.

I tend to get so much ego involvement into grandiose schemes which I dream up for the building of the church that I am prone to interpret attacks upon my program as a lack of confidence in me. This, of course, is not necessarily the case.

Alan Walker is right on target when he observes in his book, *A Ringing Call to Mission*, that "within the church there is a stubborn resistance to change." It is this covert dragging of the feet and overt opposition which keeps pastors awake at night, ties their stomachs into fiery knots, provokes profound hand-wringing, and occasionally inspires an ill-timed verbal assault upon the recalcitrant members. It is a mystery to the con-

scientious pastor why a church can be so much against itself and can so stubbornly resist moving into those very directions which are bound to minister to its life and growth. It is this trenchant inflexibility and immobility which has caused countless pastors to throw up their hands, leave the pastoral ministry, and seek out other more progressive and more fruitful means by which to fulfill their calling. But before we abandon the old ark apparently hung up on Mount Ararat, it would be well to see if there might possibly be a positive meaning in resistance.

Resistance is a sign of life, according to Lewis Mumford. He maintains that life is encompassed in a structured framework of directed, orderly sequence and is preserved by *self-limiting processes*. A rose bloom attains its fragile beauty only as the vital, life-giving processes are limited, controlled, and cut off at precise inwardly governed points. The uncontrolled and unresisted growth of cells within the human body is called "cancer"! Mumford argues that life reacts to "inner or outer stimuli by contraction, expansion, withdrawal, attack, by submission or protection, by lying low or coming forth to do battle." Resistance is a fundamental

element of life itself. Within the created order, all forms of life have certain self-limiting and self-governing resistances built into their very structure.

Might not this principle also hold true for the church? James E. Dittes thinks so. In his book, *The Church in the Way*, he maintains that resistance is the sign par excellence of vitality and commitment in the church. To quote him directly:

"Resistance is an active, vigorous response by a sensitive person to significant confrontation. . . . It reveals a commitment to remain inside the given situation however conflictual and problematic, and to address it in its own terms. . . .

"There are positive implications in the very fact of resistance, in whatever guise it might appear, whatever resources are used in its service, however effectively or ineffectively it may be executed. It is not merely negative obstructionism but a positively prompted and purposive response, and the promptings and the purposes are not necessarily alien to the minister's own. . . . The minister may actually be closer to realizing [his] purposes when these purposes are resisted than when they are not."¹

Dittes' argument is weakened when he attempts to place a positive meaning upon every form of resistance, regardless of its guise. Such a view posits value-judgments with effects rather than causes, which is a questionable ethical procedure. By reading a positive meaning into every manifestation of resistance, Dittes overlooks a large dimension of human history and experience that manifests, in Jacques Ellul's view, "the power of suicide, which is at the heart of the world." Resistance may even indicate the presence of the demonic.

Nevertheless, Dittes' point is well taken that we cannot write off the appearance of resistance as being necessarily obstructionist, carnal, or the work of the enemy. To the contrary, it may well represent people's gen-

uine encounter with the challenge, their counting of the cost, their pre-commitment struggle within themselves. Before we put resistance down prematurely, it might be well to summarize some positive aspects.

First, is the proposed change really all that necessary? Does it really represent a proven improvement over the customary way of doing things—or not doing things? Change in and of itself has no inherent merit. It may signal a new breakthrough of life, or it may lead to death. Nor is change necessarily therapeutic. When things are not going well, my first instinct is to look for something entirely new. Perhaps a radical change will inject new life into the old body. It may well do that, or it may also kill it.

Resistance to radical, abrupt, and far-reaching change may be a signal to reexamine the antique before it is buried in the basement. Maybe it can be refurbished, restored, and attain a significance far beyond its original worth. It is amazing to note how often in church history a rediscovery of the old opens a new window for the breath of the Spirit to blow afresh.

Second, people change more by evolution than by revolution. Human growth is a slow and sometimes tedious process. Illumination dawns gradually. Insight builds by incorporating many bits and pieces of experience. Even something so dramatic and crisis-oriented as conversion occurs as a point in an ongoing pilgrimage. Who in the history of religions could testify to a more radical and abrupt conversion experience than the Apostle Paul? But on retrospect, he could affirm that "he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me" (Gal. 1:15-16, RSV).² Conversion, like cresting a mountain peak, is a precise and dramatic moment. But

—also like climbing a mountain—it often comes as but a short step from the previous steps leading up to that spiritual breakthrough.

Our digression here relative to conversion is to illustrate a fundamental insight in regard to human nature: namely, people change slowly—sometimes imperceptibly. In that the body of Christ is made up of human members, it is justifiable to assume that it too will reflect this law of life. Promoters who purport to make instant Christians and graduate mature saints at the end of a six-week course merely manipulate people rather than change them. Then they go happily on their way while the slow-moving church must try to redeem the disappointed and disillusioned people left behind.

The pastor simply cannot take such a superficial and short-term view of his task. He must remember that his responsibility is to take people all of the way from the cradle to the grave. This is most often slow and discouraging work, frequently barren of visible indicators of growth, and sometimes resulting in abject failure. But there simply is no other way to do it or to speed up the process of spiritual maturity beyond the individual and internal limits placed in human nature by the creative act of God. Resistance reminds us of this law.

Third, resistance may be an invaluable element in testing the merits of a program or proposed change. It

is the church's "adversary method" by which truth is separated from falsehood, and the beneficial from the harmful. Patience is a cardinal virtue and faithful ally in the pursuit of those changes and implementations which are always necessary in the life of the church if it is to keep moving forward.

Finally, resistance helps a pastor to test his own motives. There is a fine line between our laudable ambition to build the church and our ambition, period. It is good to pause and examine our great plans. Do they use people or build people? Do they fill a genuine need or fill our own need to see visible action? Do they strengthen the family and enhance the general quality of congregational life or advertise what a lively church we lead? Do they fulfill personal and spiritual goals or preestablished organizational objectives?

Resistance does not mean that we have to choose between plans and people—it could well be that our programmatic ideas do create structures that set people free and encourage spiritual growth. But resistance may well serve to help us analyze our real purposes, and how well the proposed changes help us to realize our ultimate spiritual goals.

"Examine yourselves. . . . Test yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5, RSV).³

1. James E. Dittes, *The Church in the Way* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967). Used with permission.

2. From the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyrighted 1946 and 1952.

3. *Ibid.*

A perpetual revival is a contradiction in terms. Effective evangelism always waits on revival. To go without tarrying leads to frustration. We have been engaged in evangelism when we should have sought revival. A disparagement or neglect of revival is always a spiritual problem.

—J. B. Chapman

Many churches today are drifting like a ship without a rudder. They stay where they are because they have not decided where they want to go.

Dreams and Goal Setting

By D. R. Peterman*

IMAGINE A SEAGOING VESSEL docked at the San Francisco pier. You are given permission to board it and go to the navigator's bridge. There you see numerous charts of navigation. In talking with the captain of that ship, you discover that each port of call is clearly predetermined for that proposed journey. Neither the captain nor the navigator can see each port for 99 percent of the trip; but they know (1) where they are going, (2) how they are going to get there, (3) the approximate date and time of arrival.

Chart

Think of your local church as such a ship. You, as pastor, are the captain. Let me ask a rather penetrating (and personal) question: Have you prepared a "chart," and is it somewhere in the office, or your study, which will serve as a projection of the journey your church is to take for the next year? The next five years? Ten years? Twenty years? Has *anyone* had the foresight and vision to conceive of what your church could be in Sunday school enrollment and attendance, church membership, missionary giving, and total finances in the above-mentioned periods of time?

The tragic truth is that many churches have no such projected

plan. They are drifting like a ship without a rudder as well as without a chart. They are in the same location today as they were 10 or 20 years ago simply because they have not decided where they want to go. Do you realize that the possibility of drifting into some port of ecclesiastical success is one in a thousand without that rudder or chart? But with the chart and rudder *any* church can successfully arrive at its goals.

Conceive

"Dreaming the impossible dream" is the role of every successful pastor. Relaying that dream to responsible members of the church board and to the total church will help that dream to come to reality. "What a man's mind can *conceive* and *believe*, it can *achieve*."

My third pastorate was in Yakima, Wash. We held our first services in an old bicycle shop on Lennox Avenue. Discarded chapel pews from the old Farragut, Ida., Naval Base made each worshipper a candidate for a chiropractic treatment each Monday morning. We tolerated a leaky roof, a muddy creek down the middle aisle when it rained, inadequate heating, a poor parking lot, a muddy driveway, no choir or organ, plus many other reasons why we should not succeed. But we grew from 0 to 527 in attendance in 3½ years. We were self-

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supporting in three months. How? We dreamed an impossible dream and turned it into reality by following certain procedures in church growth.

When we moved to Santa Cruz, Calif., five years ago, the church was averaging 179 in Sunday school, and about the same in church attendance. The giving for all purposes that year was \$50,433. We began to prayerfully evaluate and do some "big" thinking, and to dream of a church in Santa Cruz exceeding 300 in attendance.

I shared my dream with the church board, and gave each of them a book on *Possibility Thinking* to help them see the opportunities of growth. That monthly board meeting brought no action—only startled stares. They could only think of a church of 150 to 200 people. I put my dream on the agenda for the next board meeting, but they still were not ready. Thirty days later I brought it up again. By now, after 60 days of careful cultivation and patience and prayer, the seed was beginning to show signs of life. As we began to discuss what we wanted our church to become, the first sprig broke through. We began to set goals for Sunday school, church membership, finances, missions, and staff.

Three years later, at the 1974 district assembly, we reported as follows:

Sunday school average	318
Church membership	308
Tithes	\$101,671
Plus world missions	47,100
A total of	148,771

This is a dream becoming reality. Three years ago we had one pastor and one secretary. Now we have the same pastor and secretary, plus a minister of music, a minister of religious education, and a part-time secretary. *All because we planned for it three years ago!* We are not cele-

brating the completion of a dream; rather the threshold of a fuller, richer, more fulfilling ministry to come. Our plans for growth *go on* from here until we reach a congregation of 600 with this staff. Then we will have another chapter of this dream to come true to bring us to 1,000 by 1984, if Jesus tarries.

Believe

"What the mind of man can *conceive* and *believe*, it can *achieve*."

The size of the brain has nothing to do with your success or failure. The largest human brain on record belonged to an idiot. The smallest brain on record belonged to Anatole France, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1921. *Attitude* makes the difference. Life is exciting to exciting people, and dull to dull people. Life is successful to successful-minded people, and average to people who are willing to settle for the average life.

When a carpenter is going to build a house, he first has a set of plans prepared. Then a perspective is drawn, so he knows how the finished project will look. Next he makes up a materiel list, hires professional help, purchases the materials, and turns the dream into a building—brick upon brick and nail upon nail.

Commit

To be a successful pastor, and to have a successfully growing church, you must commit yourself to honestly look at some facts:

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN IN CHURCH GROWTH?

What is the record of your congregation for the past 10 years? (Secure statistics from district journals.) Make a chart for the past 10 years listing the figures for Sunday school attendance, Sunday school enrollment, church members, tithes and offerings, and missions.

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

What is your dream for the next 20 years for the church you pastor? Make another chart listing the years 1975 to 1995 and set down your goals for each of the categories above.

HOW CAN YOUR CHURCH ARRIVE AT THIS GOAL?

1. Plan to *stay* in the church you are now serving and make a success of it. Remember, "If the grass seems greener on the other side of the fence, it is probably artificial turf!"

2. Work on just *one* or *two* years at a time in fulfilling the goals, but always keeping the 5-, 10-, 15-, and 20-year goals in sight.

3. *Work ahead* of your schedule. By this you should prepare for the kind of church that you want yours to become. If you now have a Sunday

school of 75, and you want one of 150 in five years, then begin to train teachers for your proposed goal for each of these years of growth.

4. *Share your dream* with your district superintendent and ask for guidance and suggestions. After this objective evaluation, then prayerfully present it to your church board for action.

5. *Follow through*. Your plans will not work unless you work your plans. As the pastor, you will need to lead your people in achieving these goals. *Dreaming* leads to *daring*, and *daring* leads to *doing*.

6. *Pray earnestly*, get excited, then watch your church thrill to the exciting adventure of growing.

What the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve!

Pastor, dream your "impossible dream" and watch it come true.

Creating a High Level of Trust

Interesting advice came my way recently in a discussion with Bob Rimington, a Canada West lay member of the CNC board of governors. He runs an ice-cream business and works for an investment firm. He had run across an article by the above title. A "shorthand" summary follows:

Human relationships tend to be of value and meaningful only to the extent that there is some mutual trust present. How do we create such trust? By—

1. Creating awareness—of the inner feelings of each other
2. Developing self-acceptance
3. Acceptance of others—letting people be themselves
4. Supportiveness—helping others to attain their objectives
5. Willingness to take risks
6. Participative problem-solving
7. Leveling with the other person

Somewhere in the above is useful advice—even for preachers.

—Neil E. Hightower

As we put the elements of our ministry to work, we will be in demand for many reasons, or for only one reason. Sometimes that one reason is enough.

Mostad Played the Tuba

By Carlos H. Sparks*

PFC. MOSTAD** was an accident-prone clod. His speech was mush-mouthed. He was clumsy and uncoordinated, a dropout of every hike. But he played the tuba like a true artist.

We were both assigned to a general hospital bound for service with the Fifth Hospital Group at Worcestershire, England. True to form, Mostad was flipped out of his bunk in a troop ship on the stormy North Atlantic. His arm was broken in three places. When our troop ship landed at Greenock, Scotland, Mostad left our transient unit to enter a military hospital.

"Poor old Mostad!" someone said kindly. "We'll never see him again."

I was on duty in detachment headquarters when the call came in from Scotland. It took but a moment to identify the caller.

"Mostad!" I said excitedly, reflecting my gladness in hearing from such a dear friend. "How are you doing?"

"Tell the colonel that I am ready to come back. I'm well and ready for duty. If he doesn't request my transfer, they will put me in a replacement depot for reassignment. I might even have to go to the infantry," he pleaded.

The infantry would be a tragedy for Mostad—or Mostad would be a tragedy for the infantry, I thought.

"I'll tell him, Mostad. I can't promise anything because we are up to full strength in our unit—but I'll tell the colonel."

"I want to come home," Mostad begged.

"I know. Give me the address and name of the hospital where you are a patient."

After several minutes, complicated by poor connections and Mostad's speech impediment, I had the needed information.

"I'll see you soon," Mostad said confidently.

"Okay," was all I could come up with. The poor guy wouldn't be in the army in peacetime. If there ever was a misfit, it was my dear friend, Pfc. Mostad.

True to my promise, I relayed the information to the colonel in command.

"Isn't that the short, chubby guy that played the tuba in our detachment band?"

"Yes, sir, that's the man." I smiled.

"Tell the adjutant to cut the papers and have him transferred back to us. We need that tuba player."

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**Mostad is a substitute name for a real person.

Quickly the good news spread, "Mostad is coming home!" A great welcome was planned for our beloved tuba player.

The year 1944 is long ago, but I never cease to marvel at the value of one good qualification.

I suppose it is somewhat normal for preachers to be apprehensive about future assignments. Many are a part of the male statistics of some 18 million between the ages of 45 and 59. These can be tempestuous years when we lose our bearings. Unfortunately there are acquaintances who are willing to add to the dilemma.

"Old men are not being replaced like they used to be," one of Job's comforters will say. "Young preachers are run roughshod over the veterans."

Here and there the chronic complainer points out an example which he indicates to be proof positive that the superintendent has instructions from higher up. "Bench every old preacher as quickly as replacements can be found."

I don't believe a word of it! I won't have you believe such an unlikely plot. We know our churches better than that. Age has its value, and every wise leader knows it. However, we must be practical.

If I have an inefficient program, stack up decreases year after year, and operate out of a slowly deteriorating building with no view to the future except another pastorate to ruin, I may be moved slowly. I ought to be. No congregation deserves such leadership.

In such cases a "greenhorn" (whatever that is) from the seminary or Bible college may be put in some choice assignment at my own disadvantage. When he is, he will be on trial—not for a week or two, but for his entire ministerial life.

As he gains years and experience, folk will come to know him as a

chronic loser or a man with a very unique ability. It is that factor—and that alone—that causes him to be neglected or assigned.

One need not be a specialist by design. As he goes about his work, he will discover a peculiar talent. William Strunk, Jr., in a textbook for writers entitled *The Elements of Style*, indicates that it is the way we put together the elements at hand that makes a writer distinctive. Not every writer uses every element or uses given elements in the same way, but the way he does it identifies him almost as surely as his fingerprint.

As we put the elements of the ministry to work, we will be in demand for many reasons—or for only one reason. We may become a unique public-relations-oriented pastor, a remarkable Bible expositor; we may have a special approach toward youth problems, a well-developed musical talent; or we may be simply a loving shepherd.

The widow of the late S. H. Elliot told me once, "Daddy could preach the sweetest funerals you ever heard. He was much in demand all the time."

Whatever your strong point(s), develop them. Take special courses at nearby colleges and universities and add to your natural ability in that particular field.

It is little wonder that the greatest business on earth should also be competitive for those who manage that province. There will always be a place, no matter the age, for the one who builds a better mousetrap. You can work effectively right up to retirement and after.

It is that one thing you do best that keeps you useful. Mostad knew that. He would have scared a patient to death had he been assigned to the penicillin team. But he played a good tuba!

A God-guided analysis of our preaching may help us improve our effectiveness as spiritual dieticians for the flocks we feed.

Preaching That Provides a Balanced Diet

By Arthur Brown, Jr.*

THE IMPORTANCE of a balanced diet in the maintenance of physical well-being is of prime concern to all. A balanced diet contains all the food elements needed to keep an average person in good health. A diet which lacks any of the needed food elements may cause certain deficiency diseases. Too much of one food element and not enough of another can result in serious chemical imbalances which can, if not corrected, cause crippling and even fatal illness. Overabundance of any one of the needed food elements will eventually result in physical distress of one kind or another.

But what relationship has this matter of a balanced diet to the preaching of the gospel?

Jesus was making a serious attempt to prepare His disciples for the work which He was about to turn over to them. He addressed Peter with these words, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs" (John 21:15). So strongly did this divine dietary direction impress Peter that, in later years when he became a general superintendent and

was instructing the elders, he passed the message on to them, and to us: "Feed the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pet. 5:2). Peter had caught the vital importance involved in this matter of feeding the flock.

This feeding of the flock of God requires that we preach in such a manner as to provide them with a balanced spiritual diet. It would be an interesting and perhaps a startling study if each of us would survey the sermons we have preached over the past year. Perhaps we might find the cause of the spiritual "scurvy" or the gospel "gout" with which some of our folk are afflicted. Possibly this is due to the deficiencies in the diet we have been feeding them. Just as certainly as it is necessary to eat sufficient amounts of the basic food elements to maintain physical well-being, so certainly is it necessary for us to provide a well-balanced spiritual diet for the spiritual well-being of our people. A God-guided analysis of our preaching, as it relates to the spiritual diet of our people, can help us to prove our effectiveness as spiritual dieticians.

John Wesley, in one of his letters on preaching, said, "But what is the stated means of feeding and comforting believers. . . . Some think, preaching the law only; others,

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preaching the gospel only. I think neither the one nor the other, but duly mixing both, in every place, if not in every sermon."

It is safe to say that Wesley had a strong distaste for preachers who rode hobbies, were excessively legalistic, or were soft in their application of biblical truth. He expected his preachers to provide a well-balanced menu to the flock of God. He forcefully condemned preachers who preached only what he called "the gospel" without including "the law."

He said of such preachers: "They vitiate their taste so that they cannot relish sound doctrine; and spoil their appetite so that they cannot turn it into nourishment. They, as it were, feed them with sweetmeats, till the genuine wine of the kingdom seems quite insipid to them. They give them cordial upon cordial which makes them all life and spirit for the present, but meantime their appetite is destroyed, so that they can neither retain nor digest the pure milk of the Word."

What is the relationship between prayerfully planning a healthy preaching diet and being led of the Lord? How do we plan for balanced preaching?

Some pastors object to the long-range planning of a preaching program on the grounds that it in some way limits the Holy Spirit's direction. They seem to forget that God's own planning for the salvation of men was not a "spur-of-the-moment" inspiration. God's plan of redemption was a step-by-step program that was carried out until, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son."

Carry this a bit further and we discover the next step in God's redemptive plan—"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come . . ." These events were planned by God to happen when they happened. If God so

thoroughly planned the redemptive mission of Christ, and inspired the prophets to predict these events with accuracy hundreds of years preceding their fulfillment, it seems the height of folly to think He cannot, or will not, inspire His present-day preachers to prepare a long-range, balanced program of preaching.

Andrew Blackwood in *The Growing Minister* speaks of Christ's training of the Twelve in this way: "In the setting forth lofty ideals He approved the faithful steward, or trustee, who planned his work with care and then carried out his plans with zeal." May He look upon us with approval.

G. B. Williamson, in his book *Overseers of the Flock*, gives us some direction here. He says, "There are some who in a general way chart their courses for a full year. Some may say such a program leaves little room for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making one's choices. Of course such long-range plans must, of necessity, be subject to change; and as a pastor prepares his sermons, he will find the themes he has chosen to be flexible enough to admit the thoughts that may have been inspired after the outline was made. In any case, it is much safer to make plans and change them than it is to have no plan and go ahead with a hit-or-miss procedure."

Following are a few suggestions in preparing a preaching program for a month, a quarter, or a year.

1. Saturate your soul in God's presence by praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and by living with the Word. Andrew Blackwood said, "If a man lives with the Master's words, full of simple beauty, and preaches from them at times, he will become like what he loves."

2. List the primary needs of your congregation. How is their faith in the time of trial? Are their testimon-

ies definite as to entire sanctification? Are they participating in the weekly visitation program? Are they tithing?

3. Consult the church calendar and seek direction for special days. John Wesley instructed his preachers here—"Everywhere avail yourself of the great festivals, by preaching on the occasion and singing the hymns."

4. Take much time and many sessions in planning your program.

5. Prepare each sermon to meet a specific need. In the book *Heralds of God*, James Stewart gives us some sound counsel: "You have apostolic authority for endeavoring to 'become all things to all men'; but Paul never suggested that the right way to do it was to pack a little of everything into every sermon, mixing your ingredients in order to have something in

the dish for every palate." After describing an eighteenth-century recipe for a salad including a pinch of this and a little of that, Stewart quotes the closing line of the recipe, "After mixing well, open a large window and throw out the whole mess." He says further, "To concentrate too much into one miscellaneous masterpiece—whether it be a salad or a sermon—is the surest way to fail."

6. Check your proposed program for dietary deficiencies. Be sure to include the proteins of the new birth; the fats and carbohydrates of entire sanctification; the vitamins of love, joy, and peace; the minerals of the works of righteousness; and the water of faith to saturate it all.

7. Do not be afraid to announce your menu from time to time. A word of caution here—when you announce steak, do not provide hash.

The appeal here, my fellow preachers, is not for a cold, preplanned preaching program which results in spiritual paralysis. The appeal is rather for a Holy Spirit-saturated preaching program which will provide a balanced spiritual diet. It is for a preaching program that will "feed the flock of God" and strengthen the shepherd who feeds.

Perhaps serious consideration in this area might cure much of the after-Sunday-school "exodusitis" which plagues many of our churches. In an effort to justify her absence from the preaching services of her church, a lady was heard to say, "I know what he is going to say before he says it." This is an unacceptable excuse, to be sure; but preaching that provides a balanced diet might change her attitude and that of many others who look to us for spiritual food.

The balanced diet of a good preaching program is well illustrated in these words from the Psalmist: "The law of the Lord is perfect, con-

Pastor?

My home was on the rocks,
And you preached on Christian
marriage,
But never came by.

I was lonely,
And you preached on the closer Christ,
But didn't have time to stop.

We were hungry,
And we heard about the 5,000
But you weren't near enough to know.

My mother was dying,
And you visited the hospital,
But forgot our grief-torn home.

I was gone,
And you preached, "Assemble yourselves together,"
But no one ever came to see why I was
not there.

Pastor, I love you for your goodness,
And for your helpful sermons,
But I need to feel your loving heart.

—Stanley Sutter

verting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is

clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (19:7-10).

Faith in **ACTION**

The Lord Does Care!

By Arthur J. Stott*

WHEN ONE BEGINS A CAREER of any kind, the thoughts of where and how it will end are far removed from the mind. As the years go by, it comes more and more to the forefront. Then as the realization comes that it is not too far off, the questions begin to come thick and fast.

Where should I think of settling down? What should I plan to do? How will I make a living?

For us that time has come. We have faced all the questions. For more than a year before it became a reality, Mrs. Stott and I knelt at the altar in the church once a week to seek for God's guidance. We *had* to be sure that we would do what He wanted of us.

One by one doors opened where there had seemed to be no door. It all began as we were first seeking for His will. It was a simple—yet profound—poem in the *Standard*. It bore the title "He Will Work It Out." We took this for His assurance.

Today we can say that God has not

failed. We have a lovely home with financial arrangements that we can handle. There were times when we were puzzled, but we found the words of the prophet Habakkuk to be true in this our day. He wrote, "Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry [will not be late]" (2:3).

God has not been late. Just at the time when something was needed, or had to be done, it was brought about.

Surely it is a wonderful thing to serve a God like that. Has He not promised never to leave us or forsake us? It is true! He wants to help us if we will but turn everything over to Him. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9). Let Him guide and direct our lives. Walk in the light as He sheds it on our path.

At this point we can but echo the words of the Psalmist when he wrote, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (103:1).

*Retired minister, Goldendale, Wash.

Wesleyana



John Wesley on the Observance of Communion

By Donald Wood*

JOHN WESLEY has a sermon entitled "The Duty of Constant Communion." In this sermon, first preached about 1733, but still believed in 1788 according to Wesley's personal note, Wesley makes his first point, "I am to show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can.

"The first reason why it is the duty of every Christian so to do is, because it is a plain command of Christ. That this is his command, appears from the words of the text, 'Do this in remembrance of me.'

"A second reason . . . is, because the benefits of doing it are so great to all that do it in obedience to him; viz., the forgiveness of our past sins, the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls. . . .

"The grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins and enables us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and blood of Christ. . . . This is the true rule: So often are we

to receive as God gives us opportunity. Whoever, therefore, does not receive, but goes from the holy table, when all things are prepared, either does not understand his duty, or does not care for the dying command of his Saviour, the forgiveness of his sins, the strengthening of his soul, and the refreshing it with the hope of glory.

"Let every one, therefore, who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can; like the first Christians, with whom the Christian Sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's day service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day: Four times a week always, and every Saint's day beside. Accordingly, those that joined in the prayers of the faithful never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament. What opinion they had of any who turned his back upon it, we may learn from that ancient canon: 'If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go

*Pastor, Faith Wesleyan Church, Greensboro, N.C.

away without receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the Church of God.'

"It is highly expedient for those who purpose to receive this, whenever their time will permit, to prepare themselves for this solemn ordinance by self-examination and prayer. But this is not absolutely necessary. And when we have not time for it, we should see that we have the habitual preparation which is absolutely necessary, and can never be dispensed with on any account or any occasion whatever. This is, First, a full *purpose* of heart to keep all the commandments of God; and Secondly, a sincere *desire* to receive all his promises."

In the second part of his sermon, Wesley replies to frequently voiced objections to constant Communion. Read this sermon in its entirety, if possible.

And now a word to pastors who claim to follow the Bible and Wesley. How frequently do you offer this means of grace to those under your care? Are you encouraging them regularly to disobey God's Word and a Wesleyan emphasis by your own neglect? Is observance of the Lord's Supper once a quarter actual obedience to Jesus' intent or to Wesley's direction? [The *Wesleyan Discipline*, 1972, 294:6 states that the observance must be "at least every three months." There is, I would judge, implicit encouragement to observe it more frequently. Some churches observe this sacrament monthly.—Comment by Associate Editor George E. Failing.]

Historically the two signs of the Church of Jesus Christ have been the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. Does your own local church demonstrate these two signs? If not, whatever else it is, is it the Church?

Practical Points

that make a difference

It's Easy to Feed a Preacher's Ego

Dear Son:

I will have to admit that I am provoked. Two times we called Tom Jessop to our church, and once we flew him east for an interview at considerable expense. I understand that he has enjoyed numerous other calls.

We are pleased by his success. That is the reason we called him, but I am having a difficult time forgiving him the six weeks' wasted time for our church.

You would think that a preacher would know his own mind. If he is satisfied where he is, it should not take him long to say no. If he is in a quandary as to what his leadings are, we will be patient with him. But for him to time and time again consider, reconsider, and ponder says to me that he is "feeding his own ego." And here is one layman that's disturbed. God help him and me!

Well, our new man had an answer in three days. He is excited about the prospect of coming and is contagious in his enthusiasm. He will make the move as quickly as possible.

Come and see us soon!

Love,


SEPTEMBER

NAZARENE

FOCUS

FOR
PASTORS
and LOCAL
CHURCH
LEADERS

Compiled by the General Stewardship Commission | EARL C. WOLF, *Executive Director*
DON WILDE, *Office Editor*

General Superintendent Jenkins



Take Time to Be Holy

R. E. STANLEY JONES, in his latest and final book, entitled *The Divine Yes*, gave the following disclosure of his own personal devotional habits. "During the years it has been my practice to read from the Bible daily. It has been more than reading. Quite literally, it has been to 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest' the subject matter. Among the many legacies left me by the small, evangelical college which I attended was the insistence on a life of devotion. There, long ago, the habit of devotion—approximately two hours a day of Bible study and prayer—was fixed. To this, maturity and refinement—the habit of listening to the Inner Voice as well as speaking during prayer—have been added. If I have had a secret weapon, this has been it" (p. 23).

A preacher friend who has been singularly blessed and used of the Lord across the years as pastor, evangelist, and able administrator, shared with me that it has been his practice from the time he was sanctified wholly to spend at least one hour each day in prayer, Bible reading, and waiting before the Lord. He added that this daily devotional time has been the secret of his spiritual life.

Here we see the key elements of the holy life revealed through each of these testimonies—the Bible, prayer, reading, and time.



Perhaps no one can adequately pray by the clock, for to pray for just a certain period of time may or may not bring one into God's presence. But everyone needs fixed patterns and time for personal devotions, for it does take time to develop and maintain a holy life. There is no more rewarding spiritual exercise than the use of time, preferably early in the day, to read the Word and wait in God's presence. We will be stronger spiritually and holier persons by so doing.

A holy life is every preacher's badge of authority, and his shield of protection for living pure in a sinfully stained world. More than that, a holy life of devotion to Christ will keep fresh the flavor and romance of the ministry in the preacher's heart. And we need this to save us from the temptation of discouragement and against the danger to become cold and professional in our ministry.

Take time *today* and every day to be holy!

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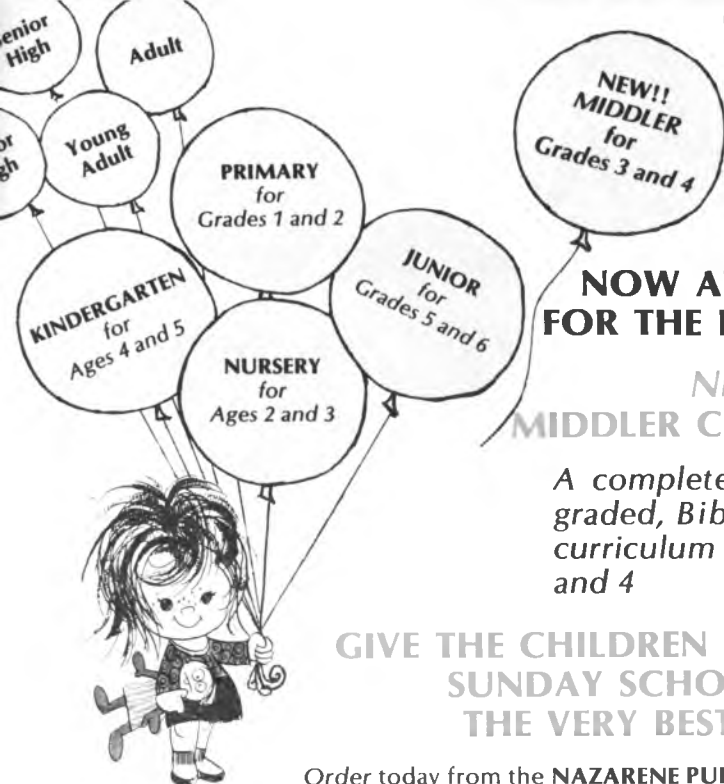
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All official records at Headquarters and periodicals checked below will be changed from this one notification.

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But God also wants our talent; namely, any natural ability, endowment, power, or potential divinely given. Paul put it squarely to the Corinthians in his first letter: "Who makes you, my friend, so important? What do you possess that was not given you? If then you really received it all as a gift, why take the credit to yourself?" (4:7, NEB).*

GIVING and LIVING

That individual was right who said, "The Christian life simply cannot be built upon the sacrifices of other people!" And again, "When a man comes into money, either God gets a partner or man loses his soul." But Jesus' supreme illustration of "plus giving" came from a poor widow who gave her all (Mark 12:41-44). Who would join His honor roll in the twentieth century?

Still time to participate in the 1975 denomination-wide study

Unit, 113.1a, "Studies in Stewardship"

Text: **Giving and Living**, Samuel Young

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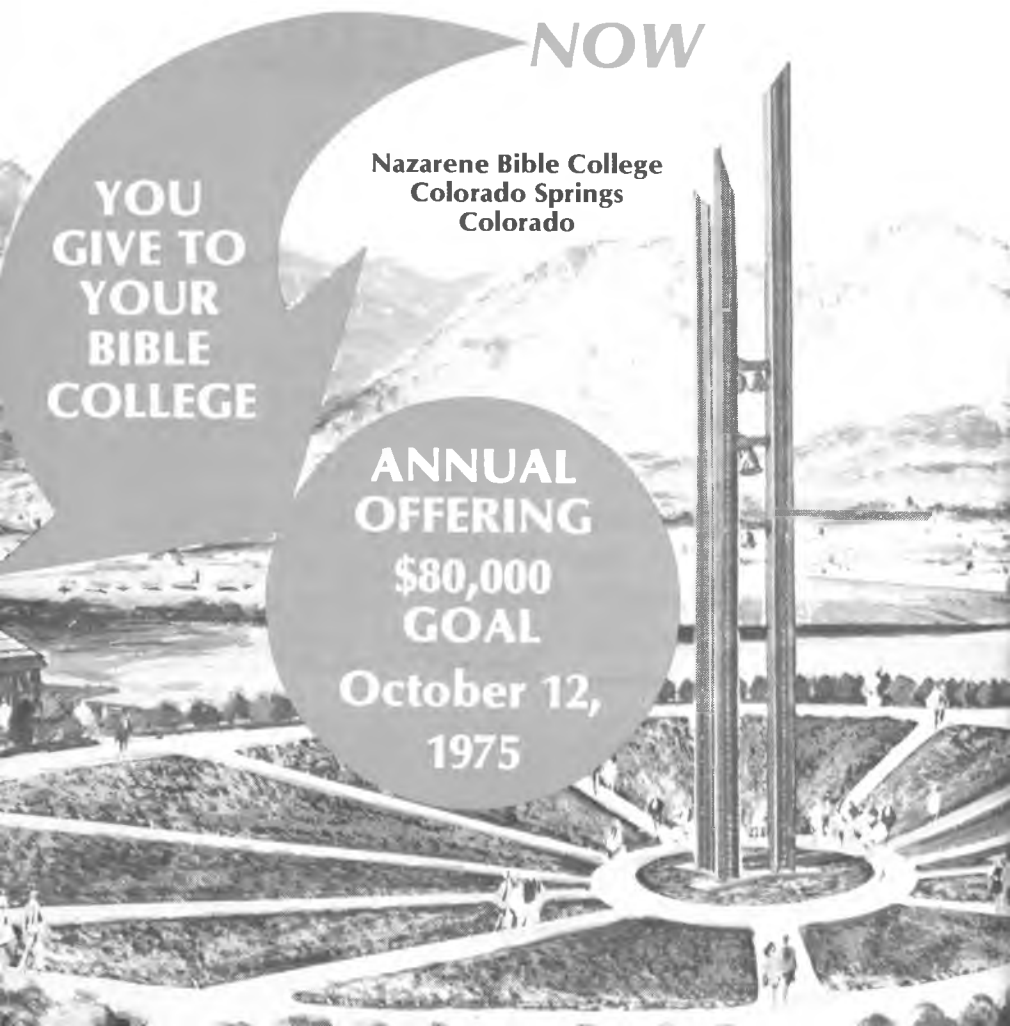
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LAYMAN'S SUNDAY

OCTOBER 12, 1975

Over 98 percent of the Church of the Nazarene is made up of laymen. They represent our most strategic resource for evangelism. However, they must be given the opportunity for training. Contact your district director of evangelism for suggestions.

"The task of evangelism is not complete until the EVANGELIZED becomes the EVANGELIST."

John L. Knight

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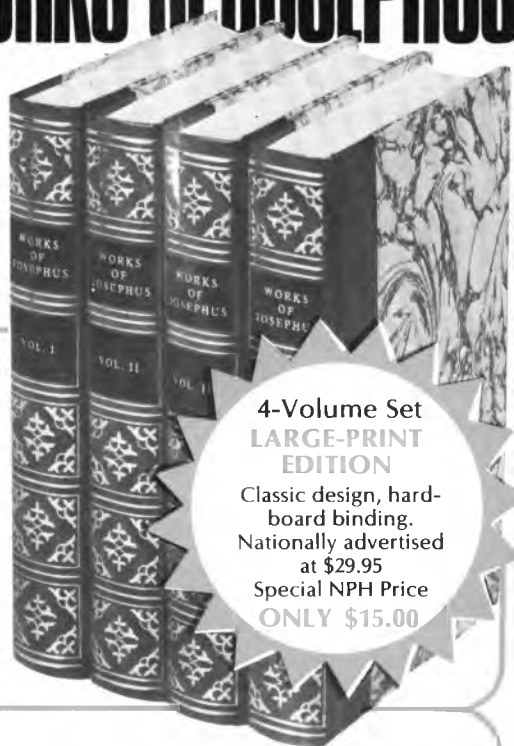
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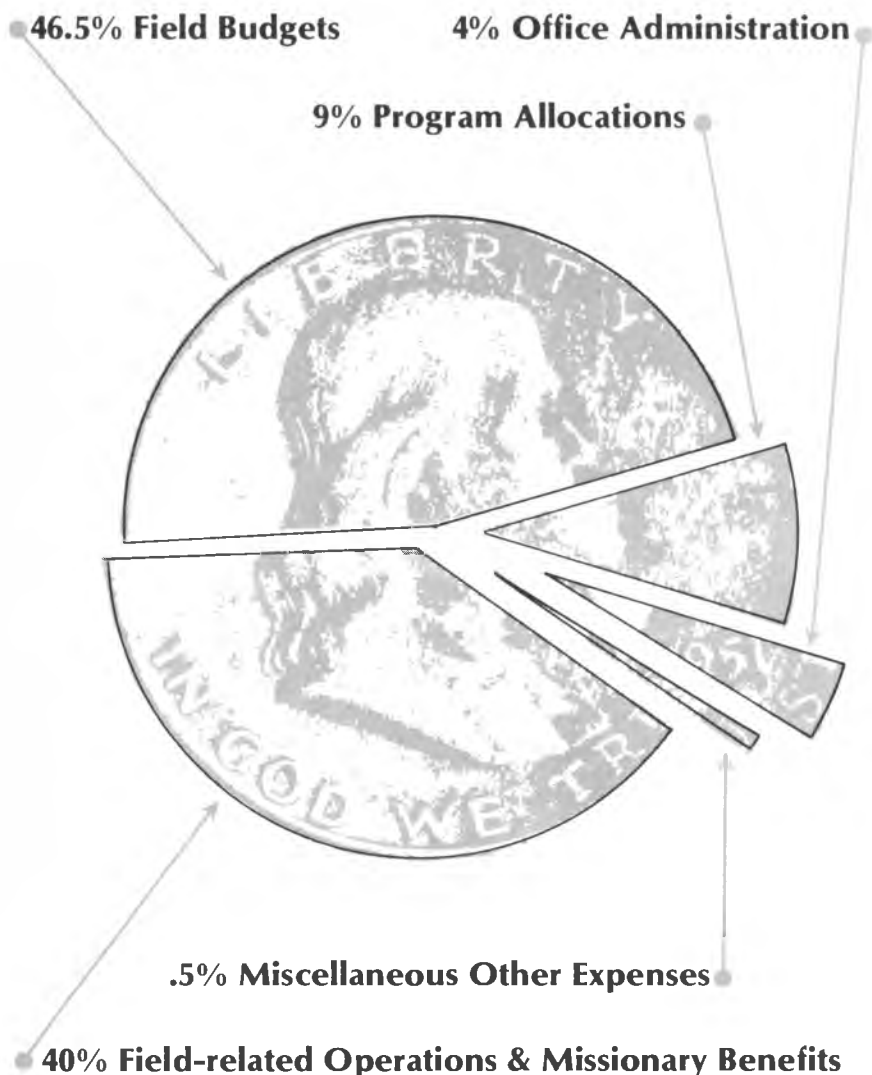
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The General Budget and the Department of World Missions

The Budget for the Department of World Missions from General Budget giving for 1975 is \$6,773,330.

Here is how the Department of World Missions is using the General Budget dollars it receives in 1975:



All World Mission special funds received during 1975 will also be administered from the 4 percent office administration allocated from the General Budget. This makes it possible for all Alabaster and special funds to go 100 percent for the project designated by the donor. In 1974 a total of \$3,133,259.72 in special funds was received and disbursed as follows:

Alabaster	\$1,195,764.04—Sent 100 percent to the field for chapels, clinics, land, Bible school buildings, pastors' and and missionary homes, etc. Ninety percent World Mission fields, 10 percent Home Mission.
Approved Specials	\$ 906,655.51—Used 100 percent on the field as indicated by donor.
Missionary Deputation Offerings	\$ 729,029.47—Used 100 percent as indicated by missionaries for deputation travel expense, equipment for the field, and \$200 per month per couple supplementary salary while on furlough.
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For information concerning Alabaster, Approved Specials, or 10 Percent Giving for 1975, please write or call:

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**DON'T BE TEMPTED TO OVERLOOK OR
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Far East Nazarene Servicemen's Retreat
September 12-14, 1975
Eighth U.S. Army Retreat Center
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Dr. Eugene L. Stowe,
Guest Speaker

Chaplain David K. Bon
and
Chaplain Curtis Bowers
Coordinators

European Nazarene
Servicemen's Retreat

November 10-14, 1975
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Chaplain Kenneth B. Clements,
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PASTORS—October 19, 1975, is NWMS Anniversary Sunday.

On the fortieth anniversary, a generous offering to open New Guinea was received.

On the fiftieth anniversary, another generous offering for building a hospital in New Guinea was received.

On this sixtieth anniversary, the NWMS is joining with the General Stewardship Commission in *special promotion* of the 1975 Thanksgiving Offering—this portion of the *General Budget*, which is so vital to Nazarene missions outreach—worldwide. We know you will want to give this Sunday much prayerful consideration in your local church.

Here a few suggestions you might like to consider:

1. Preach a missionary message—one that is burning in your own heart.
2. Set your local Thanksgiving goal. (The all-church goal will be printed as soon as it is set.)
3. Present a plan for the reaching of that goal.
4. Be sure *each age-group* is included in this plan. For instance, you could challenge each age-group to give in multiples of 60, according to their *ability + faith*.

60 Tens	\$600.00
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60 Twos	120.00
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TEEN-AGER, YOU CAN BE A CHRISTIAN TOO, Martin
YOU CAN BE A BETTER ALTAR WORKER, Oke
YOU CAN BE A HAPPY SHUT-IN, Peck
YOU CAN BE SANCTIFIED WHOLLY, Price
YOU CAN BE SAVED, Pershall
YOU CAN BREAK THAT HABIT, Ladd
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YOU CAN QUIT SMOKING, Shaver
YOU NEED A FAMILY ALTAR, Gray

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GUIDELINES

for a Young Pastor*

DEAR DAVID:

Thank you for your note, and congratulations on going into your first pastorate.

You ask some pretty big questions about some guidelines as you step into a new pastorate; so, therefore, I'll just give you a few:

1. Be an early riser. I have found this tremendously helpful in all of my ministry. Be up to have your own personal devotions. Meet God first, and then you're ready for your own schedule.

I assume you're married; this means that you will have to make your choice as to where you will study, either at home or at the church. I have done both; but now with my family and children gone, I find it more effective to study at home. And yet that could be otherwise with you. I have suggested, and I've seen it work, that for a pastor who wants to get his studying in and do it effectively, it would be good to go to the town library, where he can be quiet and alone. If your people know your schedule and have seen results from it, they will not object to your giving yourself time for study. I'm assuming that you're giving your mornings until noon in concentration, study, and preparation for preaching.

A good rule to follow for your first year of your pastorate is to preach the Word and love the people. Don't go in with any ideas of changing anything that was done before. Be a

person-centered pastor.

2. The number two priority on my personal list is to visit those who are ill. And this would mean, of course, those in the hospital. I've found it very effective, and a meaningful project of my life to—as far as possible—visit and pray with those having surgery, one hour before they are due to leave their hospital room for surgery—before the sedation is given even. Your visit would be only for about three minutes as you give a word of scripture and a word of prayer; but it's forever meaningful in the life of a patient, and for me it's very satisfying.

3. Then, if you have a family, make sure you don't neglect them as you work head over heels in the church. Have a relaxed, happy family life. Otherwise your wife will feel that the church robs her of all that she has a right to feel.

4. I have no idea of the size of the church you are going to, but I will assume that you would be able to visit in the homes of the people and make it meaningful. Just one slight, small tip would be—don't become the property of any one couple or one person or one group in your church. Be pastor to the whole group. This is especially important for a young man.

Well, I've covered a bit of territory, David. God bless you. Above everything else, keep holding on. Don't run; take one step more for a wonderful year.

Yours in Him,
EARL G. LEE

*Used with permission of Pastor Lee.

The secret for liberation of the laity is found in a philosophy of "everybody, everywhere, every day."

Pastor Jones, *Superstar*

By Michael Sellars*

MEET PASTOR JONES, *Superstar*. He can preach, counsel, administrate, and raise the budget. As a scholar he surpasses many seminary professors, and he is a master of the king's English. He handles the Sunday morning service as well as any quizmaster on TV, and carries with him the charisma of a statesman. His wit and keen mind keep him in constant demand at civil and social functions, not to mention his notoriety throughout his denomination.

To know him is to admire him, and most of us secretly wish we were in his shoes—not to mention his parsonage! His church, of course, is proud, and counts itself fortunate, for not many congregations can boast such talent. But there is one problem. There aren't enough superstars; and by now, most denominations have discovered you cannot operate the church with superstars. Thank God for the ones there are, but there simply aren't enough. But then, maybe God never intended that there should be.

If this is so, then something is wrong with our basic concept of the ministry. Take Pastor Jones's church. There is Ted A. He is an accounts executive of several large

corporations. It seems everything he touches turns to money. He has a gift of putting things together that make money. But he teaches junior boys' class in Sunday school.

Or take Bill and Agnes. They have an "exceptional" child. Of course they know other couples with the same hurt. But the only ministry they have is to sing in the choir.

Why hasn't someone suggested that Ted A. take his financial genius and turn it into a ministry for the glory of God? I wonder if Bill and Agnes have ever thought that little Andy and his problem might be a point of identity with some other couple with similar circumstances?

The truth is that we have misunderstood God's plan for the ministry. The New Testament demands that each believer is called to a particular ministry (1 Corinthians 12). In its pure form, to minister means to serve. For too many years, to minister as a layman has meant to perform chores around the church. After we have 20 or 30 ushers, things get a little out of hand. One of the things that constantly escapes us is that no one is excused or exempt from the ministry. No one!

Now if all are ministers, what is the function and role of the pastor? One has likened him to that of the playing coach. He does not play for

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them, but rather teaches them, and then joins them on the field.

What would the church be like if the pastor was not expected to be a superstar? What if the sole function of the pastor was to equip the people for their ministries? See him as he forsakes his mimeograph machine and stencils (leaving it to those whose ministry it is). Watch him as he teaches, preaches, and organizes study groups—groups that are scattered here and there, each actively involved in their ministry. Some in the ghetto, some among the hippies, some among the doctors and lawyers, but all in direct spiritual ministries. Could it ever be that way? Has it ever been that way?

We need not look further than the New Testament. "Every member involvement" was more than a slogan to the Early Church. Look closely at Acts 8:1, "And they were all scattered abroad . . . except the apostles." Now v. 4, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Their philosophy was "everybody, everywhere, every day." There is the secret—the liberation of the laity.

Obviously we are far from this pattern; and to move nearer, many things must change.

First, the "spectator" concept of the laity must go, for all are in the ministry.

Second, we must remember that the present division between the clergy and laity is deeply entrenched, and greatly enjoyed. It is easy for laymen to hire someone to do their religion for them. On the other hand, it is equally enjoyable for many clergymen to carry about the counterfeit status it gives them ("The Reverend Mr. Jones"). Paul's instruction to Archippus is our commission too—"Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col. 4:17).

Seven-Day Week

If I had a horse,
I wouldn't work him

Every day.

Once a week

I'd turn him out.

A horse should have his day.

I just can't do it

For myself, it seems,

Someway.

Every week

I say I will,

But never find the way.

Now it's Friday night

And I'm not through

No way.

I've missed Your plan,

Depended on myself.

Forgive me, Lord, I pray.

It's lack of planning,

And of faith, that I

Display.

The Lord might even

Still run His Church

If I took off a day.

—Edward F. Cox

*Rip Van Winkle is the only man who
ever became famous while he was asleep.*

* * *

*It is not so important to be serious as
it is to be serious about important things.
The monkey wears an expression of ser-
iousness which would do credit to any
scholar, but the monkey is serious be-
cause he itches.*

* * *

*While some stand on the promises,
others just sit on the premises.*

* * *

*If men speak ill of you, live so no one
will believe them.*

The Significance of the Sacrament

By David J. Tarrant*

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH does not thrive on ignorance, and it is fitting that Christian people understand the meaning of those things they do in their acts of worship—much more so, of course, those who lead their devotions.

To this very day, when an orthodox Jewish family gathers around the table for the Passover meal, the youngest son asks: "What means this feast? Why is this night to be distinguished from all other nights?" Then the father tells the old story of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt's bondage.

The Passover and our Holy Communion have much in common, so let us suppose that one of your youngest Christians is asking, "What is the meaning of this service? Why is the table spread with pure white linen, a plate of bread, and cups of bright red juice, on the first Sunday of each month?" May I help you to answer him by passing on seven seed thoughts. We can tell him first that this is

A feast of obedience

The number of specific commandments given by Jesus to His disciples was not large. But this was one of them: "Do this in remembrance of Me." To a loving child, obedience is a delight. Jesus himself confessed to His Father, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." If we truly love Him, we shall delight in obeying Him. How important it is for our souls' health that we pastors embrace the opportunity for frequent acts of obedience to the Lord we love, and how important that we should stress this aspect in our preparation of our people for the sacrament!

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If it is right to say, "You simply must not miss church next Sunday. We expect to have in our midst a famous and gifted preacher . . .," how much more is it right for us to say, "Next Sunday we shall have the high honor of sitting together at the Lord's table, and His command is, 'Do this in remembrance of Me'; let us all seek, therefore, to be obedient to our Lord's command"!

There are rich rewards to be reaped from simple acts of obedience. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will . . ." Complete this sentence in any scriptural way you please. How about "I will do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think"? Isn't that wonderful!

Weak Christians sometimes say, "I won't stay for Communion. I am not worthy. I am not walking closely enough to Jesus." How important that we say to them, "This is a means of grace. It is one of the ways the Lord has of making you a better Christian; of drawing you closer to Him. As long as you love Him a little, and want to love Him more, the feast is for you!"

A feast of thanksgiving

Matthew tells us, "He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them." The Greek word for "gave thanks" is *eucharistēsas*, from which the familiar name for this sacrament—Holy Eucharist—a holy thanksgiving. We meet together at the Lord's table once a month, or some other appointed frequency, to join in a special act of united thanksgiving to God for His many mercies, His love in redeeming us. We allow our thoughts to dwell on the wonder of Calvary. We gather to meet with the Lord himself. For this is not the minister's

table, or the church's table, but the Lord's table. This is the moment when He waits to show us His hands and His side, and the words will again be fulfilled, "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." Absent Thomases are tragic losers; trembling Peters and Matthews, Jameses and Philips can be tremendous gainers—provided, of course, that the officiating pastor stands sufficiently to one side to let the glorified Lord be seen, presiding at His own table.

At other times, there are a thousand things to say thank you for. At the Communion table, only one: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." "Lord, we praise Thee. We praise Thee, Lord."

A feast of remembrance

One of our greatest failings is that we have pitifully short memories, especially for kindnesses received and deliverances wrought by God. For this reason, God prescribed in Old Testament days the erection of memorial stones and pillars, and the institution of commemorative festivals, of which the Passover stood supreme.

Now Jesus gives to His Church this one great reminder. Its purpose is to bring our thoughts back to the centrality of the Cross, lest our preaching get taken up with side issues. "This is the heart of the gospel," cries the sacrament. "Here is the corn of wheat cast into the ground to die. Here is the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." Is there one church member, one pastor, college professor, or district superintendent so devout that he does not need this reminder? Who will not be richer for whispering as he presses the morsel of bread to his lips: "Jesus' body was broken for *me*"; and as he sips the wine, "Jesus shed His precious blood for *my* redemption, for *my* cleansing?"

I cannot tell why He should love

A child so weak and full of sin;

His love must be most wonderful

If He could die my love to win.

A feast of testimony

Paul says, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do *shew*

..." (1 Cor. 11:26). Here is the vital element of testimony. This sacrament is a delightful object lesson, teaching all who witness it. Here they may see a company of people outwardly demonstrating their faith in Jesus Christ, and their reliance on His sacrifice for their salvation.

But suppose a total stranger comes into your church. He sees the table spread. He gathers from the intimation that this is to be the greatest of all acts of Christian worship, so he decides to stay and witness it. But then he is surprised and pained—either by a stiffly formal ceremony, with the lifeless intoning of paragraphs from a book of ritual; or by a slapdash informality which appears to be going nowhere and getting there fast. What is he to think? Are there to be no sighs or tears, he wonders, as the awful anguish of Calvary imprints itself upon the worshippers? Are there to be no spontaneous outbursts of praise as the marvel of pardoning grace sweeps over the congregation?

How is it in your church? Do you and your people *show* the Lord's death at the Communion service? Does it show in tear-stained faces? In a tighter grip of the hand as your people part from one another? In an increased attendance at the Wednesday night prayer meeting?

A feast of communion

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

The wonder of Christian communion is that it is at the same time both horizontal and vertical. Walking in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son. The Scriptures place much emphasis on human fellowship in Christ. Because it is so "good and . . . pleasant . . . for brethren to dwell together in unity," we are urged to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We are to "be . . . kind one to another"; "bear . . . one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

We gather about the Lord's table "with

one accord," as did the 120 in the Upper Room. All the barriers are down. The invitation goes forth: "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors . . . draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort." Our oneness in the bond of love must be real here, or it will be real nowhere; for the one loaf, shared among the congregation, is symbolic. We, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we all share one loaf and one Christ.

To dissemble and equivocate, by holding on to grudges and prejudices and grievances against a fellow Christian, involves us in the sin of "not discerning the Lord's body," of which we are all, equally, members dependent upon the Head. "Little children, love one another" is the inescapable law when we come to the Lord's table.

Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face-to-face.

Here would I touch and handle things unseen;

Here grasp with firmer hand the eternal grace

And all my weariness upon Thee lean.

The thought that Jesus comes specially near in this sacrament has always been present in the Church; and from it developed the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence. While as Protestants we reject the physical aspects of this doctrine, we are happy to believe that the sacrament is such a powerful aid to faith that it can bring Him nearer to our souls than at any other time. Have you experienced this?

A feast of anticipation

" . . . ye do shew the Lord's death *till he come.*" Our Lord's coming again is an ever present thought as we partake of this sacrament. We are not only looking back to His Calvary; we are looking forward to His epiphany! When the Jewish family sits down for the Passover feast, an empty chair is left at the head of the table. This is for Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah. During the course of the meal, the eldest son is commanded by his father to go and see if the expected Guest is in sight. Seeing nothing, the son re-

turns, saying, "I see no sign of His coming." "Go back again, my son," the father replies; "perhaps He delays His coming." This is repeated a third time, after which the father admits that the day has not yet dawned for the Messiah to appear.

A sad ritual this—as it speaks of Israel's stubborn blindness. Yet it is a challenge to us, especially as we sit down at the Lord's table. How high is the tide of expectancy rising in our hearts?

*"Till He come"—oh, let the words
Linger on the trembling chords;
Let the little while between
In their golden light be seen;
Let us think how heaven and home
Lie beyond that "Till He come."*

Our *Manual* affirms, "We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again." Though we do not know the day nor hour, the countdown is getting lower every time. Christ returneth!

A feast of consecration

"This is the cup of the new testament in my blood," said Jesus. This sacrament is the symbol of a new covenant, which brings to men and women a new quality of life—life in the Son! Laws cut into stone slabs are replaced by laws written in letters of fire on hearts ablaze with love. The product is fantastic, but the cost was stupendous. For this new covenant had to be ratified by the shedding of blood. A new testament, a new will, could become effective only with the death of the Testator (Heb. 9:16); so "now once in the end of the world hath he [Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "This is my body," He said, "which is given for you." Given? Who gave it? Jesus himself. "No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself."

"The servant is not greater than his lord." Our self-giving must be as reckless as His.

*His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;
Then I am dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Nothing less than total consecration can satisfy the heart of Jesus.

So this wondrous sacrament leads from one altar to another—from His to mine. And yet it is not another altar after all—it is one and the same. “I am crucified with Christ”—committed with Him to one glorious end, the fulfillment of that “good, and acceptable, and perfect, will

of God.” Every Communion service must finish on this note:

*Have Thy way, Lord, have Thy way;
This with all my heart I say.
I'll obey Thee, come what may.
Dear Lord, have Thy way.*

Shall we move into this Communion with this covenant holding unhindered sway in our hearts?

THE STARTING POINT



By C. NEIL STRAIT

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Questions and Answers

The story of the young man who came to Jesus inquiring about the Kingdom (Mark 10:17-22) commends itself to us, and I pass along the following thoughts:

1. This young man was asking the right questions. “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (v. 17).

2. But this young man was obeying the wrong answers.

3. Life has to distinguish between the two—God’s answers or ours.

Too many feel that only the questions of life are important.

Life Needs Light

Earl Lee tells of a novel he read in which two skiers were enjoying the snowy trails together. Late in the afternoon one of them said, “We’d better go down early. On a day like this, the dark comes early, and this is no trail to travel when the light has gone.”

You and I are preaching every week to people who need this warning. Life is too difficult a pilgrimage to take without the light of Jesus.

The Way It Is

In perhaps a different approach to the Spirit’s urging, let me share these

thoughts from Romans 12, *The Living Bible*:*

1. *The Spirit gives confidence.* Verse 6 reads: “God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well.” That’s a word a lot of people need to hear—and heed.

2. *The Spirit expects cooperation.* We really do need each other. And, in the giving of ourselves, through the Spirit’s help, we help—and are helped (vv. 4-5).

3. *The Spirit expects competence.* Verses 6-18. It is a word that needs to echo through the Church, that the Spirit helps those who help themselves. Verse 11 may be the key here: “Never be lazy in your work but serve the Lord enthusiastically.”

Why Didn’t They Throw Stones?

John 8:1-11 records the story of the adulterous woman being brought before Jesus. There are some interesting facts in this story, often overlooked.

1. Jesus is the Central Figure here, and it is sometimes forgotten.

2. It is interesting that John is the one to record this story. But remember that John’s Gospel is one of life, love, light.

3. The main appeal is not that it is a story about adultery. Rather that it has

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all the things that man, cramped by sin, so desperately seeks, but so seldom finds—understanding, mercy, forgiveness, love.

The Church can learn a great lesson from its Lord, through this story.

Caution

A sign in a factory supervisor's office read: "Caution—be sure brain is engaged before putting mouth in gear."

That's not a bad sign for a preacher to read. It is a reminder that the moments in study and preparation are still priorities.

Ingredients for Solution

In the story of the loving father—or, as traditionally known, the prodigal son—(Luke 15) there is this observation:

This story has all the things needed for victory—a *sinner* ("Father, I have

sinned," 15:18); *a solution* ("I will arise and go to my father")—*a Saviour*.

Where there is solution, hope, and victory, all of these will be present. The man in the pew, fighting with his load of sin, needs to know that the solution isn't complicated. If he has a problem, he is a candidate for the love of God, and the open arms of the loving Father are for sinners.

Jesus Prays

The high-priestly prayer of our Lord recorded in John 17 mentions these three things, among others, about prayer:

1. It was a priority item with the Master.
2. It was personal communion between Jesus and His Father about life's important things.
3. It had a healthy balance between asking and committing.

IN THE STUDY

Looking at Our Lord in Luke

September 7

Persistent Prayer Pays (18:7)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 18:1-8

INTRODUCTION: Does it pay to keep on praying? Sometimes we are tempted to think that the answer is no. But Jesus said yes. And He always tells the truth.

In Luke 11 we have the parable of the importunate friend (at midnight). Here we find another parable teaching the same important lesson—that persistent prayer pays. It is called either the parable of the importunate widow or the parable of the unjust judge.

In this case the purpose of the parable is indicated: "That men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (v. 1). The verb



By Ralph Earle

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"faint" is better translated "lose heart" (RSV) or "give up" (NIV). We should not become discouraged in our praying.

I. THE UNJUST JUDGE (v. 2)

In a certain city was a judge who had no reverence for God nor respect for man. These are two strange qualifications for a judge, especially one who was supposed to administer the Mosaic law! This man was obviously a cynic with no moral consciousness. He was utterly unfitted for his job.

II. THE UNFORTUNATE WIDOW (v. 3)

A widow in that city was being oppressed by some enemy, probably a wealthy man. The most likely situation would be that she had been forced to mortgage her home. In those days widows could not get work, as they so often do in modern Western society. So this widow was left in desperate poverty, unable to meet her expenses.

A common sin of the rich, then as now, was to foreclose mortgages and take over the property. This is evidently what Jesus was talking about when He said that the scribes "devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers" (Mark 12:40). They were literally gobbling up the homes of helpless widows. It was sinful in God's sight.

The poor widow had only one recourse. She came to the judge with the plea: "Avenge me of mine adversary." In the Greek there is a play on words that is difficult to bring out in English: "Give me justice against the one who is denying me justice." It was a justifiable request.

III. THE UNRELENTING REQUEST (vv. 4-8)

At first the hardhearted judge paid no attention to the widow's pleas. But finally he declared that, though he did not reverence God or respect man, "yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." The last verb is a very weak translation. The Greek has a strong word that literally means "to strike under the eye, give a black eye." Probably in that culture it would not be likely that a woman would literally strike an official. But the judge may have been afraid that the persistent widow would "give him a black eye" in that community, perhaps

resulting in his being ousted from his position.

Then Jesus made the application: "And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?" (NIV). The obvious answer is "No, by no means!" And so Jesus added, "I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly" (v. 8, NIV).*

The parable closes on a disquieting note: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The context is the Second Coming (cf. 17:20-37). In these last days persistent prayer and faith are particularly important.

September 14

The Man Who Prayed to Himself

(18:11)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 18:9-14

INTRODUCTION: Why do you pray? How do you pray? To whom do you pray?

These are pertinent questions. The matter of motive is of supreme importance. And how we pray—humbly or proudly—is significant. Above all, we must be sure that we are praying to God, not ourselves.

We know to whom the parable of the Pharisee and the publican is addressed. The account says that Jesus spoke this parable "to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else" (v. 9, NIV).

He told about two men going up to the Temple to pray. The Temple area was on Mount Moriah, in the southeastern section of the city of Jerusalem (inside the walls). One man was a "Pharisee." The word means "separated one." The Pharisees, mentioned 100 times in the New Testament, were the pious separatists, who considered themselves more "holy" (ceremonially clean) than all the rest of the Jews.

"Publican" comes from the Latin *publicanus*, which meant a wealthy man, usually a Roman, who was responsible

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for the taxes of a certain large area. But the so-called "publicans" of the Gospels were not *publicani* but local "tax collectors," which is the correct translation.

These tax collectors were despised and hated by their fellow Jews for two reasons. In the first place, they were in close contact with the "unclean" foreigners, the Roman officials. In the second place, they robbed the people by overcharging, pocketing the difference.

I. THE PROUD PHARISEE (vv. 11-12)

The literal translation of the first part of verse 11 is: "The Pharisee, having taken his stand, was praying these things to himself." He chose a prominent spot, where he could be seen and heard by everyone nearby. This was in direct contradiction to what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. He warned His hearers not to parade their piety (Matt. 6:1). He put the label "hypocrites" on those who loved to pray in prominent places in order to be seen by men (Matt. 6:5).

The Pharisee began his prayer with thanksgiving, as we always should. But what was he thanking God for? Not divine goodness and grace, but his own goodness! He said, "God, I thank you that I am not like all other men" (NIV). He was putting himself up on a pedestal as being different from and superior to all the rest of humanity. What an ego!

Specifically, he was not like "robbers, evildoers, adulterers." Then he added, "or even like this tax collector" (NIV). Perhaps he said this loudly enough to be heard by the other man. His prayer demonstrated not only sheer arrogance but also cruel insult. If ever a man was unrighteous, this Pharisee was. For godliness is "Godlikeness," and "God is love" (1 John 4:8-16). The self-righteous Pharisee was probably the most ungodly man in the Temple at the time!

To prove his piety, the Pharisee reminded the Lord that he fasted twice a week and paid his tithe. He was glorying in that outward, formal, ceremonial righteousness that Jesus condemned as unacceptable to God (Matt. 5:20).

Someone has said about the opening words of the Pharisee's prayer: "Never, perhaps, were words of thanksgiving

spoken in less thankfulness than these." The whole prayer is a crass example of pride, hypocrisy, and utter arrogance.

II. THE PENITENT TAX COLLECTOR (v. 13)

Meanwhile the tax collector was "standing afar off"—perhaps in the outer Court of the Gentiles, not deigning to go inside the Court of Israel. He would not even lift his eyes toward heaven—as the Jews usually did in prayer—but "smote upon his breast"—a sign of deep grief—and prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The Greek literally says "the sinner." He may have felt at the moment that he was the worst of sinners in God's sight.

This man's prayer was an eloquent example of honesty, humility, and deep sincerity. He felt like the Psalmist of old: "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up" (Ps. 40:12).

III. THE PARDONED SINNER (v. 14)

Jesus declared that the tax collector, not the Pharisee, went home "justified" before God. And then He enunciated the great twofold principle found in the last half of this verse—one that has universal, daily application. The way up is down. If we want God to exalt us, we must humble ourselves in His sight.

September 21

Overcoming Obstacles (19:10)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:1-10

INTRODUCTION: Everyone who wants to see Jesus will find obstacles in his way. It always has been so and always will be. In this striking incident, recorded only by Luke, we discover that a man named Zacchaeus overcame three intervening obstacles and found Christ as his Saviour.

I. HIS RICHES (v. 2)

The name Zacchaeus means "righteous one." But this man's life had evidently been a denial of his name. He had become rich by taking unfair advantage of others.

His wealth was due to his position. He

was chief tax collector for the district of Jericho. This was a prize location, for Jericho was "the city of palm trees," a place where well-to-do Jews had their winter homes. The tax revenue was great.

But this was a hindrance to his finding Christ. For the tax collectors were notorious for taking a heavy "cut" out of the taxes they collected.

II. HIS SHORTNESS (vv. 3-6)

Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was going to be coming along the highway at Jericho, and he wanted to see Him. But he was a short man and "could not for the press." Today "the press" means the newspapers and their editors. But here it means simply "the crowd."

Fortunately, here was a man who was not going to give up because of an obstacle. Swallowing his pride, he ran ahead and climbed up into a "sycomore tree," or fig mulberry—probably not the one shown to tourists today!

When Jesus came to that point on the road, He looked up and saw Zacchaeus. They were looking for each other and found each other.

Jesus asked Zacchaeus to come down immediately, adding what certainly startled the man: "I must stay at your house today" (v. 5, NIV). Without a moment's hesitation, Zacchaeus hurried down to the ground—probably almost falling out of the tree—"and received him joyfully." Things were moving along faster and farther than Zacchaeus had ever dreamed. To think—this famous Teacher was going to stay at his house!

III. HIS REPUTATION (vv. 7-9)

Suddenly another obstacle was thrown in his way. The crowd began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner" (v. 7, NIV). In the eyes of the Jews all tax collectors were considered to be "sinners." One scholar writes: "The rabbinic sources repeatedly bracket tax collectors with robbers."

This complaint and criticism stopped Zacchaeus "dead in his tracks." He stood still and said to Jesus: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." This was sufficient evidence of repentance. But then he went a step further and agreed to make restitution: "And if I have taken any thing from any man by false

accusation"—the form of the Greek indicates that he had—"I restore him fourfold." This was the penalty prescribed by the law (Exod. 22:1). Zacchaeus was prepared to meet all the righteous requirements of the law, no matter what it cost him.

He had jumped the hurdle. Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham" (v. 9, NIV).

Luke 19:10 is usually considered to be the key verse of this Gospel. Jesus came to seek out the lost sheep and to save them. The story of Zacchaeus gives us a beautiful picture of how Jesus did this in a specific case. He found a "sinner" and graciously saved him.

September 28

Keeping Busy till He Comes (19:13)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:11-27

INTRODUCTION: The parable of the pounds, as it is called, is similar in several ways to the parable of the talents found in Matthew 25. In both cases there is one servant who does nothing with the money given him, and is punished. And both are related to a man's return, and so have to do symbolically with the Second Coming. The differences will be noted as we proceed.

The purpose of the parable is indicated in verse 11. Jesus was approaching Jerusalem, and the people thought that He was going to set up there the kingdom of God immediately. What they needed to realize was that He was going away, to return later as King.

I. THE RESPONSIBILITY (v. 13)

In the parable of the talents, a man was going on a journey (Matt. 25:14). Here a nobleman was going off to receive his appointment as king (v. 12). Then he would return.

So he called his 10 servants and gave each one a "pound" or mina (Greek, *mna*), representing about three months' wages. In the parable of the talents, one servant received five talents, another two, and still another one.

To his 10 servants the nobleman said, "Occupy till I come." They were to "put this money to work" (NIV), and keep busily occupied until he returned.

A little interlude is thrown in here in verse 14: "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'" However, "He was made king . . . and returned home" (v. 15, NIV).

The background of this allusion was familiar to Jesus' listeners. When Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., he left his kingdom to his Archelaus. But an earlier will he had made specified another son, Antipas, as his successor. So Archelaus had to go to Rome to gain confirmation of his appointment. The Jews hated him and sent an embassy of 50 men to oppose him. After listening to both sides, the Emperor Augustus gave Archelaus half his father's kingdom, namely, Judea.

II. THE RESPONSE (vv. 16-19)

When the ruler returned, he summoned his servants to tell him what they had done with the money he had given them (v. 15). The first reported that his pound had gained 10 pounds. He was commended for his faithfulness and rewarded with authority over 10 cities. The second had gained 5 pounds and was put over 5 cities.

This suggests that in the next life our rewards will be commensurate with our service down here. It is only fair that those who work harder should receive a greater reward.

III. THE REJECTION (vv. 20-26)

"And another" (v. 20) is literally "and the other"—the Greek word means "other of a different kind." Instead of producing evidence of honest effort, he came with an alibi, a very lame one. Said he: "Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow" (vv. 20-21, NIV).

The servant was condemned by his own words. The second half of verse 22 is best translated as a question: "You knew, did you, that I am a hard man . . . ?" (NIV). If he knew that his master was exacting and demanding, he should have put on deposit the money entrusted to him.

Then he could have returned it to his master with interest. Instead, he was a "wicked servant," because his heart attitude was bad.

The master then instructed those who stood by to take the mina from this lazy wretch and give it to the one with 10 minas. This term is found also in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:28).

Alfred Plummer, in his commentary on Luke, makes the application: "To neglect opportunities is to lose them; to make the most of opportunities is to gain others." He also writes: "He alone possesses who uses and enjoys his possessions."

CONCLUSION: We cannot do nothing, and at the same time be good. The one who fails to do good is a bad person. And to have a mean, selfish attitude, as the last servant did, is to be wicked in God's sight. The good person is the one who is actively doing good.



Revival

SCRIPTURE: Ezek. 37:1-5

TEXT: "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" (Ps. 85:6).

What is revival? Consider an acrostic of the letters in the word:

R—

1. *Repentance.* It means a change, a transformation, a new life, a new creation. We need to see some old-fashioned repentance.
2. *Removal of obstacles.* Such as a spirit of criticism, harshness, an ugly attitude, a spirit of selfishness.

E—

1. *Edification of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Church*
2. *Evangelism.* When real revival has come, evangelism follows—in the

church, in our schools, at home and abroad.

3. *Experience with God.* An experience that is up-to-date, that is working.
4. *Education in the Word of God.* Feasting on the promises of God. Expecting a miracle.

V—

1. *Vision*

The Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Revival gives vision. We need to look on the fields of opportunity about us, at the potential.

I—

1. *Interest*—in working for Christ. Interest in the church, in God, in spiritual things, in the Sunday school, in others.

2. *Increase*

The Bible says, "He must increase, but I must decrease." There is no better way for this to happen than when one is revived. Souls are saved and sanctified, and God is glorified.

V—

1. *Victory*—"Victory in Jesus." Victory over temptation and sin, over the battles of life, over the devil.

A—

1. *Awakening*

The Bible says, "Awake thou that sleepest . . . and Christ shall give thee light." It goes on to say that, after we have been awakened, we need to redeem "the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:14, 16).

2. *Action*

In the Church and out in the world.

L—

1. *Love*

For your fellowmen, for the Church, and for God. Jesus gave this as the greatest commandment of all.

2. *Life* (John 14:6)

Christ is Life—abundant Life and everlasting Life (John 3:16).

CONCLUSION: Unless we have revival, souls are going to be lost for eternity in the regions of the damned. Let us ask

God to revive us again, as the Psalmist said, "that thy people may rejoice in thee."

JERRY CLINE

Stricken of God! How Long?

SCRIPTURE: Isa. 1:1-20

INTRODUCTION:

1. God is dealing with backslidden Israel.
2. There is such a modern parallel.
3. Look at and analyze the story.

I. THE CHARGES AGAINST ISRAEL AND JUDAH

- A. Rebellion—implies ingratitude, contempt, self-will, self-assertion.
- B. Ignorance—ox knows owner, ass knows master; Israel lower than animals here.
- C. Forsaken—far away from God—on purpose, not just an accident.
- D. Provokers of God—it is hard to provoke God, but they did. It is dangerous.
- E. Modern parallels all the way down—nation, families, individuals.

II. THEIR RESULTANT CONDITION

- A. Head sick—warped thinking. Sin causes emotional problems.
- B. Head faint—spiritual poverty.
- C. General sickness—I am spiritualizing here (weakness of character); sores all over and festering.
- D. Country desolate—overrun with aliens plundering their cities.
- E. Again the modern parallels are here. We live in these conditions.

III. THEIR ATTEMPTS TO PLEASE GOD

- A. They made sacrifices—in obedience to law; attempt to "pay" for sins; this leads to light attitudes toward sin ("go to confession"—"buy an indulgence").
- B. Assemblies—had many meetings, services; went through motions of spirituality.
- C. Rituals—observed all sorts of practices; kept sacraments.

IV. GOD'S REACTION

- A. God said He was "fed up." "Stop the sacrifices. . . . Your meetings make Me sick. . . . I hate your rituals" (my version).
- B. Summed up by saying, "I will hide mine eyes from you . . . I will not hear" (v. 15).
- C. Instead God commands repentance, cleansing, and regeneration.

V. GOD OFFERS MERCY

- A. "Come . . . and . . . reason" (v. 18); forgiveness.
- B. Blessing on the land (v. 19).

CONCLUSION:

- 1. All of above is so relevant to us.
 - 2. Hinge on v. 5: "How much longer will we endure this punishment?" (my version).
 - 3. Choice is ours—How long will we live substandard lives?
 - 4. Added warning of rejection in v. 20.
- PAUL N. VAIL

BULLETIN



BARREL

LES DO LIKE GOOCH DONE!

An illiterate salesman by the name of Gooch was sent out by a large company, and the following are some letters he wrote back to the boss:

"Dear Boss: I seen this outfit which they ain't never bought a dime's worth of nothing from us and I sole them a couple hundred thousand dollars worth of guds. I am now in Chicago."

The second letter read: "I come here and sole them half a milyon."

The president of the company posted these letters on the bulletin board with this note, "We bin spending too much time here tryin to spel insted of trin to sel. Let's watch these sails. I want everybody should read these letters from Gooch who is doing a grate job for us, and you should go out and do like he done."

Need we add? There's pepul alround

this here community, and we ain't gettin em envited and vistud. Leastwise not fast enuf. Les do like Gooch done and jes do ar levl best with what we have and work for Jesus!

A PRAYER

*Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind:
In purer lives Thy service find;
In deeper reverence, praise.*

*In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
Rise up and follow Thee.*

—John Greenleaf Whittier

*Ever sit in a service—revival or such—
When the Spirit was fervently working,
And conviction was reeling a sweet-heart or beau,
But the other was carelessly shirking?*

*Well, my friend, let me tell you this sobering fact,
There are millions who never will make it
If they wait for a loved one—say husband or wife—
It's *your* sin and you'll have to forsake it.*

—Roy E. McCaleb

"What does it cost to be a Christian?" someone once asked Henry Drummond. His reply was, "The entrance fee is nothing, but the annual subscription is everything."

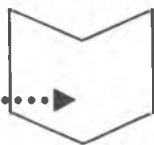
*If there is righteousness in the heart,
there will be beauty in the character.
If there is beauty in the character,
there will be harmony in the home.
If there is harmony in the home,
there will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation,
there will be peace in the world.*

—Selected



HERE AND THERE

AMONG BOOKS



Conducted by the Editor

All books reviewed may be ordered from
your Publishing House

The Treasury of David

By *C. H. Spurgeon* (Zondervan, 1975. Volumes I, II, and III, sixth printing, 475 pp. each, cloth, index, \$37.95.)

An original Spurgeon exposition of the Book of Psalms, first reproduced by Zondervan in 1966, now in its sixth printing. Along with the expositions, a collection of illustrative extracts from literature is presented, and a series of what Spurgeon calls "homiletical hints" upon almost every verse. Volume I includes the first 57 psalms; Volume II, 58 through 110; and Volume III, the remainder of the Book of Psalms. Wesley, Simeon, Spurgeon, and other writers of the past are sometimes not as "easy to read" as the contemporary authors. But many pastors find buried treasures from the past in their works. This set of volumes contains its share.

J. M.

The Gospel of Matthew

A Commentary by William Hendriksen (Baker Book House, 1973. Cloth, 1,015 pp., \$14.95.)

Here is another evangelical commentary written by a respected conservative (Calvinistic) theologian and scholar. His work is commended by Carl F. H. Henry, Wilbur Smith (Trinity Seminary), and others. There is a thorough introduction, the author's own translation, and the author's commentary verse by verse. There is a summary, which presents a synthesis of an entire thought unit, in which the central ideas are brought into focus. Discussion of the problems of a more specialized interest are also included, along with an outline showing

the structure of the book. A select bibliography follows the discussion, listing books and articles useful in the study of the book.

J. M.

Fresh Wind of the Spirit

By *Kenneth Cain Kinghorn* (Abingdon Press, 1975. Paper, 128 pp., \$2.95.)

The author, professor of church history and historical theology at Asbury Theological Seminary, believes that the Spirit-filled life is the answer for the demands placed upon Christians in our day. Holiness is a biblical term, and it is time we rediscovered it. He defines it in terms of grace rather than law, and makes a case for caution lest we equate our Christianity in the holiness movement with a long list of things we "do not do." He writes with refreshing insights.

Occasionally he does leave unexplained some questions as to the "crisis" experience as it relates to the life of holiness. One need not neglect one aspect of truth to make a point for the other. There is an occasional confusion of terminology, as for example leaving some doubt as to the distinction between "forgiveness" and "cleansing." But the faith and optimism do come through clearly, and the reader will be motivated to let the Spirit have control.

J. M.

The Lunn Log

Compiled by the M. Lunn family (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1974. Paper, 303 pp., \$2.95.)

Since 1926 the Nazarene Publishing

House (and Beacon Hill, Lillenas Publishing Co.) location at 2923 Troost in Kansas City offered an opportunity for a "wayside pulpit" for the thousands who traveled along that busy thoroughfare. Manager M. Lunn (now retired) set up an attractive bulletin and arranged for daily thoughts to be expressed in brief, pungent, neatly turned phrases. Keeping these new and fresh each day became a hobby for the whole Lunn family, and

now these gems are provided in paperback form for others to enjoy and use. Divided into more than 100 categories, alphabetically arranged, the material is readily accessible for whatever use it may have. It makes inspirational reading, and it provides a product of 60 years of collecting for instant use in the sermon, the newsletter, the bulletin, and indeed the mind and heart.

J. M.

Preachers' Exchange



WANTED—Set of the *Works of John Wesley*.—Dr. James Bross, Central Wesleyan College, Central, S.C. 29630.

WANTED—*Works of James Arminius*, in 3 vols.—Lindsay A. Enderby, 209 Carella St., Howrah, Tasmania, Australia 7018.

WANTED—Copy of *The Pure in Heart*, by W. E. Sangster.—Rev. Rodger N. Mayes, Rte. 1, Box 64-A, Eagle Springs, N.C. 27242

WANTED—Vol. 3, "Isaiah," of the *Biblical Illustrator*.—Rev. Aaron S. Glick, Smoke-town, Pa. 17576.

WANTED—Set of *Pulpit Commentaries; Selected Sermons* by T. Dewitt Talmadge (in volume set or just some volumes).—Terry Edwards, Box 9352, Colorado Springs, Colo. 80932.

WANTED—R. T. Williams, *Servant of God* (cloth edition only, about 1946), by G. B. Williamson; biography of J. B. Chapman, (exact title unknown) cloth edition; *Holiness Pulpit, Vol. I; Shoes for the Road*, by Alexander Stewart. Old *Preacher's Magazines* prior to 1960.—S. Ellsworth Nothstine, P.O. Box 100, Lowndesville, S.C. 29659.

COMING

next month

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Are some preachers too busy looking for a "fast buck" to go out looking for a "lost sheep"?

● The Pastor Deals with Conflict

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● Living with Inflation

It is not a pleasant subject, but living with inflation suggests ways of coping with a problem in the power of the Spirit and to the glory of God.



AMONG OURSELVES

One of life's good lessons is that the world does not end every time anything goes awry in the church. How wonderful it would be if there were no problems! A bishop once declared that if a church without any problems existed anywhere in his denomination he would resign his office and apply for the position of its pastor. But problems do exist—everywhere—and a good pastor learns to accept this fact and live with it. Having taken that step, he is prepared to take other steps toward the kind of spirit and growth that should exist in a genuine New Testament congregation of believers whose hearts are aflame. So it is that the pastor's own spirit is the key (p. 1) and his approach to resistance will lead him and his people on the upward way (p. 3). He is free to know what he is doing, and that makes a difference when he plans to nourish his flock with a balanced diet (p. 11). He knows where he is going and how he plans to get there (p. 6), and he knows his limitations as well as his strengths (p. 9). Pfc. Mostad, we love you—and we need you. Don't listen to Satan's lies if he ever suggests otherwise.

Yours for souls,

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