

U PLOOK

JUNE-JULY 2009

Assess the Need • Catch the Vision • Take the Challenge

**BROKENNESS:
PATHWAY TO
BLESSING**
Warren Henderson

**AFTER GOD'S
OWN HEART**
Peter Bolton

**REPORT FROM
KENTUCKY**
Richmond
Retrospective



*A New
Heart*

www.uplook.org

A New Heart

Inside out



John Nicholson

"And He that sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'" (Rev. 21:5).

It is quite common for an unbeliever to believe that mankind, although not perfect, is fundamentally good. Even many believers hold to a watered-down form of this belief where they technically admit that every one of us is a sinner, but practically think that we aren't that bad. You know, maybe we were bad enough to doom us to Hell, but most of us are still basically nice people. Given this common belief, it is surprising to realize how often people—even religious people—are exactly wrong.

The Pharisees were, if nothing else, religious men. They devoted massive amounts of time, study, and energy to doing what they believed would please God. If religion could help any man, then these men would have been safe when they died and met the Judge of all the earth. But, one day, they did meet Him. He surprised them, though. He didn't wait for them to die. Instead, He came to visit them. It was, if you will, a test run to see if religion would help men when they met their Maker.

It turned out that religion wasn't the help they thought it would be. For all of their study and effort, the Pharisees didn't know how to please Him at all. Worse—they found that He didn't please them. Of all the men and women the Lord Jesus met as He walked the earth, nobody hated Him like those men did. The Pharisees weren't just wrong, they were utterly wrong.

The problem was that they had things completely reversed. The Lord Jesus told them, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also."* (Mt. 23:25f)

This is, in fact, the problem with all of mankind's religion: it focuses on the externals, but the inner man—the real person—is untouched. In the most important question of life, we are not slightly, but completely, wrong. Our natural approach to God (and you can find it the world over in a variety of forms) is to clean up the outside—make rules and laws and rituals to get people to do right. But what we really need is to cleanse the inside.

You can see why the Pharisees didn't like Him. In telling them to first make men clean internally, He was telling them to do something that no man can do. Well, no man save One.

Our God is the God of new things: the new covenant, a new song, a new commandment, a new and living way, a new man, and, one day, a new heaven and a new earth, just to name a few. So He has a simple but wonderful method for cleaning the inside of man: He gives us new hearts.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." (Ezek. 36:25-27)

This world is full of men and women who are disheartened by the problems they see when they honestly look inside. We have the privilege of introducing them to the One who can make them a new creation, grant them a new life, and give them a new heart.

U P L O O K

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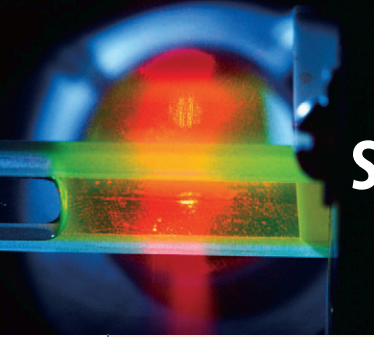
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Reader's Guide to the Origins Debate (part 3)

Dealing with Dawkins

In this third and final installment of “Reader’s Guide to the Origins Debate,” I recommend books which respond to the writings of Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*¹—a harshly worded attack on religion in general and Christianity in particular. I single out Dawkins for consideration because of his notoriety and influence with other militant atheists who contend for the suppression of religion as evil and for the banishment of all religious practice as unnecessary and dangerous. We have seen this before in history, with devastating results.

In writing *The Dawkins Delusion?*², *Dawkins’ God*³ and *The Twilight of Atheism*⁴, Alister McGrath, Oxford Professor of Historical Theology and a Ph.D. in biophysics, has done a great service for those wishing to understand who Richard Dawkins is; what the logical flaws, exaggerations, and hyperbole in *The God Delusion* are; and where Dawkins and his ideas fit in the overall history of atheism. In *God’s Undertaker*⁵, Oxford mathematician John C. Lennox has taken up the challenge of answering the underlying agenda of *The God Delusion*: that science has not only made God unnecessary but also killed and buried Him. In other words, that science has disproved God. Lennox ably shows that rather than pushing God into the dark corners of the universe, as Dawkins and others allege, scientific knowledge increasingly points to the reality of God’s existence and also illumines His handiwork.

Unlike Dawkins, McGrath is knowledgeable in both science and theology; and, as he focuses the microscope of rigorous scholarship on *The God Delusion* and other works by Dawkins, some surprising results are seen. McGrath reveals Dawkins’ increasing use of inflammatory rhetoric, selective manipulation of facts, intellectual sleight of hand, and shallow theological scholarship. It is clear to McGrath that in *The God Delusion*, Dawkins has made a transition from scientist to crude antireligious propagandist, where things are so because Dawkins says they are and where logic like “it is either A or B and, since I pronounce B to be utterly stupid, it must be A” is the norm. McGrath also convincingly challenges Dawkins’ claims that science and religion are, and must be, at war and can never be reconciled.

There are no new ideas from Dawkins, including the desire to vanquish religion by force if it does not die out on its own.

McGrath’s, *The Twilight of Atheism* is one book I wish had been available when I took Western Civilization in college because it provides an interpretive framework for understanding centuries of French and German philosophy. With this understanding, it is clear that Richard Dawkins is really

an 18th century philosopher whose atheism is recycled from d’Holbach, Feuerbach, Hegel, and Marx. There are no new ideas from Dawkins, including the desire to vanquish religion by force if it does not die out on its own. Recall the failed experience of forced atheism during the French and Russian Revolutions, the latter of which led, by some estimates, to 80 – 100 million deaths. And now Dawkins’ militant atheism, buttressed by Darwinism, calls for this same experiment yet again. But “when religion is declared the enemy”, McGrath warns, “the outcome is as inevitable as it is criminal.”⁴

—MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D.

1 Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006).
2 Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).
3 Alister McGrath, *Dawkins’ God: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).
4 Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (New York, NY: Galilee Doubleday, 2006).
5 John C. Lennox, *God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford, England: Lion Hudson plc, 2007).



New Commended Workers Directory

A renewed vision to expand the usefulness of this important resource

Earlier this year, Assembly Care took up the responsibility of rebuilding and maintaining the workers directory. A well maintained directory can be a valuable tool in helping assemblies connect with commended workers they know and do not yet know. Today, resources exist to inform assemblies about overseas missionaries, but there is a clear lack of such tools for those commended to the Lord's work inside North America. ACM is trying to reverse this trend, and reviving a directory of believers commended from New Testament assemblies is one step in this direction. If you are currently commended to the Lord's work inside North America from a New Testament practicing assembly, they would like to include your name/photo/description in the online directory. You are invited to visit www.assemblycare.org to submit your information online or by fax.

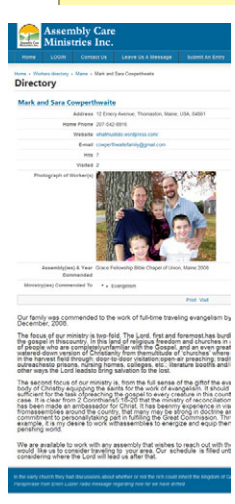
Features of the new directory include:

- The online directory has room for photos and a generous description of each workers' ministry.
- Workers can be given online administrative privileges to edit their own entry.
- Changes to the directory can be made instantly rather than waiting for the next publication.
- Workers interested in being listed in the directory may now register online.
- Plans are being made to print the next edition of the updated workers directory in the back of the 2010 Assembly Address book.

Believers in each state are encouraged to email Assembly Care with any **corrections, updates, or names of workers** that should be included in the directory: jgentile@assemblycare.org

Letters of commendation should be faxed to: (888) 704-8822 or mailed to:
11928 Sheldon Rd., Suite 101, Tampa, FL 33626

Questions about the directory should be directed to Jesse Gentile: jgentile@assemblycare.org (813) 300-4774. Please utilize this directory and let others know about this helpful resource.



FAMILY CAMPS IN MISSOURI

Ozark Family Camp hosts three separate weeks of family camp during Jul and Aug at Turkey Hill Ranch Bible Camp, Freeburg, MO. The camps are a great source of fellowship with other believers and spiritual encouragement. There is no set fee for camp but rather it is provided on a donation basis. **Contact:** Dan Moffitt email: danmoffitt@sbcglobal.net web: www.ozarkfamilycamp.com

TURKEY HILL RANCH BIBLE CAMP

For the complete 2009 camp and conference schedule for Turkey Hill Ranch Bible Camp, visit the camp website at www.turkeyhillranch.com

Contact: Sonny Williams, Director, 13781 Maries Road 301, Vienna, MO 65582 ph: 573-744-5843 email: sonny@turkeyhillranch.com

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONFERENCE

Berean Gospel Assembly, Langdon, NH will host their Follow-Me Conference Jul 16-19. Roy Wahab (ON), Jesse Gentile (FL) and Jeremiah Morrison (KY) are the scheduled speakers. The topic is "Radical Christianity" – following the Lord Jesus in practical ways and meaning business for Him in our daily lives. **Contact:** Nathanael Pena ph: 603-499-3099 email: goserveurking@gmail.com

SOUTHEAST FAMILY CONFERENCE

Camp Hope will host their 2nd annual conference Jul 25-31 in the will of the Lord. Speakers will be Thomas Wheeler (TX) and Alan Malchuk (NC) for the adults and Nate Thomas (SC) for the children. Registration begins Saturday afternoon with the first meeting at 7:00 PM. Camp will end Friday morning. **Contact:** Steve Roys, 7011 Pony Lake Rd, Dahlonega, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@arilion.com web: www.camphopega.org

WEST VIRGINIA BIBLE CONFERENCE

The WV assemblies invite you to their annual family camp Aug 2-7

FRONT LINES *continued*

with speakers Charles Fizer (IA) and Mike Attwood (GA). Children's ministry will be with Nate Thomas (SC). A nursery is also provided. The conference is held at Bluestone Camp and Retreat near Hinton, WV, surrounded by beautiful mountain scenery. A detailed brochure can be mailed to you per request. **Contact:** Brent Jones ph: 304-466-4738 e-mail: brentandhope@verizon.net

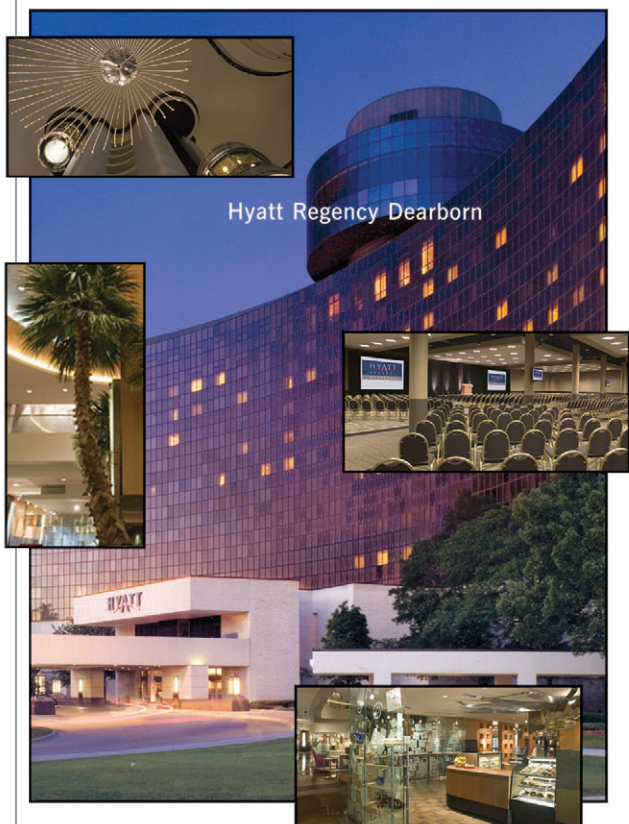
UPWARD BOUND 2009

Upward Bound will be held again at Wilfrid Laurier University in

Waterloo, ON. Running from Sunday, Aug 16 to Sunday the 23rd, the focus of week one is intensive Bible study and practical teaching from the Scriptures, but there are also times of social and recreational activities. Week two is a canoe trip into Algonquin Park running from Sunday Aug 23 to Friday the 28th. Speakers: Brian Cretney (ON), Charlie Tempest (ON), Craig Shakarji (MD), Dennis Leblanc (NB) Sandy McEachern (ON). Attendees are welcome to attend either or both weeks. **Contact:** armceachern@gmail.com

ENGEDI '09 IN TX

A young adults conference convened by South Plains Bible Chapel will be held at a camp facility in Waxahachie, TX Aug 21-23. Speakers will be Eric Smith (Good News on the Move) and Brady Collier (Missionary to young people in Honduras). Teaching will be focused on equipping and encouraging young people to walk consistently and faithfully with the Lord in spite of circumstances. This conference is open to college students, career age adults, and young parents. Visit www.engedicon.com for



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Roy Hill

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Willie Burnett

www.riseupconference.com

For more information, call 704-843-9632,
or email rextrogdon@carolina.rr.com

Rise Up & Choose features a series of conference seminars which focus on practical aspects of our life and love for the Lord, featuring leaders and general session speakers from across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

This is a great opportunity to meet and interact with like-minded believers.

more information. **Contact:**
Brady Collier ph: 806-441-7460
email: Collier2009@gmail.com

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY SEMINAR

Pine Bush Bible Camp in Bloomingburg, NY is planning an intensive Bible study seminar Aug 23-27 for men who are serious about the study of God's Word. Randy Amos (NY) will speak on the subject "God's Calling and Prophetic Plan for the Nations, Israel and the Church." The seminar starts with Sunday dinner and ends with breakfast on Thursday. The cost is \$95. **Contact:** Charles Myers ph: 732-451-9444 web: www.pbbc.org email: Cvspeedie@aol.com After July 1st, call the Camp at 845-361-1871.

LABOR DAY WEEKEND CONFERENCE

The 2009 Mid-South Bible Conference will be held Sep 4-7 at Horton Haven Christian Camp. This is an event for the entire family with ministry and activities for all age groups. The accommodations range from deluxe private rooms in the lodge to rustic cabins and an RV area. Warren Henderson (WI) will be ministering to the adults, Justin Phelan (IA) will be the teen speaker and Art Manning (IA) will be teaching the children. **Contact:** Horton Haven Christian Camp, P. O. Box 276, Chapel Hill, TN 37034 web: www.hortonhaven.org

YOUTH CONFERENCE AT CAMP HOPE

Camp Hope in Georgia will hold their annual Youth Conference Sep 5-7 with Dwight Knight (IL) speaking. Registration begins Saturday at noon and camp ends Monday at 11:15 AM. No lunch is provided Saturday or Monday. Cost: \$60/person.

Contact: Jamie Wolfgram
ph: 706-799-7053
email: Jcdewolfgram@aol.com

BC BIBLE CONFERENCE

Christians gathered to the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ as Horse Lake Christian Fellowship in 100 Mile House, BC., extend a warm invitation to attend a conference Labor Day weekend, Sep 5-7. The conference theme is "Lord, Teach Us to Live in Perfect Freedom!" Speakers invited are Dan Smith (IA) and Jack Spender (CT). Daniel McKinley (Peru) will lead sessions for youth. Workshops and seminars are scheduled for Saturday afternoon and evening. Plenary sessions are Sunday evening and Monday. Youth events are planned. **Contact:** Rob Brennan ph: 250-791-5657 email: rob_brennan@shaw.ca Don Street ph: 250-395-4230 email: don.street@shawbiz.ca

EASTERN IOWA CONFERENCE

High Point Bible Chapel of Davenport, IA and Gateway Bible Chapel of Fulton, IL will hold their annual Eastern Iowa Conference at Grace Lutheran Camp, DeWitt, IA on Sep 18-20. Steve Price (KS) is the invited speaker. Accommodations and meals will be provided. **Contact:** Jim Fullan ph: 563-242-4597 email: jimfullanh@ci.clinton.ia.us Jim Iverson ph: 563-391-3122 email: iversonhpt@netzero.com web: www.highpointbiblechapel.org

ANNUAL LADIES CONFERENCE IN GA

Camp Hope will be having their annual Ladies Conference Sep 25-27 with Vicky Gaynier speaking. The conference begins Friday with registration at 7:00 PM and ends Sunday

2009 Myrtle Beach Bible Conference

December 29, 2009 - January 1, 2010

Make your plans now to attend this year's conference! Conference features include:

- accommodations at 5-star resort right on the beach!
- ministry from the Word both morning and evening sessions!
- children's meetings & nursery provided for all sessions!
- 6 hours of free time to relax and enjoy the fellowship!

Speakers this year:



Warren Henderson



Jim McKendrick



Tim McNeal

1 Bedroom
\$198.00

2 Bedroom
\$360.00

3 Bedroom
\$420.00

SPACE IS LIMITED - REGISTER EARLY!

Call (919) 598-0392 or visit our website
www.mbbibleconferences.org

at 10:00 AM. Cost: \$60 per person. **Contact:** Barbara Thorpe ph: 706-359-6297 email: sambarb@nu-z.net Camp Hope ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@arilion.com web: www.camphopega.org

PACIFIC BIBLE MINISTRIES

This annual conference will be held Sep 28 - Oct 2 at the Mission Springs Christian Conference Center 75 miles south of San Francisco, CA in the Santa Cruz mountains. The conference begins Monday with dinner at 6:00 PM and ends Friday with lunch. Speakers: Alan Parks (SC) and Keith Keyser (PA). **Contact:** Max Krieger ph: 323-256-1992 email: maxnbethk@sbcglobal.net

THE GREAT GOSPEL CALENDAR DROP

Last October, the believers at Halton Hills Bible Chapel banded together with *Cross Canada Cruisers*, the *Good News On the Move* team and over

FRONT LINES *continued*

a hundred Christians from across North America to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to Georgetown, ON. This year, they are preparing to reach out once again to those still without a Savior in an effort dubbed *The Great Gospel Calendar Drop*. Slated to take place the weekend of Oct 2-4, approximately 12,000 calendars will be delivered to homes throughout town. The calendar will feature historic pictures of Georgetown that tell of the roots as a community, along with photos of modern day. Each month on the calendar will feature a Scripture text and contact info for HHBC. Plenty of hardy souls and willing hands will be needed for the weekend to help drop off calendars. Prayer for this outreach is requested. **Contact:** Don MacMullen Jr. email: dmacjr@gmail.com Anthony Capuano email: adcapuano@gmail.com

FALL FAMILY CONFERENCE AT HOPE

Camp Hope will hold their conference in the will of the Lord Oct 30 -Nov 1. John Heller will minister God's Word to the adults and Nate Thomas will minister to the children. The conference begins Friday with registration at 6:00 PM and ends Sunday with lunch. There will not be a set charge or suggested offering to the camp. It is realized that many young families would not be able to meet the expenses of such a camp weekend but that the Lord would move in the hearts of others to give above the cost of their coming in order to supply the needs of others. **Contact:** Steve Roys 7011 Pony Lake Rd., Dahlonga, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787 web: www.camphopega.org email: camphopega@arilio.com



The new "Ministry Centre" at Guelph Bible Conference Centre

COMMENDATION

David & Becky Jenkinson



The elders from Bible Fellowship Assembly, Porcupine-Timmins, ON, Canada

are pleased to announce the commendation of David & Becky Jenkinson to full-time work for the Lord. They have been in faithful fellowship and serving the Lord at BFA for 27 years. During the past two years they have been burdened for and are conducting Gospel meetings with Christians in Shillington, ON. They conduct a home Bible study, are active in marriage counseling and minister to local northern assemblies as the Lord leads.

NEW ASSEMBLY IN WALPOLE, NH

A new assembly known as Berean Gospel Assembly is temporarily meeting in homes for worship and fellowship. Meetings are on Thursday nights for Bible study and Sunday mornings for the Lord's Supper and Family Bible Hour. **Contact:** Robert Gentile ph: 603-835-6189 Alan Chidester ph: 603-495-1415 email: chidester5@gsinet.net

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Guelph Bible Conference Centre, a year-round Christian camp and conference facility is seeking a candidate to fill the position of General Manager. The successful candidate will have a passion for Christ and will demonstrate good leadership and people skills. The General Manager needs to be a

good communicator who will work in conjunction with the Board to coordinate the day-to-day operations of the camp including customer relations, promotion, finances, maintenance, business operations and strategic planning. A desire to see individuals grow in Christ is essential. **Contact:** Bruce Dureno email: bdureno@mnsi.net ph: 519-734-1196 web: www.guelphbiblecc.com

Emmanuel Bible Camp in PEI, Canada is looking to the Lord for a camp manager for the upcoming season. Fifty-five years in presenting the gospel to boys and girls in the area, Emmanuel continues to emphasize Christ in all its ministry. **Contact:** Gerald MacLeod email: gerald@pei.sympatico.ca web: www.emmanuelbiblecamp.ca

Bethel Bible Camp, Woolwine, VA requires a Maintenance Manager with mechanical aptitude. He will need to be commended by his home assembly. A home is provided. **Contact:** John Hand, Bethel Bible Camp, P. O. Box 71, Woolwine, VA 24185 e-mail: keptbyhim1936@va.net ph: 276-930-4289

Parkside Ranch in Orford, Quebec has need of a couple to be involved full time. It would be ideal if they were commended and have a desire for camp ministry. Responsibilities include maintenance, farm management, administration and involvement in the camping program. **Contact:** diron.w@sympatico.ca web: www.parksideranch.com

A Joyful Heart

Enjoying the Christian life depends on our focus

Do you need
more grace?
Go and get it!

I once went to my father and said, “I’m not happy, Dad.” He patiently sat down with me in his study and listened to my woes. After a nice chat, he sent me on my way, feeling much better than when we started. The next day, I was back with the pronouncement “Dad, it didn’t work, I’m still not happy.” He listened again and, once more, I left feeling the better for the conversation. We continued this process for several days, and then he wisely looked at me and said, “Scott, the happiest people in the world never think about whether or not they are happy.”

My father helped me to see that the core of my struggle was my focus. It was my selfishness that was spoiling my joy. I have noticed this to be true many times in my life. Self-focus creeps in and robs me of joy. There have been many times when I have had to be judged by the Word and then confess a sinful focus! A godly woman in my life once sent me a quotation: “Occupation with self brings

distress; occupation with others brings discouragement; occupation with Christ brings delight!” It was a loving and helpful rebuke. I wonder if perhaps there are those of you who have been robbed of joy by a focus that falls short of “setting your mind on things above.” If so, call it what it is, confess it, and be restored to the joy of a

focus on Him!

The Lord wants gladness for His people. Psalm 4:7 says, “*you have put gladness in my heart.*” C. S. Lewis puts it this way: “We are

half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition, when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”¹ The Lord wants far more for us than what we have come to enjoy so far. So what has the Lord given us that our joy may be full?

His presence

“in Your presence is fullness of joy” (Ps 16:11)

I recently read a statistic that was a bit shocking. A survey of evangelical Christians showed that less than 25% of them reported to read the Word daily! No wonder we lack the joy of an overflowing heart if we are not spending time in His presence! He is life! He is overwhelmingly good!

I have a friend whose mother spends an hour a day in her husband’s study, alone with the Lord. This has been her habit for many years. Some time ago, she let the busyness of life crowd this away and the dryness she noticed in herself quickly convinced her that she had chosen poorly. She went back to her time with the Lord and to a heart that was filled with Him! Are you spending time with Him or are you missing out on the day-to-day enjoyment of the best that life has to offer? In other words, are you making mud pies or enjoying a holiday at the sea?

Abiding in Christ

“that your joy may be full.” (Jn. 15:11)

After teaching His disciples that they should abide in His love, the Lord Jesus states that the result will be full joy! I am sometimes surprised by answers I receive when I ask



Photos: Joshua Blake

WHAT'S YOUR OCCUPATION? *continued*

young Christians if they are abiding in Christ. They usually tell me how much they have been reading their Bibles. The thought in John 15 seems to be much more than that. The emphasis is abiding through obedience. His followers had his commandments. If they chose to abide in those commandments, then they should expect a joyful heart. The Lord Jesus is teaching that a lifestyle of communion with Him will result in a heart that is overflowing with joy!

Does your experience show this to be the case? The most joyful people I know are the ones who consistently commune with their Saviour. What a challenge for those of us who recognize a lack in our walk with Him! I want to have a great marriage where I consistently enjoy my wife and she me. I don't want to just enjoy her quarterly or yearly on a family vacation. I abide with her and thank the Lord for such a wonderful gift! Is this how you think about the Lord Jesus? Is this how you are ordering your life for Him? How is your joy? If there is a lack, perhaps abiding is the answer!

Answered prayer

"ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full."
(Jn. 16:24)

Prayer is one of the greatest privileges of the Christian life. To ask of God and see His hand at work in our lives is consistently one of the greatest joys that I know! The Lord has given us free and constant access to His presence. Do you need more grace? Go and get it! A throne of grace awaits you.

Do you see the hand of God move in your life as a result of prayer? I am saddened to say that my observation is that many Christians do not. The Lord desires us to ask according to His name so that He can answer and we will rejoice at the reminder of His loving and watchful eye.

There are reasons when a Christian's prayers are not answered. If a husband does not treat his wife correctly, if we ask selfishly that we may consume it on our own lusts, if we are walking distantly from the Lord, then we should not expect that our prayers will be answered nor that our joy will be full.

I know a brother who has given the best years of his life to serve the Lord in a foreign country. His prayer over the course of that time has been for the Lord to reach every tribe in the jungle of that nation with the gospel in his lifetime. When we were speaking with



him, a woman from the final unreached tribe had come out of the jungle because she was very sick. The missionaries were praying that this would be the open door that they had sought. I wish you could have been there to see their faces—*full joy!*


We were recently on a college campus to share the good news with students and it was supposed to rain all day. We prayed, asking the Lord to make it possible for us to share His truth, and decided we would do whatever we could, as long as we could. We were out there all day sharing the good news and never got wet. Again, I wish you could have been there to see the joy on all the faces when we learned that it had poured around the campus all day but the Lord held off the rain for us! It was not an effort to give thanks and praise to our great God! Our hearts were full of joy!

Having a healthy, biblical prayer life and seeing His answers leads to a joyful heart.

Fellowship of saints

"greatly desiring to see you...that I may be filled with joy" (2 Tim. 1:4)

The Lord has given us a wonderful blessing in the family of God. Getting together with saints is to be a time that fills our hearts with joy. Do you look forward to getting together with the saints, or is it a chore for you? According to 1 John, this is a good test of how we are doing spiritually. Are you loving the saints, investing in the saints, seeing the Lord work in the saints, and, as a result, having a full heart of joy when you see and speak with them? Thank the Lord that when the Lord looks upon us and thinks of us, He rejoices over us with great joy!

Dear reader, is your heart filled with an abiding joy? Are you a blessing to others because of this? Let us press on through His presence, abiding in Christ, answered prayer, and fellowship to honor Him with a heart full of joy! *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy"* (Rom. 15:13)! 

Endnote

1 Galaxie Software, *10,000 Sermon Illustrations* (Biblical Studies Press, 2002).

An Acceptable Sin?

A growing problem

Most Christians take a strong stand against certain sins. There is a holy rejection of sexual immorality. The pro-life movement is strong with its plea for the life of the unborn. Alcoholism and drug abuse are rightly condemned. Pornography is abhorred. But there is a common sin which has become acceptable among many Christians.

Missionary friends from South America commented recently that when they returned to the States, they were amazed at the number of people who are overweight. Obesity is a growing problem in the United States. Statistics indicate that 30% to 50% of Americans are too fat, and it is a growing health problem.

“You notice it especially at the beach. With one out of two adults and one out of four children overweight, it’s almost abnormal to be normal weight. Fewer manual jobs, more computers and television, parents afraid to let their kids outside to play without supervision, and increased dependence on cars all contribute to the fattening of America. But that’s only part of the equation. The food industry spends billions of dollars each year on advertising and promotion to create an environment that constantly pressures us to eat. And it’s not hawking carrots and celery sticks.”¹

Is it really wrong?

But is obesity a sin? If a person enjoys eating, what is wrong with that even if he tends to overeat? Should not we guard against legalism in this area? After all, aren’t there some preachers who are too heavy and God uses them? Does Scripture say anything about the matter?

Under God’s Law in the Old Testament, parents with a rebellious son were told to bring him to the elders of the city. “*And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our*

voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear” (Dt. 21:20f). Gluttony is linked with drunken-

ness as evil. That is strong language!

“*Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat”* (Prov. 23:20). Once again, overeating is linked with drinking and is warned against. In the New Testament, Paul affirms of the people of Crete, quoting one of their own race, “*Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons*” (Titus 1:12). There were certain national traits and overeating was one of them. It is hardly a commendation. Paul describes some as “*enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly*” (Php. 3:18f). Apparently, these lived for sensual pleasure, and eating was one of these obsessions. One remembers the drunken and gluttonous orgies of the



Statistics indicate that 30% to 50% of Americans are overweight.

rich Romans of ancient times.

But what of the accusation made of the Christ? “*The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children*” (Mt. 11:19). Jesus said they criticized John for his ascetic lifestyle, living like a hermit, eating locusts and wild honey, living off the land. Jesus came and fraternized with people, eating in their homes and reaching out to sinners. They criticized him for such conduct. The truth is that they rejected the message of God. The word for glutton here is *phagos*, literally an “eater.” They were attempting to discredit and to ridicule Him. It was a slanderous remark. Certainly, the Lord Jesus never was drunk nor ate to excess—one must consider the source of the remark—but it is significant that gluttony was understood to be obviously evil.

DARE TO THINK *continued*

Why do some of us struggle with overeating? Often, it may be because of emotional stress. Eating is pleasurable and satisfying. It helps one forget unhappiness or pain. Or it may be falling into wrong patterns of living, like lying on a couch reading or watching TV, munching all of those calorie-laden goodies. We don't need the food, but it tastes good! A sedentary lifestyle plus overeating spells weight gain.

Are you as a Christian a little convicted and concerned about your weight? Maybe your doctor has even cautioned you that your weight is endangering your health. And as a Christian you realize your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19f). Your body belongs to God and should be maintained carefully for His use and glory. Is there some emotional need or stress in your life that food seems to satisfy? Surely God can satisfy the needs of our hearts as we turn to Him.

What can I do?

Doctors tell us two things are necessary to maintain proper weight, unless there is some organic problem in one's body. One of these is exercise. The body was made to be active and, many times, one's employment simply does not give adequate exercise. Paul says, "*For bodily exercise profits a little*" (1 Tim. 4:8). He is not belittling exercise but simply contrasting it with the eternal value of godliness. Some brisk exercise 3-5 times a week will burn up calories and tone up one's muscles. Some are able to have a workout in a gym but many are not able to do this. But can you walk briskly for 30 minutes or so daily? Choose your own exercise but be consistent and disciplined in doing it.

Then there is the matter of food! Proverbs gives advice to the man going to eat with a ruler, "*And put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite*" (Prov. 23:2). It is good advice for all. Control your appetite on a regular basis. Crash diets are ineffective because after the initial loss of weight people go back to their old eating habits. Learn to take smaller portions and refuse seconds. Reduce your fat intake.

Beware of fast foods which are often laden with fat. And eliminate snacks between meals. Eat more fruits and vegetables. In short, be a good steward of the body that God has given you. (As is often the case, it is possible to go to the other extreme and become obsessive—even self-righteous—in the name of "health." This doesn't glorify God, either.)

What about those times when food seems desirable and tempting? The urge to open a bag of potato chips seems overwhelming. Surely this is a time to read, to meditate, and to pray. "*Oh, how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day. ... How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*" (Ps. 119:97, 103). Honey is such a delicious sweet, sweeter than sugar. As a beekeeper for many years, I can affirm its sweetness. But the Psalmist asserts that God's Word is much sweeter and more satisfying.



**"How sweet are
Your words to my
taste, sweeter than
honey to my mouth!"
(Ps. 119:103)**

Is this nit-picking? Is this legalism? We live in a society that is increasingly obsessed with physical, temporal comforts and pleasures. And it shows! We have the opportunity to be different. May we, as God's people, find supreme joy and satisfaction in our God and in His Word. 📖

—DONALD L. NORBIE

Endnote

1 *Nutrition Action*, Vol. 25, no. 8

A Willing Heart

Eager or reluctant?

Israel's work in the construction of the tabernacle provides insight for the great building project that God has for His people today in the church.

The Law that God gave to His Old Testament people, Israel, contained a great many commandments pertaining to the moral and spiritual lives of each individual. But it is not without significance that, proportionally, far and away the largest two topics covered by the Law are the offerings (picturing the person and work of Christ) and the tabernacle. It is this second topic that we will spend a few moments considering.

The tabernacle was a corporate work, not merely the disjointed efforts of individual Israelites. Secondly, it was to be a dwelling place for the Lord Himself (Ex. 25:8). The application for today is clear. Certainly the New Testament contains a large amount of moral and spiritual teaching for individual

believers today. But when we examine the practical teachings of the New Testament, no topic is given more attention than the church. Like the tabernacle, this is a corporate work. Also like the tabernacle, it is a dwelling place for the Lord Himself (1 Cor. 3:16). Given these obvious parallels, we can

carefully draw applications from Israel's work in the construction of the tabernacle that will guide us in the corporate building project that God has for His people today.

In Exodus 35, the Lord specifies what will be required for the building of the tabernacle. Two categories are evident: materials (gold, silver, bronze, material, skins, etc.—vv. 5-9) and skills (vv. 10ff).

Our resources

The Lord has given each of us resources. Some have more physical resources than others, but the amount isn't relevant. The important question is are we using whatever resources He has given us for Him?

Perhaps the first resource that comes to mind is our money. It's been said that, when it comes to giving, some people stop at nothing. Christians, of all people, should be generous because we know something of how generous God has been with us. A stingy Christian is an embarrassment. Giving in the local assembly, giving to missions, helping those in need—these habits should be fostered from the earliest ages, not just once a Christian has graduated from university and have a career.

We also have other physical resources. Are our homes open to the saints? Are we given to hospitality? Are we eager to share our possessions with others, or do we carefully hoard them?

But there is a resource more valuable than money: time. How do we use our time? It is a worthwhile exercise to think back over any given week of our lives and calculate how much time we spent serving the Lord and how much time we spent in recreation—even "innocent" recreation. For example, the real evil of television isn't the moral filth that characterizes much of it. The larger problem is that, even if you are careful what you watch, it's still consuming your greatest non-renewable resource. But let's not obsess on television. The form of recreation is irrelevant. There are many people who self-righteously criticize television only to waste countless hours on other pastimes that are equally useless in the light of eternity. It's amazing how many saints "don't have time"



NOT UNDER COMPULSION *continued*

for meetings or Bible study or service but always have time for their hobbies, reading, sports, home projects, etc.

Our skills

Secondly, the Lord has equipped each of us with skills. Some of those skills are “natural”—talents or abilities that we’ve developed and honed over the years. Do we use those abilities for Him? Many can attest to the refreshment they’ve received from those who provided kind and loving meals or baking, especially in difficult times. Those who are handy with a hammer and wrench can be a great help and encouragement to the saints, both in their home assembly and on the mission field. And who hasn’t been enriched by believers who use their musical talents for the Lord?

God has also given us spiritual abilities in the form of spiritual gifts. *“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”* (1 Pet. 4:10). Are we being faithful stewards of those gifts. Are we diligently serving others? Do we have a spiritual burden for those in our assembly?

Our hearts

If we want to be truly useful in the local church, it will require both our resources and our skills. But there is another requirement—one that is listed before the materials and the skills: a willing heart (Ex. 35:5).

In the world, men don’t usually care whether we have a willing heart or not, provided we get the job done. Nobody asks their plumber whether he is eager and joyful about fixing their sink. But even though man looks on the outside, God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). He’s not interested in reluctant giving or grudging service. He desires that we give like He gives: generously and joyfully.

“Let each one [give] just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Not only our giving is to be voluntary, but also our goodness (Phm. 14) and our service (e.g. 1 Pet. 5:2).

Do we serve willingly? Eagerly? Or do we have to be prodded and cajoled? We need a willing heart—a heart that is taken up with the high honor of serving the Lord Jesus.

Without such a heart, we will face several serious

problems. First of all, since God is concerned about our hearts, service that doesn’t come from the heart is defiled service.

Secondly, grudging service is usually more of a hindrance than a help. People who serve under compulsion typically need to be constantly reminded and prodded. Exhorting them ends up taking more time than doing the job oneself. And, because their heart wasn’t in it, the service is often second-rate or incomplete.

Thirdly, it’s a bad testimony—to believers and unbelievers alike. We give the impression that serving the Lord is onerous. But, in fact, *“His commandments are not burdensome”* (1 Jn. 5:3b). Do we leave others with the idea that the Lord is a hard master? Nothing could be further from the truth! His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Mt. 11:30).


Lastly, we’ll find that, without a willing heart, service is unsustainable. We can force ourselves to serve for a little while, but, eventually, we’ll lose heart.

Cultivating a willing heart

Every assembly needs saints who are not only serving, but are eager to serve. Serving the Lord is their passion. They aren’t trying to find the bare minimum that they have to do. They don’t only serve when asked; they *look* for ways to serve.

If we want to have this attitude in our service, let us keep three truths in mind. First of all, we need to grasp what an unspeakable privilege it is to serve the Lord. Many Christians would be honored to directly serve an earthly ruler, but are bored at the thought of serving the King of kings and Lord of lords. This betrays an utter failure to embrace a biblical and heavenly view of life.

We also need to study the example of the greatest Servant of all. The Lord Jesus didn’t serve reluctantly. Not once did He require prodding. Instead, He could say, *“I delight to do Thy will, O My God”* (Ps. 40:8), even though that will meant the unspeakable sufferings of Calvary.

Lastly, love will see us through. Men will endure almost anything to win a bride. Parents will make virtually any sacrifice for their children. If we want to have willing hearts, let us cultivate a love for Christ. 





Apollos

An example to follow

In Acts 18:24-28, we receive a condensed version of nearly all the practical teaching in the book of Acts through the example of a young man who demonstrates for us the character, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry for which every true believer is responsible.

The character of a Christian

Mimicking Apollos's character alone would bring a widespread revival in the knowledge of Christ and a resurgence in the working of the Holy Spirit. Although Apollos was from Alexandria (a city of great orators where he, no doubt, gained some of his eloquence), he stepped out of his comfort zone. He left a refuge from persecution and boldly faced the headquarters of the goddess Diana, the city of Ephesus, with the Word of the true and living God. Apollos's being "mighty in the Scriptures" establishes an example for every believer. All true believers are indwelt by the Holy Ghost who was promised to "guide [us] into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). This truth is found in the Word of God and embodied in Christ. You don't have to know every passage inside out but the believer diligently seeking Christ will search the Scriptures and find that they testify of Him (Jn. 5:39). The outward expression of Apollos's devotion was a fervent spirit—a spirit that boiled over in teaching the things of the Lord. But his zeal was accompanied by carefulness, for it says that he taught the Word diligently. The word for "diligent" has the sense of "with accuracy" or "exactness."

The discipleship of a Christian

In verse 26, we have the notable example of Aquila and Priscilla, the hospitable couple of the New Testament who, earlier in the chapter, took Paul in and would later open their home to a local church. Upon hearing Apol-

los speaking "boldly in the synagogue," they realized that his knowledge was incomplete. Notice here that Apollos, before being fully trained, was still ministering to the saints and evangelizing the lost. The responsibility of discipleship is firstly on the mentor as we see Moses taking Joshua as his servant and Elijah casting his mantle on Elisha. Paul found Timothy in Lystra just as Jesus found and called the twelve to follow him. Aquila and Priscilla didn't just joke around with Apollos at fellowship time after synagogue; "they took him unto them," likely to their home, and invested their lives in him. What a precedent of discipleship we have before us!



"When he had arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace." (Acts 18:27)


The fellowship of a Christian

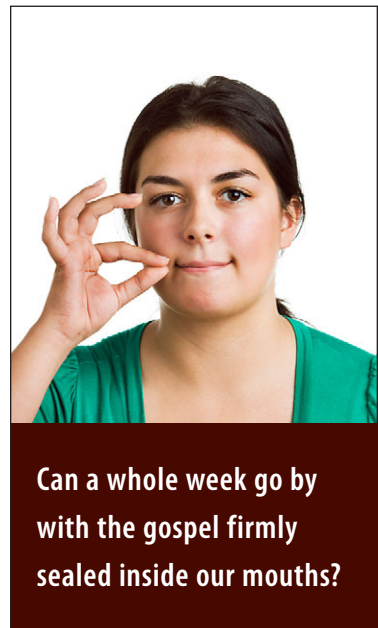
Next we see the proper fellowship of Christians in the inclusiveness of true believers. Having few, if any, sects at that time, it would have been quite arrogant of the believers in that day to avoid fellowship with those whom God had accepted in his Son without a clear, biblical reason. This is just as true for us today. God forbid that we exalt our standard above that of God's! God's criterion for fellowship is not the light we have, but the life we share. Apollos's report from his assembly was confirmed in that "he helped them much which had believed through grace." What is your assembly's report of you? "He shows up most Sundays, but no one really sees much of him throughout the week"? How encouraging to hear instead that a visiting brother or sister is "enthusiastic and fervent about Christ, and will be sure to get involved in people's lives; you're certain to enjoy his fellowship." Of course, we strive to please God

not man, but a consistent testimony among the saints can be an indication of our relationship with the Lord.

The ministry of a Christian

The basis for the whole of Christianity—both what we believe and what we do—is derived from Apollos’s message to the Jews in verse 28 that “Jesus was Christ.” The three ways that Apollos was able to use to “mightily convince the Jews” ought to be mimicked in our lives. Often we need to lay down our apologetics and philosophies and simply present Jesus as Christ. Unbelievers must accept Jesus as such, and there are few better ways than the example of a Christ-like life. Apollos, fervent in spirit, provided this example. If being a Christian were a crime, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Apollos “publicly showed” Jesus was Christ; and because

his life had been changed by Christ, he was constrained to give everyone around him an earful of the gospel. How about us? Can a whole week go by with the gospel firmly sealed inside our mouths? Convincing an unbeliever that Jesus is Christ cannot be done without the Word of God, read by them, to them, or displayed in our lives. The Word is alive with the power to soften hearts. Upon being asked how he defended the Bible, C.H. Spurgeon replied, “I defend the bible as I would defend a lion, I open the cage and let it loose!” Like Apollos, our goal ought to be to know Jesus—the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us—and to make it known that He was and is Christ.  —TRAVIS DEVRIES



Can a whole week go by with the gospel firmly sealed inside our mouths?

FOR YOUR STUDY



TYPES OF HEARTS

 **Positive**

- Willing – Ex. 35:5
- Glad – Deut. 28:47; Isa. 65:14
- Whole – 2 Ki. 20:3; 1 Chron. 28:9; 29:9; 2 Chron. 25:2; Isa. 38:3
- Perfect – 1 Chron. 12:38; 29:19
- Pure – Ps. 24:4; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22
- Clean – Ps. 51:10
- Broken and contrite – Ps. 51:17
- Tranquil – Prov. 14:30
- Joyful – Prov. 15:13; 17:22

 **Negative**

- Cheerful – Prov. 15:15; Eccl. 9:7
- Wise – Eccl. 8:5
- New – Ezek. 18:31; 36:26
- Sincere – Heb. 10:22
- Trembling – Deut. 28:65
- Troubled – 1 Sam. 25:31; Prov. 25:20
- Double – Ps. 12:2
- Perverse – Ps. 101:4
- Proud – Prov. 21:4
- Wicked – Prov. 26:23
- Deceived – Isa. 44:20
- Heavy – Isa. 65:14
- Hardened – Mk. 8:17

 **Related**

- Heart of a line – 2 Sam. 17:10
- Heart of wisdom – Ps. 90:12
- Heart of stone – Ezek. 11:19; 36:26
- Heart of flesh – Ezek. 11:19; 36:26
- Heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience – Col. 3:12

A Broken Heart

Brokenness: The pathway to blessing

Often the Lord will bring us into painful situations to pry us out of the world's grip.

Normally, when something breaks it loses value. For example, a collision decreases the worth of an automobile, and a shattered keepsake is remorsefully discarded as a total loss. Within the physical realm, the laws of nature work to depreciate the value of our possessions, but this is not so in the spiritual realm—in fact, the opposite is true. Scripture poses a number of metaphoric examples to show that, in God's reckoning, objects, and especially people, become more valuable for service after being broken. Each of the following examples testifies of what can be accomplished in the believer's life through brokenness.

To offer acceptable worship

Only days before the Lord would be crucified, Mary took a stone flask of spikenard, broke it open, and anointed the Lord Jesus with its precious contents (Jn. 12:1-11). As the ointment was very costly, some criticized the action as being wasteful, but the Lord was refreshed by her expression of devotion. *"Let her alone; for the day of My burial has she kept this"* (Jn. 12:7). The vessel which contained the spikenard had to be broken to effect worship and the same is true for the believer: *"The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise"* (Ps. 51:17).

To be fruitful

Under his ephod, the high priest wore a blue sleeveless robe which hung down below his knees. Pomegranates, which rattle when dried, and gold bells were to be attached to the bottom hem (Ex. 28:33). The rattling of pomegranates and tinkling of gold bells spoke of Christ's continual intercessory work on behalf of believers before the throne of grace. The result of this ministry enables believers to be fruitful (as typified by the pomegranates which were full of seeds) and to have a clear testimony of Him in the world (as pictured in the pure gold bells). Yet, for the pomegranate to be fruitful, its hard shell had to be broken in order to release its seeds; if no seeds are planted, there will not be any fruit to come. What it was previously ceased to exist in order to experience God's creative power and fruitfulness. The same principle is true for the believer.

To have a testimony

Gideon was to attack a vast host of Midianites with merely 300 men armed only with trumpets and torches (Jdg. 7:9-22). The torches

To know meaning in life

The donkey's colt, which had never been saddled, became instantly broken in the presence of the Lord Jesus (Lk. 19:30). Through brokenness, the colt learned God's purpose for its life and fulfilled it: he was to carry Messiah down the Mount of Olives before a cheering crowd. It is when we are broken before God that we will be able to learn of Him and, like the colt, find true meaning in life: *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (Mt. 11:28-30).



PERFECT IN WEAKNESS *continued*



were to be hidden in jars which were to be broken on command to let the light shine beyond the jars' confines. The trumpets were blown and 300 torches shone brightly on the hillsides. Mass confusion swept the camp of the enemy, so much so that they slaughtered each other. Just as the torches shone forth their light after the jars were broken, the believer's testimony for Christ becomes more intensely brilliant through brokenness.

To be sanctified

Jehoshaphat was a good king, but he had a tendency of associating with wicked people. He aligned himself with evil Ahab to recapture a religious city, and the endeavor almost cost Jehoshaphat his life. Later, he entered into a joint venture with Ahab's son Ahaziah to sail ships to Ophir for gold; however, God would not have His man fraternizing with the enemy, so He *broke up* all the ships (2 Chron. 20:35-37). Because the ships were destroyed, the unnatural union Jehoshaphat had with the world was severed, and Jehoshaphat's only recourse was to draw near to God. Often the Lord will bring us into painful situations to pry us out of the world's grip. God hates worldliness in the believer's life and will take drastic measures to ensure that the believer feels His jealousy (Jas. 4:4).

The lesson posed by these broken items is that the believer must be broken to know meaning in life, to offer true worship, to be fruitful, to have a powered testimony, and to be disillusioned with a corrupt world. Spiritually speaking, God puts a premium on broken things, especially on the brokenness of His people: "*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit*" (Ps. 34:18). Perhaps there is no greater example of this truth than in God's dealings with the patriarch Jacob.

Brokenness in the life of Jacob

One of the most significant events in Jacob's life occurred while en route to Bethel from Padanaram. God had graciously intervened to rescue Jacob from Laban, but now Esau was approaching with 400 armed men. The news of Esau's approach unnerved Jacob (Gen. 32:7). So what did Jacob do? Did he pray or cry out to God for help? No, not at first. Rather, Jacob chose to manage the situation himself and meet imminent danger by his own devices. It was only after Jacob finished his planning that he prayed to God for deliverance. On this matter

of dependency, C. H. Mackintosh writes, "We must be really brought to the end of everything with which self has aught to do; for until then God cannot show Himself. But we can never get to the end of our plans until we have been brought to the end of ourselves."¹

On the eve of confronting Esau, Jacob isolated himself from his family to fret alone. The Lord, incognito, visited Jacob (Hos. 12:3; Gen. 32:32). Apparently, nothing was said, but the Lord initiated a wrestling match with Jacob, and Jacob was obliged to wrestle the unidentified man all night (Gen. 32:24-25). Both the Lord and Jacob desired something from the other. Jacob, nearly 100 years old, wanted a blessing from the Lord. The Lord wanted Jacob to be broken and yielded before Him.

The Lord could have "pinned" Jacob at any time but did not choose to do so. The Lord was patient with Jacob and was willing to wrestle the whole night with him. What was the Lord's purpose in this activity? It was certainly not to defeat or destroy Jacob, but rather to teach him to be yielded and broken before Him. If the Lord has ever wrestled with the reader, it is for the same purpose: to obtain brokenness in order to bless you.

By divine skill, Jacob was crippled, making wrestling very difficult and painful (Gen. 32:32). Jacob, being disabled, resorted to the only tactic he had left, holding on to the Lord with all his might. It was at this moment that Jacob was blessed by God. Jacob had sent his family over the brook Jabbok while he remained on the other side alone. Ironically, Jabbok means "he will empty." Once Jacob's will had been broken and his self-dependence emptied, he became a vessel fit for God's use. That day, Jacob received a new name, Israel, and a new walk, or rather a limp. The pain and the loss of mobility would be a constant reminder that he had wrestled with God and that God had won! The Lord will never harm us, but He may hurt us so that we relinquish control of our lives to Him, the result of which is our fruitfulness and His glory. In closing, let us contemplate Jacob's words to the Lord: "*I will not let thee go*" (Gen. 32:26). Jacob had sought to be alone in misery, but after embracing the Lord, his soul clung to His presence and he was blessed. 🕊

Endnote

1 C. H. Mackintosh, *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1972), p. 122.

Once I was blind, but now I see.

A larger-than-life, true story of redemption.

Every day, we see images of suffering graphically portrayed for us in the media. These stories are often larger-than-life and, for a little while, the world will stop and take notice. We hear of accidents that thrust grief upon unsuspecting families in an instant. We hear of sickness and suicide and bankruptcy. We observe suffering from a distance. But we tend to move on, unaffected, unless we have a personal connection. Now and then, however, we are blessed to enter into and be a part of someone else's journey of faith. We discover that the individuals going through these horrors find a foreign peace—they can sing songs in the night. We get to experience, almost first hand, the abundant consolations of our God, and that He wounds for a purpose...never arbitrarily.

Since last fall, I have been blessed and changed with such an experience, as I have marveled at the faith of a young lady, and have been learning that some larger-than-life stories are taking place right beside us—we just need to be willing to notice.

My name is Kacey. I am 17 years old, and I am struggling with the affects of anorexia nervosa.

I began to write my story to help people understand the dangers and futility of eating disorders. As I wrote, however, it became clear that I could not really explain where I have come from and where I am now, without also including the story of my faith. My faith is as intrinsic to the person I am today as the anorexia that has nearly destroyed me. My faith has brought me hope and security, and I don't think that I could get through my life without God.

I grew up in an ungodly home. I never heard anything about God or Jesus Christ; I didn't know about church. Everything was just corrupt. While I was battling life, a friend was always telling me about the Lord. This girl was always witnessing to me. I chose not to listen. I literally thought she was crazy. It wasn't until I had run out of hope—and steam—that I chose to give her

the time of day. This is the story of my journey to that place of hopelessness and the slow, painful climb out of that pit of despair.

I began gymnastics at age nine and it wasn't long until I began to have thoughts like: "These other girls are so thin"; "I have to be able to fit into my suit and look good"; and "I can't be going to town on the junk foods before my competitions."



Outside the gym, my life was terrible. Mom and Dad never got along. Each time I came home, I would be faced with the same old thing: my parents arguing. My dad became increasingly aggressive. After one episode with him, I suddenly collapsed in my room. I woke up the next morning on a hospital bed, with monitor patches on my chest and my head. I had an IV in each of my hands and could hear a ton of beeping. When I looked over, I saw Mom asleep on the chair. It wasn't until a few hours later that I found out I had dropped into a tonic-clonic seizure the previous night. I was confused; how could that just happen? I was told that my high stress level, mixed with an outrageous blood pressure, was the recipe for this seizure. What I didn't realize then was that these seizures would continue to plague me.

Once this episode calmed itself down, and after a lot of rest, I was able to get back to the gym. Having lost almost 20 lbs from not being able to eat, I received many compliments. It was great. I then started to limit my

GRACE AT WORK *continued*

foods back to strictly fruit and vegetables, and only a bit of meat and carbohydrates at supper.

By the time I was 12 years old, my dad had gotten to the point of physically abusing me; and eventually, one night when I was 13 years old, worse.

After that night, I decided that I didn't care about anyone anymore. I didn't care about what my dad thought; I didn't care about myself or my own body. I felt almost numb and I found my exit (at age 13), in sex, alcohol, and medication.

Later on that year, after a huge blow-up, my parents separated. We never lived with Dad again. Over the next few years, however, I started to slip again. It got to the point at which it didn't matter what I was wearing, or how I was wearing it; the mirror was always showing me someone that I didn't like to see. Every time I stepped in front of it, my head would begin to flood with thoughts. "How can you look like that?" "People are laughing at you!" "You are so ugly!" It didn't matter what I did; I was never happy with myself. I saw only someone who was fat and gross.

I remember the night when I finally realized that I needed Christ. I was left at home with my three-month old sister. I remember sitting on the rocking chair in mom's room, crying, with my little sister screaming away in my arms. I was trying to rock her to sleep. I didn't know how to calm a baby. I didn't even know how to take care of myself. I was praying to this God that I had been hearing about, asking for Him to show me what is real, to show me if this was true. As I was praying out loud in confusion and worry, and rocking my sister, she just started to drift off to sleep. I still don't know if it was God assuring me that He is real or whether it was just a coincidence. All I know is that it was at that very moment I realized I couldn't get anywhere in my own strength.

I decided to accept Christ, and I felt such a strange peace go through me. But I expected things to change instantly. When I didn't see this happening, I gave up. I continued in my sins. I continued to slide back more and more. I didn't realize, however, that God continues the

work He begins, and that even though I had given up, He hadn't.

Eventually, after many more destructive choices, I started to study my Bible and pray and search for healing. I was searching for real peace, for once. I just wanted life to make sense. I wanted something that I had never known before. I wanted to be loved. While I was slowly learning about God, I was still battling with many of the thoughts, attitudes, and fears that had been plaguing me—gradually getting more isolated from the outside world.

At 17 years old, I started to develop the habit of skipping meals. This got completely out of hand and soon turned into drinking mustard water every other day to cause me to throw up, and then into my making myself vomit after every meal that I ate. My body was already weak from my seizures, and so these habits just made things much worse. Eventually, I had a seizure which left me partially blind. Since then, the blindness has become complete.

At 87 lbs, I was diagnosed with a form of anorexia. This disorder weakened my body more, which made my blood pressure rise to extreme numbers, which, in turn, triggered the seizures, that have now left me without sight, organ-damaged, and very weak—often wondering if I will live.

It was a few weeks ago, while talking to a friend, however, that I realized that many of the things that have happened to me were from God. She reminded me of a journal entry I had let her read earlier. About a week before I went blind, I had penciled these words: "God, please help me. I don't want to fall again [referring to my anorexia], but every time I look into a mirror, I am seeing someone I don't like." Not long after that, I had a seizure, and I am now blind. I truly believe that this is God's answer to my prayer. I can no longer see myself in that mirror; I can no longer dislike what I see. Yet in my blindness I can see that God provides and He answers prayer. God is an awesome God. 📌



...God continues the work He begins, and that even though I had given up, He hadn't.

A Whole Heart

“... those who live should live no longer for themselves.”

When God works in our lives, He always starts at the heart.

When we have heart problems physically, we usually go to a specialist, a cardiologist. But there is no better heart specialist than the Lord—the heart’s Maker. He designed the heart to be filled and functioning without interruption. The same is true for what is figuratively referred to as the heart. The heart is considered the center of our being. Therefore, when God speaks to man’s need, He speaks straight to the heart. When God works in our lives, He always starts at the heart.

The heart of the matter

When it comes to the heart, the Bible tells the whole story. In fact, there are nearly a thousand references to the heart in the Bible.

The first reference gets right down to the heart of the matter. What is the matter with our hearts? God says that it is sin. *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen. 6:5).

The second reference to the heart is in the following verse, and it is about the Lord’s heart. *“And the Lord*

was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Gen. 6:6). You might see these two verses, being side by side, as a heart-to-heart talk with God. God’s heart is grieved over the evil of mankind’s heart.

God designed us to respond to Him with a whole heart, with all of our being. No half-hearted attempts will do when it comes to our response to the love and care that God has

shown to us. There are a number of areas that God calls us to step into with all our heart. Let us consider these with heartfelt care.

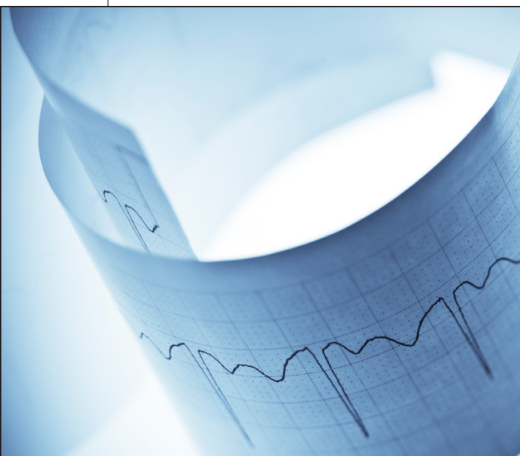
Seek

The first is in regard to seeking a relationship with God. The Lord spoke through Moses and warned His people of their hearts turning away from Him to idols in the years to come. He promised them that, even in a far distant land of idolatry, *“from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul”* (Deut. 4:29). The prophet Jeremiah echoed this promise to Israel. And after they had been in captivity for seventy years in Babylon, a land filled with idols, they sought Him and found Him, and He delivered them out of Babylon and brought them back to the land.

God wants to be found. He did not say to Israel or to us, *“Seek Me in vain”* (Isa. 45:19). He wants us to seek Him sincerely. In the same way, the apostle Paul declared to the people in Athens, a city full of idols, *“that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him”* (Acts 17:27). While we are seeking Him, He is seeking us. We are the ones in hiding.

Love

The second way we are to respond to God with a whole heart is to love Him with all our heart (Deut. 6:5). When asked by one of the scribes which was the greatest commandment of all, the Lord Jesus answered with what is referred to as the *Shema*, *“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength”* (Mk. 12:30).



We are to have an all-out love for Him. I know we fall short of such a calling, but our love for Him can blossom as we learn of His love—the great source of love. As John, the apostle with a heart full of love, wrote, “*We love Him because He first loved us*” (1 Jn. 4:19). Isaac Watts captured the heart of love when he penned the words,

*“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine;
Demands my heart, my life, my all!”*

Service

Thirdly, we are to serve the Lord with all our heart. Moses said it was required: “*And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul*” (Deut. 10:12). In other words, we are to serve the Lord from the heart (Eph. 6:6). Once again, the motivation of our service is love—His love. As the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, “*For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*”

This is seen practically in Paul’s epistle to the believers at Colossae, “*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ*” (Col. 3:23-24). Have you ever wondered what would happen if we conducted our businesses the way we serve the Lord? Would we still be in business? It is worth considering.

Trust


We are to seek, love, and serve the Lord wholeheartedly. But there is more. The wise man said, “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths*” (Prov. 3:5). We are to completely trust the One who is completely trustworthy. In a world of broken promises, be assured that He will never let you down.


Praise

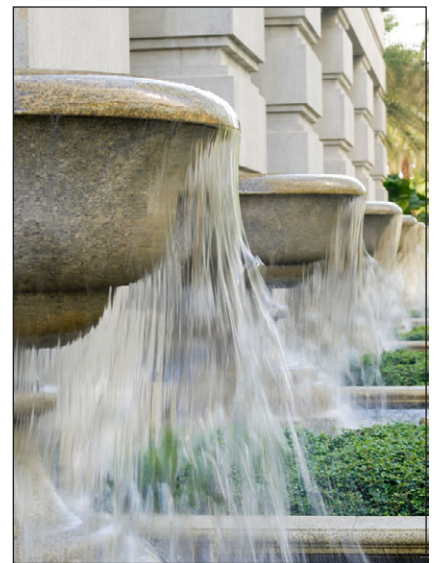
Lastly, we think of the Psalms, and it comes as no surprise to read that we are to praise the Lord with our *whole heart* (Ps. 9:1)—with all of our being. We have much for which to praise the Lord, and the Lord inhabits praise. The psalmist said, “*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed*” (Ps. 57:7). The fixed heart is a steadfast heart. Nothing can move it because it is wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord.

How can I have a whole heart? Fill it up to the full with Christ! He has promised to make His abode in us. Solomon, who was said to have a “perfect heart” (1 Chron. 28:9), said, “*Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built*” (2 Chron. 6:18). But now, wonder of all wonders, Christ lives within our hearts “*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*” (Eph. 3:17, 19).

Do you have a whole heart for Him? The Psalmist tells us the secret in Psalm 45:1: “*My heart is overflowing [bubbling over] with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King.*” As we think of Him and His love and care for us daily, we cannot help but overflow from our hearts with praise for Him. Above all, “*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life*” (Prov. 4:23). In a world that tries to crowd our hearts with everything but Him, we must give Him first place.

The apostle Peter exhorts us to “*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*” (1 Pet. 3:15). If we devote our hearts to Him, others will notice. When they do, just pour out your heart to them—the whole thing! 

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A Pure Heart

“Clean the inside ... that its outside may become clean also.”

“The moral purity of a past generation is now the punch line for late night comedians.”

In a modern world so full of the artificial, and so transformed by the synthetic, we have almost lost an appreciation for the authentic. Society has traded foundational life principles and absolutes for compromise and situational ethics. The moral purity of a past generation is now the punch line for late night comedians. How much more should the words of our Lord stir us as we hear Him say, “*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*” (Mt. 5:8)?

Defining the words

The New Testament uses the word “pure” to describe something that is clean, clear, and without impurities. It speaks of a pure mind and a pure conscience in addition to a pure



heart. Paul, writing to Titus, contrasts that which is pure to that which is defiled (Titus 1:15). The term “pure” is used primarily in the context of morality, rather than physical cleanliness.

How is the word “heart” used in Scripture? Here we have a word which is used more often as a metaphor or simile rather than as referring to the actual organ of the human body. The word is found 833 times in 765 Bible vers-

es, and almost always refers to the inner man, the real you, the core of your being. It is first used in this way in Genesis 6:5 as it describes the moral condition of man’s inner being.

It is in this context that many of our children’s choruses and terminology regarding salvation speak of asking or letting Jesus into our hearts. One might technically find fault with such phraseology, but the concept is sound: the Saviour claims our whole life, the Holy Spirit occupies the temple of the inner man, and “your life is hid with Christ in God.”

After scanning the uses of the word in Scripture, it will become evident that this term is speaking of the center or core of one’s soul. Given that biblical use of the words, we would offer this definition for a pure heart:

Within the core of one’s soul, there are morally clean passions stimulated by a mind that is engaged in clean, wholesome thoughts; together they motivate and shape a person’s whole character and personality, so that his life continues to grow in step with the heart of God.

The foundation of godliness

Notice the Lord’s summation of the first and greatest commandment: “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*” (Mt. 22:37). Here is the pure heart that God so desires from

us. But note, too, the second commandment: “*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*” (Mt. 22:39). Here is the pure heart now at work shaping the whole being and outward character of the person into a life of godliness. Peter may have recalled these words of the Lord when he wrote, “*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love for the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently*” (1 Pet. 1:22).

The prerequisite for worship

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Ps. 24:3-5). God’s desire for us is to have clean, pure hearts (our inner being) and clean, holy hands (our outward life) before we approach Him in worship.

In some circles today, much is made of “lifting up holy hands,” either in prayer, praise, or just being “in touch” with the Holy Spirit. This practice is primarily taken from 1 Timothy 2:8, *“I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”* The term “holy hands” in the Bible speaks of the purity and condition of the heart before God. The root thought is really a heart raised and open (as an open palm) to God. Not literally raised hands, but a life lived openly, clean and clear before God, with nothing to hide—my hands and heart are open and clean before Him. This condition prepares us for worship, as exhorted in 1 Corinthians 11:28. We must examine the cleanliness of our hearts in the light of God’s Word, confessing any sin to Him, making things right with others, and then partaking of the emblems in remembrance of our Lord’s death.


A mind that is pure directs a walk in purity before God. This condition is a prerequisite for entering into the presence of God in worship.

The battleground for men

In 1 Timothy 2:8 quoted above, the word “men” is in the masculine tense. There is a good reason why God singles out the men with this challenge. Knowing the frailties of my own heart as I do, I fear that too many men, as fathers, husband, and even leaders, have an external appearance of righteousness, yet, within the mind, some have been entertaining thoughts of

evil passions and lustful desires. This condition is portrayed in the words of James 1:8, as double-mindedness—*“A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.”* This gap between the outer life and the inner heart will soon be manifested. It will not be hidden for long. Through the Scriptures and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, this unholy breach between mind and body can be healed before the mind casts the body into tragic circumstances, causing heartbreak and sorrow for Christian families and the family of God. If we desire to be men of God with pure hearts, may we open our hands wide in the presence of God and confess to Him the corruption of our minds and the actions of our hands.



“Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.” (Ps. 19:12-14) 

A gap between the outer life and the inner heart will not be hidden for long.

Richmond Retrospective

Blessings: ongoing, outflowing, overwhelming.

The city of Richmond, Kentucky will never be the same. For a little more than three weeks recently the love, grace, and truth of God flowed through its streets and into its homes. Many were touched by it.

Richmond is located about 25 miles south of Lexington and 110 miles southeast of Louisville. Metropolitan Cincinnati, Ohio, sits about 112 miles north of the city.

WHO LIVES IN RICHMOND?

According to the US Census Bureau, the population was 30,008 in 2006 and is expected to be 34,292 by 2010. Richmond is Kentucky's sixth largest city. This is comprised of about 12,000 households within the city limits, about 15,000 if the near environs are included. All of these homes received a pack of literature in the first five days of the "Good News! Richmond" outreach.

The racial makeup of the city is given as 88% White, 9% African American, 0.29% Native American, and 1% Asian, with a mix of other ethnic groups in small

although these numbers may be somewhat skewed by the presence of Eastern Kentucky University. For example, about 32% of the population is in the age category from 18 to 24, and another 27.5% from 25 to 44.

The median income for a household in the city was \$25,533, and the median income for a family was only \$36,222. About 17% of families and 25.0% of the population are listed as below the poverty line.

Statistics aside, those we met behind the doors and on the streets of Richmond were the kind of people Jesus came to save: captives to sin, those crushed by the sorrows of life, and many who were broken-hearted.

LOOKING FOR VENUES

The Christians of Bluegrass Bible Fellowship have an efficient building, two units in a commercial strip just off the interstate. It was suitable for the first and third weeks (door hanging and follow-up) but we were able to secure the use of a meeting room at a local hotel for most of the middle week, including the special evening sessions with brother Joe Reese (ON).

The city has numerous parks, the most prominent being Lake Reba Recreational Complex. There the local believers rented a large outdoor pavilion for us that overlooked the water. Our lunches were served there. Other parks were ideal for various kids clubs held throughout the week; some of these continue.

The downtown business district consists mostly of Victorian-style structures. There was not a great deal of foot traffic in the CBD, but Joe Reese received permission from the city to park his "Never Thirst Again" water concession trailer there, right in front of the municipal building. He was able to distribute almost all the water he had, except what he would distribute going home.

We also used a hall in the Richmond Area Arts Council downtown for a special luncheon for the ladies. About 45 of our own ladies were joined by about 50 women from the community for a gospel presentation from the life of Corrie Ten Boom given by Vickie Gaynier (OH) followed by a meal. Many good contacts resulted from this event.



Prayer magnets were given out as part of a gospel packet.



Daily lunches together at Lake Reba were a good time to fellowship and share stories.

numbers. Hispanic or Latino of any race are 1.21% of the population. I think those on the gospel team would agree that we were warmly received by almost everyone.

The stats show that Richmond tends to be poorer, whiter, and younger than the rest of Kentucky, on average,

WHO CAME TO “GOOD NEWS RICHMOND”?

Believers from across the U.S. and Canada (even a few faithful brothers from Ireland!) joined the Good News on the Move team as they linked arms with the assembly in Richmond. The Lord provided happy and eager workers, some who came from as far as Oregon on the west and Newfoundland on the east, as well as from MT, CO, WI, SD, NC, SC, ON, NY, GA, and many other places (even Ireland!).

The few families that comprise the assembly were heroic in their efforts, and we trust you will continue to pray for them as they press on in this vigorous work. Brothers Larry Sax (SD) and Jerry Denny (NC), among others gave help in the extensive planning necessary.



A group photo taken during the second week

WHAT NOW?

Elders Jim Harmon and John Frasher wrote:

It is with deep love and appreciation for each of you that we want to express our gratefulness for your efforts in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ here in Richmond, KY. Many of you came from all over the USA, Canada, and Ireland out of devotion to our Savior to share His love with the lost of our city. Others of you couldn't be here in person, but stood shoulder to shoulder with us before the throne of grace. What a privilege to see your prayerfulness, perseverance, and zeal for our Lord in sowing the seed! Thank you for giving, giving, and giving for His honor and glory. We were tremendously blessed to see the Lord's work in and through you. The Lord Jesus Christ is worthy!

We just said “good-bye” to the last of the laborers who stayed an extra week after follow-up week, in order to reach the nearly 300 contacts that were made during the “Good News, Kentucky” outreach. The surge greatly impacted people in Richmond. Some of the original contacts have led to others and we are seeing a rippling effect of the gospel. Bible studies are being established with interested individuals. So far these have been “one-on-one” Bible studies with men, women, and two couples who have not studied the Bible before and are reluctant to join in a group study with others. Pray that these will come to know the Lord through His Word.

Many of you may remember Raphael, a new Spanish speaking believer who is hungry for the Word and faithful to meet with the believers. He is full of questions and continues in discipleship studies with the brethren. Pray for him as he is also being bombarded by a JW friend and others. Another Spanish-speaking lady, Maria, has trusted the Lord as her Savior and brought her three children to meetings on Sunday. We are also continuing on with the children's work in three areas of the city. These have been well attended.

Please pray with us that the Lord will bring us to individuals He has prepared. After return visits and phone calls, we are still not getting in touch with some of those who were initially contacted during the outreach. Pray that all obstacles will be overcome in bringing the Light to those who live in darkness.

The Lord has done above and beyond what we could possibly ask or think. We value your constant prayer support for all He is doing and for the assembly of believers as we continue follow up. Again, we are grateful for your labor of love for our Savior and the encouragement you have been to us.

*On Behalf of Bluegrass Bible Fellowship
With love in Christ Jesus our Lord,
JIM HARMON & JOHN FRASHER*



For more photos from the outreach efforts in Richmond, please visit: www.uplook.org/bbf

To send a word of encouragement, email the saints at: bbf@goodnewsnow.info



www.neverthirstagain.com

A Sound Heart

Submitting to the truth

“The healthy or sound-hearted Christian is not a finished product...but he is working towards being as much like Christ as he can possibly be.”

“A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.”

The will, the intellect, and the emotions—the very core or heart of man—is fallen. One need not turn very many pages in Scripture to find that truth implicit, but Scripture is repeatedly explicit on the matter as well. A single one of many verses will serve: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9)

As a consequence of our desperately wicked hearts, we should expect that the natural man will be marked by three distinct problems and that even the mature Christian will continue to occasionally wrestle with the old nature in any (or perhaps all) of the three areas that compose the inner life:

- a corrupted will that stubbornly resists truth
- a clouded intellect that struggles to comprehend truth
- conflicted emotions that encourage distortion of the truth

Our verse in Proverbs 14:30 references a sound heart; and, when it does so, it implies a desirable healthiness or a wholeness of the inner life; a soundness that is evident when the will, the intellect, and the emotions of a person

are all in full submission to the revealed will and Word of God. For our prime example of a sound heart and a fully-submitted inner life, we turn to the Lord Jesus Himself.

Perfectly sound

There is a full submission of His own will in Christ’s words to the disciples in John 4:34: “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.”

There is full intellectual submission in John 8:28 in Christ’s words to the Jews: “I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”

There is full emotional submission in Luke 22:42 in Christ’s words to His Father: “Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.”

In submitting Himself to the Father, Christ had no internal sin nature with which to wrestle; Christ’s will, intellect, and emotions were peerless and uncorrupted. It is striking, then, that His claims do not rely on His own demonstrable internal perfection; that while, unlike us, He could have done so, He made no appeal and no boast of His own flawless inner man. Instead, His claims are the words of a Man whose inner life was in full submission to the Father at all times. If the One who could have relied on His own flawless emotions, intellect, and will consistently refused to do so but instead submitted all to the Father, what excuse remains for us who wrestle daily with the sickness of our own hearts but continually resist the same full submission?

Partially sound?

If we should demand more than the example of full submission that the Lord Jesus provides in His life, we can turn to the words of direct instruction on the matter: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” (Prov. 3:5f)



UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT *continued*



Note please that partial submission—like its oxymoronic partners partial obedience and partial commitment—is of dubious benefit and worth. We need to acknowledge Him in all our ways and with all our hearts; this is the path of the sound heart. There is no promise of benefit suggested in our passage for those who occasionally or partially acknowledge God in their walk. Despite the clarity of Scripture on the matter, the problems we face in our homes, in our local assemblies, and in our broader fellowship are all too often clearly related to a brother's or sister's failure to fully submit some aspect or aspects of his inner life to the will and Word of God.

In the physical realm, there are countless examples of otherwise healthy men and women who died as a result of a tiny and perhaps undetected flaw in a single internal system, leaving an otherwise viable body in the grave. The same idea can be observed at work in the spiritual realm: we've likely all seen the Christian who has an admirably fully-formed and appropriate intellectual grasp of a particular doctrine but who has been utterly derailed by a willful or emotional resistance to the practical application of that doctrine in his own life. "I know I should forgive them, but I just can't" or "I know it's not great; that's just how I am"—and other similar phrases—are the words of self. They are the words of a conflicted inner life that is only partially yielded to the will of God. Whatever else they may be, they are most certainly not the words of full-hearted submission. A sound heart—a healthy inner life with all its related benefits and promises—mandates complete submission in the will, the intellect, and the emotions contemporaneously; anything less will not serve.

Of course, we all understand that full health or soundness—physical or spiritual—is usually a relative term, not an absolute. With the notable example of Christ aside, when we describe someone as healthy or sound, we do not intend to suggest they are flawless, but rather that they are free from any major issues of concern and that their general trend over time is in a healthy direction. Just so, the healthy or sound-hearted Christian is not a finished product—especially in his own estimation!—but he is working towards being as much like Christ as he can possibly be. This will necessarily mean an ongoing spirit of submission that is renewed humbly and daily.

Increasingly sound

In practice, for each of us who are part of the ongoing process of becoming more and more healthy, more sound-hearted, more Christ-like, this will mean three things:

When we find ourselves in the unhappy position of understanding and approving a scriptural doctrine but not having implemented it in our daily walk (and we will certainly find ourselves in that position from time to time), we will repent before the Lord in prayer, submit our stubborn will for correction, and set our guards against such indolence in future. The sound heart is always searching for additional opportunity to break the stubbornness of our self-seeking will.

Secondly, when we encounter scriptural teaching which contradicts that which the world teaches and confounds our intellect, our default position will be acceptance of scriptural teaching over the world's instruction. This is not to suggest for a moment that the Christian position is anti-intellectual at all; there is a worthwhile and strong intellectual defense to be made of every biblical teaching including such "controversial" subjects as the resurrection, the virgin birth, and the creation record of Genesis. What it simply means is that when we encounter areas about which there is a seeming disagreement between God's Word and man's transient beliefs, we will begin humbly with the understanding that God's Word is correct to the last detail.

Thirdly, when we discover scriptural instruction against which we have a visceral emotional response (and we will most certainly discover such things if we are faithfully reading), we will not wait until our emotions concur with Scripture before implementing God's instructions. That could hardly be called submission, after all! When the Word of God and our emotions disagree, the true disciple of Christ will suppress an emotional response in favor of the implementation of Scripture. In doing so, we will be cultivating a sound heart and bringing our emotional life into conformity with God's plan, rather than twisting God's Word to suit our ephemeral, cultural preferences.

A healthy, sound inner life is God's will and pleasure for each of us. May we find ourselves eagerly seeking further submission to Christ's example and leading. 🕊

"A sound heart... is evident when the will, the intellect, and the emotions of a person are all in full submission to the revealed will and Word of God."

After God's Own Heart

Does my heart work like His?

"We need to submit and funnel all our energies into a oneness of pursuit and focus."

Most of us will recognize the title topic as a description of David, as recorded in 1 Samuel 13:14. Paul also makes reference to it in Acts 13:22, and this is perhaps even more instructive to us as we endeavor to understand the heart we are to have as believers: *"And when He had removed [Saul], He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all My will.'"*

Saul and David are pictures of the unbeliever and the believer, respectively. Saul made decisions according to pride, fleshly needs, fear, and self-interest. David usually made decisions according to humility, spiritual needs, faith, and God's interests.

What is encouraging about the label given to David is that God is the one who gave it.

This was His assessment of David. That reminds us of Christ's analysis of the heart of Peter and the other sleeping disciples, when He said, *"The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"* (Mt. 26:41). David committed many sins which stand out to us. But the greater volume of evidence (especially in the Psalms) shows the man that God saw. The real David knew his place before a sovereign God and very much valued the work of redemption that only God could do in his soul. He was a man who was not caught up in religious expression of his beliefs, but in "a broken and contrite heart" that he could entrust by faith to the One who loved him very much. His prayers were interactive with a very personal God.

This is the kind of person the Lord Jesus spoke about in John 4: someone who worships *"in spirit and in truth"* (v. 24). Such a person finds worship, praise, and thanks to be natural, since *"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"* (Mt. 12:34).

A possession

God, in His infinite wisdom, knows that trials and pressures are excellent ways to reveal our hearts. When Samuel announced to Saul God's rejection of him as king and His choosing of someone else, Saul's lack of obedience was the stated reason. The immediate context was the presumptuous act of Saul to offer a sacrifice, due to his fear and pride. He was seeking God's blessing rather than God Himself. The pressures of leadership and enemies created a stress level that Saul couldn't handle. And it revealed his ungodly heart.

David, on the other hand, was characterized by an apparently supernatural peace during the storms that assailed him. When enemies closed in, or even his family turned against him, he sought the Lord. He didn't demand that his circumstances change; rather he wanted to know God's mind on the matter. He wanted to live according to God's heart.

Saul wouldn't wait; he just didn't have the faith to do so. His solutions were according to human reasoning. But we are stunned by David's thinking. Which of us, if we were in David's sandals, tired and sore from being hounded and hunted by our enemies, would have spared the life of our enemy when he was apparently given right into our hands (cf. 1 Sam. 24 & 26). David felt guilty for even cutting part of Saul's cloak! Why? Because he would rather wait for the Lord to vindicate him than to have immediate self-vindication.



PLEASING HIM *continued*

In David's example, we see that we are to be "according to" God's heart. There is to be an agreement between our heart and His. In fact, we are to count ourselves dead and to embrace the new creation that we are in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Much of our frustration as Christians comes from the balancing act we try to maintain between our old nature and the new. The secret is to live as much as possible according to God's own heart. Hear the words of God through Jeremiah: "And they shall be My people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, ...that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:38-40).

This is also the kind of mindset the Lord Jesus was prescribing when He called us to take up His yoke and learn from Him since He is "meek and lowly of heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls" (Mt. 11:29). We often get obsessed with knowing what work we are to be doing once the yoke is on rather than doing whatever work it is with the heart and attitude of Christ. Since the flesh fights the spirit, we must always take the learner mode in order for our Master to teach us whatever we need to know so that His will can be accomplished.

God knew the result of choosing such a man as David "which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22). People who possess the heart of God are people who seek and accomplish the will of God. As always, this is best seen in the Lord Jesus (Jn. 8:29; 10:30; Isa. 53:10).

A pursuit

We have noted that "after" God's own heart can mean "according to," in that we possess or function from a heart that works like His. Yet it is also true that David sought God's heart, much like a thirsty deer in pursuit of the water that will satisfy it (Ps. 42:1). Such is the evidence of genuine saving faith (Php. 3:8; Jn. 15:8; Col. 1:10-12; Heb. 12:1-2; Rom. 8:13-14; Lk. 9:23-24).

God wants to be sought out; He wants us to take Him and His ways seriously and to pursue them. And He delights to be found by us and to reveal the intimacies of His heart to those

who commit their own heart purely to Him (Jer. 29:13; Lam. 3:25; 2 Tim. 2:22; Prov. 3:32).


Again, many of the frustrations in our Christian walk come from seeking to do things for God rather than living our life by God. We are to walk in Christ. Although believers possess the heart of the Lord through the indwelling Spirit, we need to submit and funnel all our energies into a oneness of pursuit and focus, as the Spirit conforms us to the image of Christ, in order to bring glory to the Father.

Do we profess to be believers? If so, what difference does that make in our lives? What priorities can others see in our lifestyle? More importantly, what testimony would God Himself give if He were to tell others about us? Would He say, "These are people who are after My own heart"?

Saul failed because of fear and pride; David succeeded because of faith and humility. Saul

couldn't take his eyes off himself or his circumstances; David's eyes were always drawn back to the Lord, even when he failed miserably. It was all rooted in the heart. David wasn't perfect, but he was still an excellent

example. Let's close this brief study by hearing from the overflow of his heart:

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple....When Thou didst say, 'Seek ye My face'; my heart said unto Thee, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek'....Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." (Ps. 27:4, 8, 14) 



God wants to be sought out; He wants us to take Him and His ways seriously and to pursue them.



Who of us finds it easy to get down? Is it a surprise, then, that to “condescend to men of low estate” is the antithesis of our modern connotation of what it means to be condescending?

Endnotes

- 1 *A History of the Brethren*, William Blair Neatby; Hodder and Stoughton, 1902, p. 23.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 *Brother Indeed: The Life of Robert Cleaver Chapman*, John Ritchie.

Condescending

Making the lowly feel at home is Christlike ministry.

At present there is a “fabulous family home” in Dublin South Center selling for just 7,500,000 euros (about \$10.25 million U.S.). With a mere million-and-a-quarter down, said family would only have a nine million dollar mortgage! Described as “a stunningly elegant and meticulously appointed Georgian residence on the quiet and sunny south side of Fitzwilliam Square,” at Number 24, it isn’t far from Number 9, once the fashionable home of Francis Hutchinson. There, in November of 1829, a small group of believers began gathering regularly in the drawingroom for the Lord’s Supper, prayer and the study of God’s Word. They were all landed gentry, some of them owning large estates themselves.

But as the truth they were discovering ran over the wall, it also bore fruit among the lower class. The believers realized that their place of meeting would be uncomfortable to those not accustomed to such rich surroundings. Edward Cronin wrote: “We soon began to feel as humbler brethren were added to us that the house in Fitzwilliam Square was unsuited. This led us to take a large auction room in Aungier Street for our use on the Sundays...”¹

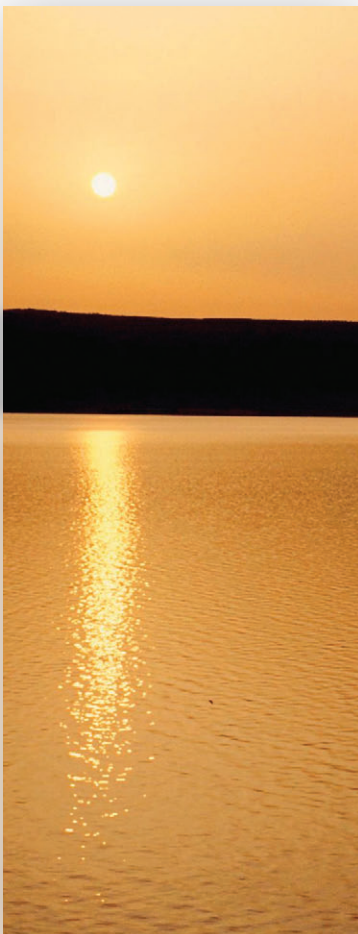
What an illustration of the principle expressed to the Roman saints: “*Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate...*” (Rom 12:16). My dictionary defines “condescending” as “displaying an attitude of patronizing superiority.” But the word “conscend” expresses the Greek word *sunapago* which occurs just three time in the New Testament. Apart from this reference, it is translated “*carried away*” (Gal. 2:13) and “*led away*” (2 Pet 3:17), both with a negative connotation. But J. N. Darby thought that idea was closer to the meaning, and so translated the verse, “*Have the same respect one for another, not minding high things, but going along with the lowly.*” In other words, think about how they feel, and rather than expecting them to fit in with your lifestyle, move in their direction instead.

Francis Newman wrote this description of Darby: “Every evening he sallied forth to teach in the cabins, and roving far and wide over mountain and amid bogs was seldom home before midnight...The poor Romanists...looked on him as a genuine saint...The stamp of heaven seemed to them clear in a frame...so superior to worldly pomp, and so partaking in all their indigence...That a dozen such men would have done more to convert all Ireland... than the whole apparatus of the Church Establishment was ere long my conviction...”²

In describing another saint of that time, R.C. Chapman, Frank Holmes said: “After Mr. Chapman had lived for a time in Barnstaple, he took a house in New Buildings. His idea was to...live amongst the poor....Its cottages were very small and simple. Strange odours sometimes assailed the nostrils of its inhabitants, for beyond the end wall there was a tan-yard. All this presented a contrast to the circumstances in which Chapman had lived in London... He afterwards said that at his conversion he knew that pride was likely to be his besetting sin, so he presently went to the town where he had on occasions driven in a carriage and pair with coachmen and footman...and there lived in a workman’s cottage in a side street. ‘My pride never got over it,’ was his typical comment.”³ May the Spirit show us how to do this in our day: condescending—*going along with the lowly*—without being condescending.

When a Word was Not Enough

BY EUNICE FREE



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

Four simple Words proceeded from the lips of God the Son,
Four Words of true authority—darkness was overcome.

"And He said, '...Sarah thy wife shall have a son.'

...Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age..."

Again His Words of power were all that circumstance required;
The heir of promise soon was born, the son so much desired.

"He said unto the sea, 'Peace, be still.' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

His Words this time brought questioning, " "

What man might this Man be,

A Man who speaks dominion over wind and over sea?"

"He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.'

And he that was dead came forth."

What? Can His Word be even supreme over one beyond life's reach?

Yes, the Son of God omnipotent binds death with human speech.

"And the remnant were slain with the sword... which proceeded out of His mouth."

This One who is called "Faithful," "True," will be revealed to all;

"The Word of God" will simply speak—His enemies will fall.

Yes, all that God the Son has willed was done by but a Word;

He simply spoke—creation acted, did just what it heard.

And all on the horizon, still to come in days ahead,

Will come about by His command, by all that He has said.

Yet consider: "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

"The Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

*"O Jerusalem,...how often would I have gathered thy children together,...
and ye would not!"*

"O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me..."

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

At one time in history, His Word did not suffice;

He left His throne, came down to earth, and offered up His life.

For man's redemption had a price tag none but He could pay;

Blood had to flow from veins of man—a greater Man than they.

The God of all the universe whose power must be obeyed

Knew just what He was doing as they laid Him in the grave.

This once, a Word was not enough; instead, He had to "DO"—

Can any love be greater than this love bestowed on you?