

UPLOOK

NOVEMBER 2006

Assess the Need • Catch the Vision • Take the Challenge

**MEN WITH
CLEAR
PRIORITIES**
Jack Spender

**THE STATE OF
THE FLOCKS**
Mike Attwood

**WHY ARE
ELDERS
NECESSARY?**
Donald Norbie

Where is your Pastor?



**WORKING WITH & CARING FOR
THE FLOCK OF GOD**



It's tempting to say, "We don't have one." Tempting, but wrong.

Where is Your Pastor?

What should we say?

“Where is your pastor?” If your church is seeking to follow the New Testament pattern for leadership, this is a question you’re likely to hear again and again. How should we answer it?

I’ll never forget my first time at the breaking of bread. I’d grown up in a church system where all eyes were fixed on the one man who was front and center, governing every aspect of the meeting. So, at about the ten-minute mark of that first Lord’s Supper, when I realized that there was no plan—no order of service, no man in control—I panicked. Not for me, you understand. But for all those poor Christians. Surely this was going to be a disaster! Without someone in charge, the meeting would be chaos! At the time, it didn’t occur to me that if this meeting spiraled into catastrophe every week, the believers probably wouldn’t still be doing it. And so, I watched with increasing wonder as the meeting progressed—decently, and in order—without a man to plan or direct it. That was my introduction to New Testament church order.

My problem was that I had become accustomed to having one man directing the activities of the church, and I simply couldn’t conceive of a meeting that wasn’t controlled by such a person. Of course, this misunderstanding extends well beyond the way a local church’s meetings are conducted. Common practice and teaching have conditioned the modern Christian to take for granted that a church is led by one man.

When we turn to the New Testament, however, we find a different design: a plurality of leaders. The apostolic pattern was to have “elders in every church” (Acts 14:23).

In our day, the word “pastor” has taken on a formal, ecclesiastical meaning. But the Greek word for “pastor” (*poimen*) is simply the word for “shepherd,” which is how it is translated 17 out of the 18 times it occurs in the New Testament. While there might be shepherds in a local church who are not elders, it is the elders who are primarily charged with the task of shepherding. When Paul gave his farewell address to the elders at Ephesus, he charged them to “*shepherd the church of God*” (Acts 20:28). And when Peter addressed the elders among his readers, he passed on the identical command: “*shepherd the flock of God*” (1 Pet. 5:1). An elder without a shepherd’s heart is as out of place as an evangelist who doesn’t care for the gospel.

Therefore, saying that we don’t have a pastor is misleading. It’s true that we don’t have a pastor in the officious, religious sense that the word has acquired in the years since the New Testament was written. But, hopefully, in the biblical sense of the word, we have several pastors. These elders serve together, with equal authority, to shepherd the church.

But there is a second reason that it is wrong to say we don’t have a pastor. It’s wrong because every church has one glorious Shepherd. And what a Shepherd He is! He is the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd.

It turns out that there is one Man in control of the church. There *is* one Man front and center to govern every aspect of the meeting. We really do have a Pastor!

U P L O O K

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NEW LIFE IN HIM *From seed planting to fruit growing*

Eternal Security

Safe and sure!

On July 28, 2006, my mother, Vivian Carol Horn, died in her sleep and, according to the promise of 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, immediately entered the presence of the Lord. The obituary she prepared years in advance of her death read like this:

At the age of 16, she came to realize that she was a sinner for whom Jesus died. From a God who cannot lie, she accepted His death on the cross, and nothing else, for her sins. He was the One who loved her and gave Himself for her. This was the most important decision of her life.

My mother's life is secure in the Saviour's hand. I can say this with absolute certainty based on the precious words of John 10:27-30 which simply, yet clearly, outline the believer's eternal security in Christ. In these verses, Christ reveals Himself as the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep, and further details exactly how safe the Christian is in His hands.

My sheep... In this passage, the shepherd is the Saviour who "giveth His life for the sheep" (v. 11). The sheep are people from both Jews and Gentiles who have trusted in the Good Shepherd for salvation (vv.9, 11, 27).

Hear my voice... Hearing is a reference to believing. In verse 24, unbelieving Jews said, "If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly," to which Christ replied, "I told you, and ye believed not." Their unbelief, not an auditory problem, kept them from salvation.

And I know them... When a person becomes a Christian, he is known by the Saviour and becomes a son of God (Jn. 1:12; Rom 8:14-17). This relationship cannot be severed. God remains our Father even when we sin (1 Jn. 2:1). The Holy Spirit is the seal—the guarantee—of adoption by God, and, although our sin grieves Him, it cannot break this divine seal (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 5:5).

I give... God's standard of holiness requires absolute perfection. To slip in any one area of His Law brings

condemnation as a law-breaker (Jas. 2:10). Man's ability to save himself by obeying the Law has a 100% failure rate (Rom. 3:10-20). So God offers salvation as a free gift—because we could never earn it (Rom. 6:23). Fur-


thermore, since our salvation is not obtained by good things we do, it cannot be lost by bad things we do. (Rom. 3:24; 4:5; 5:17; 6:23; 11:6; Gal. 2:16; Eph 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9).

Eternal life...they shall never perish...

Scripture uses words such as "eternal," "everlasting," and "never perish" to describe the believer's salvation (Jn. 6:40; Heb. 9:12). If we could lose our salvation, then, by definition, it would not be eternal. Eternal life is received at conversion, as John 3:36 illustrates:

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life." This life is everlasting. There should be no confusion.

And they follow me... Genuine believers will be followers of Christ. The new believer's life is miraculously created unto good works (Eph. 2:9). "If verses" such as 1 Cor. 15:2; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:14, 6:6; and 1 John 1:7 are sprinkled throughout the New Testament, stimulating groups of professing believers to re-examine the reality of their profession of faith. The question is this: If you're not acting like a Christian, why aren't you? Professing Christians are either struggling with sin as a believer, or worse, have never trusted Christ at all! True believers are followers of Christ and will bear fruit that shows their obedience to Him.

My mother's life bore testimony to the Good Shepherd who kept her in His hand until she could see Him face to face. I look forward to meeting her again—and soon! *"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* (1 Thes. 4:16-17).  —RANDY HORN



Workers & Elders Conf.

Westside Bible Chapel, Wichita, KS. Oct 10-12, 2006



Each year a growing number of active Christians are realizing that you don't need to be a recognized elder or a full time preacher to enjoy the general sessions and seminars at these conferences. The evening meetings were attended by two hundred and fifty to three hundred believers, filling the main auditorium. One hundred and thirty five workers and/or elders attended from 28 states, excluding Kansas. There were 38 from cities in Kansas, 63 from Wichita who attended and 7 travelled to the conference from Canada. The highlight of each day were the morning prayer sessions where concerns and conquests from across the continent were brought before the Throne of Grace. The general topic was "Stewardship" with Brother Mike Attwood giving the morning Bible teaching each day on being stewards of the grace of God. Other speakers included John Bjorlie, David Cetola, Scott Degroff, David Dunlap, George Farber, Bill Feiss, Charles Fizer, Bobbie Heller (ladies' seminar), John Heller, Warren Henderson, Mark Kolchin, Jim McCarthy, Steve Price, and Lee Weber. The book table, courtesy of Walterick Publishing Ministries, was well stocked with excellent resources. The messages and seminars are available as MP3's on one CD for \$10.00. When ordering, please provide your full mailing address.

Contact: Darold Peters, 4420 W 11th St N, Wichita KS 67212 email: darold.peters@cox.net Tel: 316-943-3334

CAMP IROQUOINA RETREAT SCHEDULE

Dec 14-17 • Staff Retreat

Dec 30-Jan 1 • College/Career

Jan 12-14 • Junior High #1

Jan 26-28 • Junior High #2

WHAT WILL BE YOUR LEGACY?

Salem Acres Bible Camp, Elnora, AB will host the 2007 Men's Retreat Jan 12 -13. Craig Funston will speak on the theme "Passing on our Convictions to the next Generation." The retreat begins 8 PM Friday. Saturday sessions start at 9:30 AM. Cost for the weekend is \$55. **Contact:**

Ralph Kirchhofer 250-348-2059

web: www.salemacres.ca

email: Gospel@uniserve.com

FOCUS CONFERENCE

Northside Bible Chapel, 4510 E. 61st North, Wichita, KS will host the annual FOCUS Young Adult Conference Feb 16-18. The scheduled speaker is Joe Reese (ON). **Contact:** Randy Horn 316-832-9756

Tom Goodson 316-744-3977

email: thmsgdsn@yahoo.com

HOLIDAY, FL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Holiday Gospel Assembly in Holiday, FL is pleased to announce their annual Bible Conference on Friday evening and all day Saturday, Feb 16- 17. Speakers expected, in the will of the Lord, are Brian Gunning (ON) and Ross Ragland (MO). The theme of the conference is "Old Testament Prophecies in View of Current Events." **Contact:** Lee Capiello 727-845-4572

email: ecapiello@tampabay.rr.com

RAMSEUR, NC BIBLE STUDY

Ramseur and Randleman Gospel Chapels will host the "Back to the Book" study one Saturday each month until May, except Dec. Lord willing, Randy Amos, Larry Price, Mike Attwood, Warren Henderson and Jim McKendrick are scheduled to speak. Also, three Ramseur/

Randleman men are continuing with a class. **Contact:** Mike Moody 336-824-5525

Ramseur Gospel Chapel,
PO Box 1259, Ramseur, NC 27316
email: mcjmoody@yahoo.com

OZARK FAMILY CAMP

Ozark Family Camp hosts three separate weeks of family camp each year from late July to mid-August at Turkey Hill Ranch Bible Camp in Missouri. The camps are a great source of fellowship with other believers and spiritual encouragement. There is no set fee for the camp but rather it is provided on a donation basis. To be put on the mailing list to receive a brochure and registration form in the spring, contact Dan Moffitt at danmoffitt@sbcglobal.net or 918-744-6484.

NEW ASSEMBLY IN CALGARY, AB

A group of believers seeking to gather unto the Name of the Lord Jesus

FRONT LINES *continued*

The lake at Galilee Bible Camp is one of many beautiful spots to enjoy at their facility.



Christ alone have formed a new assembly in Calgary, AB. The Good News Bible Chapel meets in the Scandinavian Centre located at 20th Ave & 7th St NW. Lord's Day meetings are: Breaking of Bread at 10 AM followed by Sunday School and Bible Reading at 11:15 AM. Midweek meeting is Monday at 7 PM. Those of like faith in the Calgary area and those visiting Calgary are heartily welcome. **Contact:** Brent Rawlings Good News Bible Chapel, PO Box 64328, 5512-4 Street NW, Calgary, AB T2K 6J1, Canada 403-619-2816 goodnews@goodnewsbiblechapel.org web: www.goodnewsbiblechapel.org

HORSE LAKE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

The assembly meetings of Horse Lake Christian Fellowship in 100 Mile House, BC are now convened at a new location - the Good News Center, 5827 Horse Lake Road, 100 Mile House, BC V0K 2E3. **Contact:** Don Street email: don.street@shawbiz.ca

INTEREST IN FLORIDA

A couple with an Assembly background is interested in contacting like-minded believers to establish, in the Lord's will, an Assembly in central Palm Beach County, FL. **Contact:** John Schmidt 561-793-8411 or cell 561-262-4237 email: jfs2@bellsouth.net

ASSEMBLY CLOSURE IN TEXAS

Believer's Bible Chapel in Georgetown, TX is no longer functioning. It has met for some time mostly in the home of the Meschkat's, and there has been a true spirit of unity, but changes have come which make

closure clear to all. Edwin (Ed) and Mary Ellen Meschkat believe He is leading them to their former sphere of service in Lubbock TX, where they spent nearly 22 years.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Virginia

Bethel Bible Camp, Woolwine VA is in need of an experienced Camp Director and an experienced Maintenance Mechanic. Committed men desiring to labor for the Lord are requested to consider these positions. **Contact:** Bethel Campgrounds Inc., PO Box 71, Woolwine VA 24185 email: BethelBibleCamp@swva.net 276-930-2201

California

The Western Assemblies Home, a retirement care facility located in Claremont, CA, has need for a retired man or couple desiring to serve the Lord as the priority in their lives. His responsibilities would include maintenance and gardening. If a couple, she could assist the kitchen staff, if experienced, or help with other needs of the Home. Accommodations could be made available. Claremont Bible Chapel is just a block away. **Contact:** Lynn Hughes, Administrator Western Assemblies Home, 350 Berkeley Ave, Claremont, CA 91711 email: wahoffice@verizon.net Ph. 909-626-3711 Fax 909-626-4493

Ontario, Canada

Galilee Bible Camp in eastern Ontario is looking for a Facility Manager. This is a full time position, with the primary responsibilities being year round property management and

facilities maintenance. For more information about this position, contact the camp at 613-432-5774 or inquiries@galileebiblecamp.on.ca Please pray with us, asking the Lord to help us meet this area of need in our ministry.

COMMENDATIONS

Jenny Lowe

The believers at Brookfield Bible Chapel, Brookfield MO, wish to announce the commendation of Jenny Lowe to the work of the Lord in Mozambique. Jenny has spent the last four years studying language and tribal cultures in preparation for this work.

Jenny grew up at Brookfield Bible Chapel and has shown real love for the Lord and a desire to serve Him. Those at Brookfield heartily commend Jenny and request your prayers as she plans to depart for Mozambique in 2007.

Dave and Anne Spearing

The McLeod Hill Assembly in Fredrickton, NB, Canada announces the commendation of Dave and Anne Spearing to the Lord's work. The Spearings will be continuing on a full time basis what they have been involved with for many years. They will be serving the Lord in the propagation of the Gospel and the uplifting of the saints in ministry in the Maritimes, the Gaspé Bay Peninsula and elsewhere as the Lord may lead.

ADDRESS CHANGE

Steve & Nancy Hulshizer
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The Chief Shepherd

Leading by Example

With unwearied care, the Shepherd leads His sheep through the trackless wastes until He gathers each one safely Home at last.

That our blessed Lord Jesus is the Chief Shepherd is a truth that the under-shepherds would do well to keep in mind.

To them He has entrusted the care of His sheep, but He remains, for all time, the *Chief* Shepherd. Their work among the sheep has its source in Him, its authority from Him, and its pattern after Him. Elders, therefore, should always be in submission to Christ as those who will ultimately give account to Him alone. They need to consider the implications of His being the Chief Shepherd.

The Owner of the Sheep

Firstly, the flock belongs to Christ because He purchased it by His own blood (Acts 20:28). He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life

for the sheep (Jn. 10:11) that they might have eternal life (Jn. 10:28). And He continues to care for them. The Lord knows each of them by name (Jn. 10:3, 27). And when they face danger, He is willing to put Himself in harm's way to guarantee their safety (see Jn. 10:8). A hireling,

on the other hand, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees because he doesn't care for the sheep (Jn. 10:12-13).

Secondly, the sheep belong to the Lord Jesus because they recognize Him alone. They know His voice and they follow Him (Jn. 10:4, 27). They do not know the voice of the stranger, nor do they follow him. Instead,

they flee (Jn. 10:5).

Thirdly, the sheep belong to the Chief Shepherd because, having given them eternal life, He is the guarantor of their eternal security. At the end of his life, Moses, the man of God, in blessing the nation of Israel, said "*Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand*" (Deut. 33:3). Those who know Christ as Lord and Saviour have tasted of this safety. No one is able to pluck them out of His hand, neither can any one pluck them out of His Father's hand (Jn. 10:28-29). Furthermore, our Lord is the surety of His people's eternal security because He is the mediator of a better covenant (Heb. 7:22)—a covenant that was established between Him and God, and which He sealed with His own blood. The Lord Jesus is our great high priest who now lives by the power of an endless life (Heb. 7:16). His priesthood is therefore unchangeable (or untransferable) and thus He is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by Him, for He lives forever to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:24-25).

The Shepherd and Bishop of Their Souls

"*For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*" (1 Pet. 2:25). Christ's sheep have turned to Him from their wanderings and going astray. By His stripes they were healed. As the Shepherd He feeds the flock, gathers the lambs with His arm, and carries them in His bosom (Isa. 40:11). He leads them into green pastures and by refreshing waters of rest (Ps. 23:2). He alone is indeed the Great Shepherd of the sheep who was brought back from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20-21).

As the Bishop or Overseer of their souls,



THE CHIEF SHEPHERD *continued*

the Lord Jesus is the One who determines the circumstances of each sheep's life. He oversees their childhood, their family surroundings, their education, their places of work, and their habitation. His Divine wisdom would lead them first to accept Him as Lord and Saviour, and then to live their lives according to His will. To those who yield in obedience to Him, His Holy Spirit reproduces Christ-likeness in them. No human under-shepherd is able to exercise such a profound influence in the lives of the sheep. We can learn from human rulers, teachers, and shepherds in regard to their faith and manner of life, but all of these will change and pass on. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb. 13:7-8). Only He remains permanently available to His people in all circumstances of life.

The Shepherd of Shepherds

Christ's Holy Spirit raises up elders to shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28). The Word of His grace should be the elders' mainstay for their own edification and that of the flock (Acts 20:32). They are as much in need of His loving care as the sheep that He has entrusted to them. Isaiah speaks of how the Lord gently leads those that are with young (Isa. 40:11), meaning those that are capable of feeding others. In other words, the Lord cares both for the lambs and for those that feed them.

Elders, as under-shepherds, need to have a full appreciation of their relationship with their Chief. This will help them carry out their duties to the glory and honor of their Master rather than for their own profit or personal gain. First, they have to always realize that they are only in a stewardship position over the flock. Thus they always need to keep in mind that they do not own the sheep; Christ does. Remembering this will prevent elders from setting themselves up as lords over God's heritage (1 Pet. 5:3) and enable them to walk humbly before the Master, owning His Lordship over them. As stewards it is required of them that they be faithful to Him who has entrusted His sheep to them (1 Cor. 4:2). Elders should do their work with a single eye for His glory. They should do it willingly, not by constraint, and never for personal glory or gain (1 Pet. 5:2). As the Master has left us an example to follow His steps, likewise under-shepherds ought to lead by example (1 Pet. 2:21; 5:3), not seeking their reward here on earth in money, prestige, or the praise of men, but looking forward to



His appearing. For when at last He appears, He will reward those faithful shepherds with a crown of glory that doesn't fade away (1 Pet. 5:4).

Secondly, elders ought to show diligent care in their tending of the sheep, "*Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*" (Rom. 12:11). In Old Testament times, God severely rebuked the slothful shepherds of Israel for their lack of diligence in caring for the sheep. The flock was not fed regularly, nor tended when sick and broken, and ended up being scattered (Ezek. 34:1-10). The under-shepherds of the risen Lord Jesus ought to take heed of these warnings in the Word of God. They need to hold themselves responsible for the kind of spiritual food offered to the sheep. Elders need to seek after the wanderers, tend to the ailing ones, and bind up the broken and injured, for they shall give an account of their work to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:10).

Thirdly, overseers ought to watch out for wolves coming from outside and deny them access to the flock (Acts 20:29). These could be false teachers or others with agendas aimed at perverting the truth. In particular, in our times there are those who attempt to attack the truth of the scriptural gathering of the people of God. It is the duty of elders to prevent such men from misleading the flock.

Elders should also be wary of the human inclination to seek to draw away disciples to ourselves. To do so would be to draw them away from the Lord Himself. Gathering a following around us, forming cliques and parties, is clearly condemned by the Word of God (1 Cor. 3:3-4). Elders, therefore, should be before the Lord examining themselves personally and corporately to keep such tendencies from becoming a cause for concern.

The under-shepherds should also guard against strife, envy, malice, or wrath coming among them (1 Pet. 2:1). They should be of one mind on major issues and make a practice of looking up to the Chief Shepherd in all things for guidance.

This is quite a list of duties and obligations. But remember beloved that, "*ye have need for patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry*" (Heb. 10:36-37). Amen, even so come Lord Jesus. 🕊

Men With Clear Priorities

Shepherding isn't for hobbyists.

The Lord Jesus, who had compassion for the people "because they were as sheep without a shepherd," set the example.

Elders are men who love and serve the Lord Jesus and His church. They probably have the most difficult and the most important work in the world. They certainly face some of the strongest spiritual conflict. What makes a good elder? The list could be long, including things like experience, wisdom, godly speech, humility, a servant heart, and the willingness to work hard. But elders are also ordinary men who face the same temptations, challenges, and opportunities in life as the rest of us. One quality that makes them effective is the ability to make good choices, also known as setting good priorities in life. There are many areas where an elder must establish and maintain proper priorities. Let's think about four of them.



The Priority of First Place for the Head

The earliest spiritual leaders in the church were the apostles who had been chosen by the Lord Himself. It is clear from Acts 6 that amidst a rapidly expanding work in Jerusalem, they devoted serious time to the Word of God (v.2). In other words, they spent regular and substantial time with the risen Lord, the living Word. Inevitably,

growth brings new challenges; and, in time, the apostles became aware of a problem in the church. We don't need to explore the details, but we can guess that the situation had the potential not only to harm the work, but also to force the apostles to become administrators in order to maintain peace.

As good leaders, they were unwilling to

part with their time around the Lord. In other words, quality time with the Head of the church took priority over church problems. Is this true for us? There are reasons why the choice is not an easy one. Spending time with the Lord seems like a luxury when pressing church business calls. Shouldn't we deal with the problem first and then return to fellowship with the Lord?

If we think about our daily quiet time, we'll realize that this does not work. There will always be more problems than we can solve, and the adversary will use these to keep us from spending time with the Lord. This was the great lesson Martha learned (see Luke 10:38-42). So then, elders must make the difficult decision to give the first fruits of their time to the Lord, and then take up the problems of the flock. Amazingly, we'll find that the problems will all be solved as He leads us in addressing them with the wisdom and power we gain from spending time with Him.

Does experience bear this out? Several years ago, when elders were recognized in the assembly where we fellowship, a decision was made to begin every leadership meeting with substantial time in the Scriptures and prayer. Looking back over the years, we can testify with joy that problems have been dealt with, and harmony preserved, in a remarkable way as the Head of the church has blessed this decision. We have lost no time; in fact, we have gained it!

The Priority of Care for the One Another

In Acts 20:28, Paul begins his instructions to the elders of the church at Ephesus with a warning to take heed. The order is significant: "Take heed therefore, unto yourselves and to all

the flock of God...” An immediate question might be: “Haven’t we been taught to think of others first?” True. But which “others”? After spending time with the Lord, the next priority of elders is one another, sometimes referred to as the “oversight.” Let us get this truth firmly in our minds. Work among God’s people is all about relationships, and elders will never have credibility as shepherds if they cannot care for one another. Yet many elder groups are far too busy in “the work” to build and maintain the kind of team that becomes a model for the church.

There are a number of reasons for this and some are noble. Elders are often humble men who just don’t think of themselves. An old saying goes: “The squeaky wheel gets the grease,” and elders usually don’t squeak; they just bear the load and the hurts. But the Lord told his disciples: “*Come apart into a desert place and rest awhile*” (Mk. 6:31). Note this did not refer to a private rest at home, but a rest together from the work. Some do not see the need for team building, and in some places the team is not even identified. But in the earliest church, the record is clear that the apostles continually worked with one accord, even when the majority of believers were scattered by persecution (Acts 8:1).

Such team care need not be prying or time-consuming. Sharing honestly about the joys and constraints of life such as, the family, the job, and one’s health, accompanied by some prayer and expressions of love and support, can go a long way toward building a leadership that functions “with one accord” from the heart.

The Priority of Shepherd Work

Both Paul and Peter instructed church elders to feed or shepherd the flock of God. The word they used is the verb form of “pastor” or “shepherd.” They knew that people are like sheep and need to be tended, protected, and cared for. Perhaps because of the misuse of the word “pastor” in Christendom today, some assemblies have rejected the word and neglected crucial pastoral duties. The result can be elders who are more like administrators than shepherds: teaching and preaching with a heavy involvement in decision making.

The Lord Jesus, who had compassion for the people “*because they were as sheep not having a shepherd,*” (Mk. 6:34) set the example. When gathered in the upper room, He had many things to say to His own, but before

The anticipation of [our Lord’s] “Well done!” can give strength to go on when the way seems hopeless.

He taught them, He washed their feet. Every elder can ponder this lesson. There is something in our nature that would rather exercise authority by making decisions in the church than to wash the dusty feet of the saints! Yet the flock will grow much more by being loved and served than by being controlled.

Without question, there are many decisions to make, and the affairs of the church cannot be neglected. Here is a wonderful opportunity for elders to disciple young believers. Commit some of that administrative work of the church to them, and use the time gained for visiting the flock and laboring in the Word and prayer together as elders. The priority of caring for people will pay large dividends in the growth and blessing of the work.

God’s Crown, Not the World’s

What in the world will give a man the strength to make such sacrifices? Nothing. The answer lies in another world entirely. Like Abraham, the elder has his eye set on the heavenly country where the Chief Shepherd has gone to make preparation. He will come again with His reward (Rev. 22:12), and for elders there will be the crown of glory that does not fade (1 Pet. 5:4).

Great wealth, or fame, or mighty positions in the corporate world may endure for a time, but they will fade. Before very long, it will all be gone, and the humble work done in caring for the Lord’s sheep will be brought to light. The anticipation of His “Well done!” can give strength to go on when the way seems hopeless. Remember, He is not looking for success as measured by this world, but for faithfulness.

So let us take up the work and make the hard choices; to spend time with the Head before tackling the problems of the church; to patiently strengthen each other before urging unity among the flock; to seek out and practice true shepherd’s work; and to willingly forego the crowns of this world as we do the work of the next. Maranatha! 🕊



The Wonderful Net

Freak chance or deliberate design?


Swimsuit-clad men, determined to qualify as U.S. Navy SEALs, sit in the cool ocean water off Coronado Island near San Diego, California. Their body temperature gets lower and lower until they become hypothermic and incoherent after just a few hours in the water. Nearby, shorebirds such as the heron, stand motionless in the same water yet their body temperature does not fall. How can this be so? The answer is that herons, but not human beings, employ a principle called “counter-current exchange” to conserve heat that would otherwise be lost to the ocean water. P. F. Scholander has called the counter-current exchanger “the wonderful net” and characterizes it as “a truly remarkable piece of biological engineering.”¹

Heat flows from warmer to cooler areas. Moving the areas in opposite, or counter, directions makes heat flow between the two areas much more efficient. In the heron, warm blood flows down out of the bird’s trunk and into its legs through arteries that are closely interwoven with a network of veins coming up from the legs, carrying cool blood in the opposite direction. Heat from the arterial blood quickly moves into the cold, venous blood. This warms the blood coming into the bird’s main body and cools the blood going out. Along with an insulating layer of feathers, this wonderful net of blood vessels keeps the heron from becoming hypothermic. People have a similar counter-current exchanger in the kidneys to regulate salt and water balance, but do not use counter-current nets of blood vessels to reduce heat loss to the environment. Instead, the human body restricts blood flow to the skin, reduces blood flow into arms and legs, and generates heat by shivering.

Counter-current exchangers are also found in some land animals like the armadillo, the sloth, and the anteater, which are very sensitive to low temperatures,

but not in other animals like the fox or the Husky sled dog. Some shorebirds, like herons and cranes, have counter-current nets while other waterfowl, like ducks, geese, and gulls, do not. It seems that ducks and geese have a need, not to conserve, but to lose body heat because of their very efficient body insulation.

Scholander concedes that counter-current exchangers appear to be designed, or engineered, solutions to the specific physiological challenges faced by some animals but not others. They are found

in animals as diverse as the tuna, the seal, the squirrel, and the heron but not in other types of birds or land animals. In other words, they are used selectively and intelligently on an “as needed” basis. Evolution proponents call this “convergent” evolution—where unrelated animal groups independently evolve the same solution to a common problem. This is interesting speculation, but naming something does not explain, nor prove, how it came to be. By contrast, we could reasonably infer that this “truly remarkable piece of biological engineering” came from the hand of the truly remarkable Creator who used the appropriate design elements, where needed, for each type of animal and for people. 

—MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D.

¹ P.F. Scholander, “The Wonderful Net,” in *Vertebrate Structures and Functions: Readings from Scientific American* (San Francisco, CA: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1969), pp.125-131.



Eldership and Spiritual Vision

An eye test for overseers

Those who have most powerfully influenced the world for Christ were men and women of spiritual vision.

One of the greatest needs of New Testament assemblies today is for strong, spiritual, dedicated elders. The Lord has placed stringent demands on those that are called to be elders. He has called them to a spiritual work and rigorous labor. Paul charges the Thessalonian assembly that the elders were to be recognized on the basis of their “labor.” The word translated “labor” in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 is the Greek word *kopiaio*. This is a strong word, which means to toil to the point of weariness and exhaustion. Regarding this word, British expositor and author G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) writes:

“Paul has in mind the kind of toil that has in it the red blood of sacrifice, that kind of toil that wears and weakens by the way.”¹

Therefore, when the Word of God speaks of the work of an elder, it describes men who “*watch over your souls*” (Heb. 13:17), “*rule over you, who have spoken the Word of God*” (Heb. 13:7), “*labor in the Word and doctrine*” (1 Tim. 5:17), and “*desire a good work*” (1 Tim. 3:1).

The “Labor” of Eldership

An elder in the local assembly must realize that eldership is not merely an important title, but rather an indispensable work. The work of the Lord in the church of God must not be neglected. Sadly, this is not the case in many New Testament churches. The shepherding of the flock is left unattended, the ministry of the Word is mishandled, and outreach to the lost

is frequently forgotten. True elders set the spiritual tone in a church. Where there are elders

who are godly men, who put the Lord first in their lives, and who radiate the grace of the Christ, one can expect to find a healthy, spiritual church. On the other hand, where elders are taken up in the affairs of the world, overly occupied with outside interests, too busy to read the Word of God or to pray, one can expect to find coldness and deadness among the flock. Such men are not true elders. William MacDonald writes:

“Doubtless one of the greatest blights on the church today is the recognition of men as elders who do not have the spiritual qualifications. Because a man is successful in business, he is thrust into a place of leadership, even though he may have little or no spirituality. The result is an abundance of whatever money will buy and an absence of spiritual power.”²

However, many are carrying on this strenuous work; yet how desperately our assemblies need more committed men to labor sacrificially among the Lord’s people. Biblical eldership necessitates weariness, loneliness, criticism, sleepless nights, and tears. May we realize that the work of the Lord requires our sacrifice, time, and hard work. An assembly cannot flourish without the arduous work and commitment of the elders. If the elders fail, people will resort to unbiblical methods, bringing spiritual harm to many. However, in all areas of the work of oversight in the local assembly, there is one indispensable aspect which must not be neglected: spiritual vision.

What is Spiritual Vision?

Spiritual vision might be defined as that which God puts in our hearts to do when the spiritual need is great and our hearts are filled with the concerns of God. A few



years ago, an elder gave verbal expression to spiritual vision when he prayed, “Lord, break my heart with the concerns that break the heart of God.” A leader with vision does not see with mere human eyes, but with transformed vision. As he passes by a hotel that is for sale, he sees the potential for a missionary training center; when he sees a store front for rent, he envisions a future Christian bookstore; when he sees new neighborhoods, he sees thriving home Bible studies; when he see new growth in a town, he longs to see a new assembly established in that area. This was the burden of church leaders in the New Testament. The apostle Paul wrote, “*I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation, but as it is written: to whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand*” (Rom. 15:20-21).

Spiritual Vision in Antioch

After the stoning of Steven, a few disciples of Cyprus and Cyrene entered the city of Antioch in Syria to make Christ known in the preaching of the gospel. At that time, Antioch, situated on the Orontes River, was a cosmopolitan city of 500,000 people, the third largest city of the ancient world. Antioch was a city renowned for its immorality and idolatry. Juvenal (A.D. 78-127), the Roman writer, rebuked the morals of Antioch by saying:

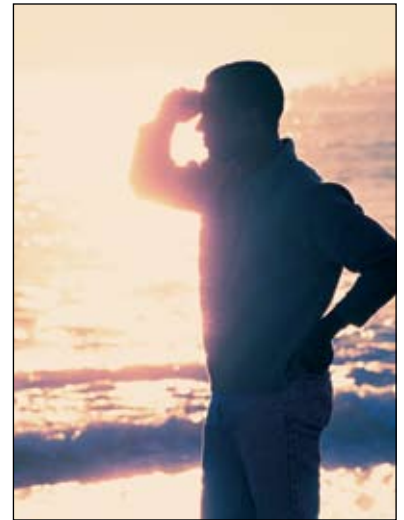
“The sewage of the Orontes has for long been discharged into the Tiber.”³

His point, which would not be missed on his readers, was that the immorality of Antioch was so great that it polluted the depraved morals of Rome, more than 1,300 miles away! Yet these few disciples would not be deterred from preaching the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:20-21). These men were men of God with vision. These disciples, who were armed with the gospel of God and equipped with the commandment to go into all the world, preached and served Christ valiantly.

But not only did these few disciples have vision to see cities won for Christ, the persecuted assembly at Jerusalem also shared this vision. “Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch” (Acts 11:22). The assembly at Jerusalem sent one of their best men to help establish the new work in Antioch. Barnabas was sent to Antioch and labored there as a teacher, exhorting the believers that “*with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord*” (Acts 11:23). As the work in Antioch grew mightily, there was now a need for another worker. Barnabas went to Tarsus to encourage Paul to come help in the work at Antioch. Barnabas sought out a man of God—this man of vision sought a man who likewise possessed a vision for establishing New Testament churches throughout Asia Minor, Syria, and Galatia. “*When he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch*” (Acts 11:26).

The Cost of Spiritual Vision

Those who have most powerfully influenced the world for Christ were men and women of vision. Spiritual vision and commitment are strands of a cord used to raise high the banner of the cross. These men of God laboring at Antioch were men of vision and were men of tireless zeal and unflagging commitment. Their charge was the Word of God and their commission was that it must go forth, no matter what the cost to themselves. The work of God and the assembly of God must not suffer loss. But personal loss, financial expense, physical persecution, stonings, and the whipping post were all part of the high cost of spiritual vision.



Men of vision are those who see with the eyes of faith



New Testament leadership always exacts a heavy toll on men and women of God. Amy Carmichael, who labored and sacrificed greatly to reach the lost masses of India, wrote:

*No wound, no scar.
Yes, as the master shall the servant be,
And pierced are the feet that follow Me;
But thine are whole.
Can he have followed far—who has no wound? No scar?²*

H. A. Ironside (1876-1951) was once told by a man, “I would give my all to have the knowledge and ability to preach the Scriptures as you do.” Ironside replied, “That is exactly what it has cost me.” The Lord Himself knew much of self-sacrifice in service. Christ, when speaking of the humble character of His labors for the Father, said, “*Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. Even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many*” (Mk. 10:44-45). John writes, “*He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1 Jn. 3:16).

Spiritual Vision and Spiritual Focus

Men of vision are also those who see with the eyes of faith—eyes fixed upon the power and glory of God. These men have usually seen more clearly the importance of the work of God and have seen farther concerning the glory of God than most others. Oswald Sanders writes:

“Eyes that look are common. Eyes that see are rare. The Pharisees looked at Peter and saw only an unlettered fisherman...Jesus saw Peter and discovered the leader of a band of men who turned the world upside down...Vision includes optimism and hope. No pessimist ever made a great leader. The pessimist sees difficulties in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunities in every difficulty.”⁵

This was true of many of God’s choicest servants in the Word of God. The Scriptures tell us regarding Moses, one of the great servants of God, that he “endured as seeing Him who was invisible” (Heb. 11:27). Moses was able to see what the crowds could not see. He saw the ways and desires of God more fully, more deeply, and more powerfully than many around him. But spiritual vision encompasses not only insight, but also godly foresight. Spiritual vision is the spiritual ability to sense and anticipate what lies ahead. These

godly leaders can envision the results of inappropriate methods or the rash decisions of others. These men see far out on the horizons the dire consequences and the withering effects of unwise personal choices, petty theological squabbles, and ill-advised assembly decisions, and seek to avoid them. A leader of spiritual vision sees difficulties ahead, but also possibilities, potential, and opportunities that lie in the future. Faith, boldness, and wisdom are all ready weapons in his arsenal.

The bold vision of godly elders and spiritual leaders within the local assembly is the great need of today. The church needs men of God who possess wisdom, insight, foresight, and a heart for the glory of God; men who work hard and esteem the work of Christ in the local church worth the cost; men who step out in faith, seeing firstly God, but also that which God desires to accomplish through the church. May there be more like the “*children of Issachar, who were men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do...*” (1 Chron. 12:32). In the words of Harry A. Ironside:

“By vision is meant spiritual enlightenment and insight into divine things...when this ministry is lacking among the people of God and the assemblies of His saints, they soon become lawless, substituting for the Spirit’s energy the mere busy meddling of nature, and the opening the door to what is simply of man in the flesh...but the anointed eye is needed to discern what has been therein revealed...lack of vision will be manifested in a cold, dry, theological, or philosophical, treatment of the Scriptures, as though given to exercise the intellect, rather than the heart and the conscience.”⁶ ⓘ

Endnotes

- 1 G. Campbell Morgan, *The Corinthian Letters* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1946), p. 207.
- 2 William MacDonald, *Christ Loved the Church* (Kansas City, KS: Walterick, 1956), p. 87.
- 3 F. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 141.
- 4 Amy Carmichael, *Toward Jerusalem* (London: S.P.C.K. Publishers, 1950).
- 5 Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), p. 80.
- 6 Harry A. Ironside, *Proverbs* (New York, NY: Loizeaux Brothers, 1977), pp. 425-426.

Sudbury Outreach Report

Christianity on the offense

About four years ago, a few men in our assembly made a commitment to set aside an hour on Tuesday mornings to pray for the affairs of our assembly. One item we regularly prayed for was the unsaved people that the Lord had placed in our lives. We were familiar with an effective tool of evangelism used by the saints in Timmins for over 20 years: they enlist a Christian professional athlete to speak at a banquet at a local hall. Encouraged by their example, we asked the Lord if He would desire to do the same thing in our locale. Sudbury is a typical northern Canadian town where hockey is very much a part of the culture. In the spring of 2005, we booked a local hotel and hosted a banquet with Jean Pronovost, an ex-NHL player, as the featured speaker. The response to this first foray was such an encouragement that we started prayerfully looking forward to another banquet.



Ron Ellis, Speaker

This first experience also taught us a great deal. Timing is essential in order to optimize attendance. Many in the world see a Saturday evening commitment as too much of an intrusion into their lives. But the idea of a

weeknight out with a nice meal is much more acceptable. Secondly, any successful invitation to such an evening is built on the credibility of relationships. People agree to come because they trust the individual who extended the invitation. We exhorted the saints in this regard.

In September 2006, we rented a local hall and held our second annual Christian Athletes Banquet with Ron Ellis of Toronto Maple Leafs fame. We were also privileged to have Gary Weeks with us as emcee and to sing. His songs presented Christ extremely clearly, and he was

able to use his emcee role to corroborate the message that Ron presented.

It was our objective to create a venue that the unsaved would find comfortable. We rented a familiar establishment renowned for its excellent Italian food. We underwrote a significant part of the cost in order to give people more than what they expected. Personal invitations went out without any pretense, inviting people to attend a banquet where Ron Ellis would speak about his experience in the world of professional hockey and share about his faith in Jesus Christ. Even in the invitation the Lord was at work. Dan, a fellow whose language in the locker room would make a sailor blush, found himself hospitalized for depression. A believer he played hockey with visited him in the hospital and invited him. Dan was discharged the very day of the banquet in time to attend with his brother. Both were moved to tears by the testimony of Ron Ellis.

The Lord faithfully filled the hall with over 170 guests, most of whom were unsaved. A young lady, Marie, arrived too late to find a seat. She was quickly spotted by an old friend whom she had partied with years before, but who had since come to know the Lord. The two sat together for the evening and became reacquainted as the believer shared what Christ has done in her life.

We've discovered that the work of organizing and running this banquet is small in comparison with the follow-up. The real work continues as we build into the lives of people who came and heard the life-changing message of Christ crucified. But one thing is clear: God is at work in people's lives. The very next day, one guest called his Christian friend to discuss the message Ron Ellis had shared. Over coffee he shared the emptiness of his own beliefs and his fear of what others might think if he became a Christian. He has recently purchased a Bible and is planning to study the gospel of John with this believer. Ultimately, the results will be left to eternity to be settled. 🕊



Gary Weeks, witnessing by song



WHERE IS THE GOOD NEWS ON THE MOVE TEAM?

1. Sep 19-29, Orientation was graciously provided at Greenwood Hills, PA Bible Conference (not far from the famous Gettysburg battlefield). There was some initial door-to-door work with two nearby assemblies, one meeting beside the conference grounds, and one a few miles away in Waynesboro, PA. These assemblies also provided opportunities for the team to give their testimonies and share in the gospel. One young boy confessed Christ after the first gospel talk.

2. Sep 30-Oct 1, Washington, DC area. The nearby Rockville, MD assembly was the team's gracious host for the first weekend on the road. In addition to meetings with the saints (they meet in a rented room in a hotel), opportunities were provided on the University of Maryland campus, in front of a local high school, and an extended session of witnessing and open air preaching at the large (100,000 people est.) book fair in the National Mall in Washington.

3. Oct 2-8, Oxford, PA. The Lord sovereignly placed the team this week with the small assembly of Oxford Bible Chapel in southeast Pennsylvania, home of team member Scott Duncan. Oxford is a farming community just a few miles from the Amish schoolhouse where five girls were gunned down just when the team arrived. The CD handed out there was titled "Nothing Happens by Chance."

4. Oct 9-15, Hartville, OH. One of the few repeat stops from GNOM's tour last season, Hartville is a small town just northeast of Akron. The new assembly (just a year old) has an open door at a nearby Flea Market/Farmer's Market, one of the largest in the state. Door-to-door work was also done here as well as meetings further north where God is doing a work among some Amish folk.

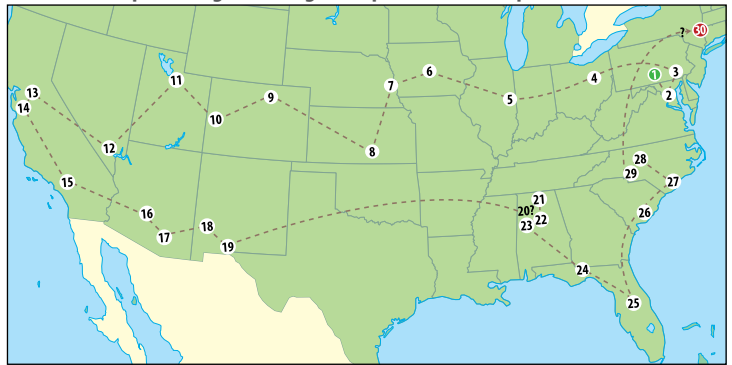
5. Oct 16-22, Danville, IL. A few hours south of Chicago and near the Indiana line, Danville is a medium-sized town. Here the team concentrated on Hillary, a small town just outside Danville, where the assembly meets. The door-to-door was greatly aided by believers who joined the team on the Saturday from Chicago and Rockford, IL. There was also a day trip to do gospel work on the university campus in Champaign. Some in the assembly work with Grace and Truth, a publisher and printer of about 25 million tracts annually.

6. Oct 23-29, Polk City (Lake Country Bible Chapel), Greenfield and Redfield, IA. The team joined with brother Dave Hammond to work with him in his "backyard." Greenfield and Redfield are two small towns southwest of Des Moines where two older assemblies soldier on. Polk City has a relatively new assembly north-northwest of Des Moines that grew out of the vigorous work further north in Stratford/Boone.

7. Oct 30-Nov 5, Omaha, NE. Here three local assemblies (Keystone Bible Chapel and Northwest Bible Fellowship in Omaha, and the assembly in nearby Council Bluffs, IA) banded together for an intensive week of door-to-door, open air preaching, evangelism training, and gospel events. This would be the strongest concentration of assembly work in the state.

8. Nov 6-12, Wichita, KS. This week the team comes to the home assembly of Keith Trevolt (GNOM I), Northside Bible Chapel in Kechi, north of Wichita. The objective is to cover three small towns on the north side of Wichita with the hope of finding serious contacts to be followed up

Visit www.uplook.org for a larger map and recent reports from the team.



by the assembly believers. This is the largest assembly we will be visiting throughout our 06-07 tour.

9. Nov 13-19, Greeley, CO. This is the home assembly of our esteemed brother, Donald L. Norbie. He has an encouraging prison ministry here, and we also hope to be involved in making contacts in the community. Greeley is about an hour north of Denver. This will be the last stop for the team before their Thanksgiving break Nov 20-26.

10. Nov 27-Dec 3, Grand Junction, CO. Following Thanksgiving break, GNOM travels through the mountains to work with Clifton Bible Chapel just beside Grand Junction. This is the home assembly of Leonardo Salaz (GNOM I). The work here was pioneered by brother Rich Bishop. We may also do some preliminary gospel work in the nearby town of Fruita.

11. Dec 4-10, Salt Lake City (Ogden) UT. There are three families here in Ogden just north of Salt Lake City in the heart of Mormon country. Our emphasis here will be to work with one of the young men in the assembly on a nearby college campus. The young assembly here also needs help with a building they have acquired and we hope to have ministry opportunities here with a geographically isolated group of believers.

12. Dec 11-17, Las Vegas, NV. We almost had decided to travel through Nevada without stopping as New Testament assemblies are few and far between out here. But when the latest statistics on the U.S. showed NV to be the fastest growing state in the Union, how could we? There is a small group meeting in a home in Las Vegas (or as some spell it, Lost Vegas). We will be concentrating this week on handing out William MacDonald's "Nothing Happens by Chance" CD (with a gambling motif on the cover) to people exiting the casinos. Following this week, the team flies home for Christmas break (Dec 18-Jan 1).

13. Jan 2-7, Tracy, CA. A relatively new work in a burgeoning area (near the large cities of Stockton and Modesto), the assembly at Tracy has only a few families. There are very few assemblies east of the mountains in California, an area of phenomenal population growth. This assembly is small and needs much prayer and encouragement.

14. Jan 8-14, San Jose, CA. Brother Jim McCarthy and others pioneered this assembly a few years ago in Silicon Valley. The area presents its challenges, being very expensive to live here. The team will have the privilege of working along with other men who are studying under brother Jim and others in a disciple intern program. Hopefully this will include some work on the famously liberal campus of Berkeley.

15. Jan 15-21, Claremont, CA. Our third stop in California is planned for the Claremont assembly east of Los Angeles. This city has several colleges. The assembly also has a ministry in the contiguous assembly senior's home. A number of nearby smaller assemblies might also afford ministry opportunities for the men. The believers here are eager for greater gospel witness in the area.

16. Jan 22-28, Phoenix, AZ. The massive city of Phoenix (75 miles across) is a place of great need. Recent years have seen some concentrated gospel effort by some brothers from Gospel Halls in the U.S., concentrating on the Hispanic work. However Palms Bible Fellowship is in need of more gospel outreach and we hope to work with them in seeking those who are seeking. It would be wonderful to make some good contacts for the assembly there.

17. Jan 29-Feb 4, Tucson, AZ. One hundred and twenty miles south of Phoenix is the city of Tucson where an assembly has functioned for many years. We are hoping to make contacts in the area to help the assembly expand their influence in the city. We will also be seeking opportunities at one of the largest gem shows in the country. Special gospel materials are being prepared for this effort. Anyone interested in gems? Or in jewels for the King? You're welcome to join us—as at any of our stops.

18. Feb 5-11, Silver City, NM. Near Silver City in west New Mexico is a small assembly meeting in the town of Bayard. Brother Frank Avalone and his family fellowship here. They helped the GNOM I team in Minot, ND and Sioux Falls, SD. This was also the home assembly of GNOM I team member Robert Clingen while he worked at nearby Southwest Bible Camp.

19. Feb 12-18, El Paso, TX. The border city of El Paso has more than its share of those flooding across the U.S. border from Mexico. We will need help here from some Spanish-speaking believers. The cross-cultural challenges will need much prayer as we seek to work with the assembly here. Following this effort, the team will take their Mid-Winter Break (Feb 19-26). Vehicles will have to be brought cross-country for the next area of evangelistic concentration—Alabama.

20. Feb 27-Mar 2, Prep week for a major gospel effort somewhere in Alabama. The next four weeks need much prayer from the people of God. Our hearts have been burdened to help the handful of assemblies in this state (the largest of the six would have about 25 (Hope Bible Chapel, Birmingham); the smallest, a biblical “two or three”). Three major cities have no assembly testimony as far as we know (Mobile in the south, Auburn/Phenix City/Columbus, GA in the east central, and Huntsville in the north). The smaller cities of Decatur (in the nw) and Dothan (in the se) also have no NT assembly to our knowledge. Tuscaloosa has one couple, as does Huntsville where the Alabama brethren would love to see solid testimonies for the Lord's name.

21. Mar 3-11, Huntsville or Tuscaloosa, AL? This is the week for the BIG WINTER EFFORT. Please be exercised to go, send others or invest in the “Good News! Alabama” week. Please also pray for several couples to feel the call to move to these cities full of potential for the work of God. We hope to give more detailed profiles of these cities in an upcoming Uplook.

22. Mar 12-16, tentatively arranged for Birmingham. If the

Lord gives us clear guidance, we may commit to TWO major gospel efforts—one in Huntsville and the second in Tuscaloosa. Much of this would depend on the number of people willing to help with these two weeks (Mar 3-11 and Mar 19-25) and with solid couples willing to move to either or both of the target cities. In that case, this week would be the Prep week for Big Winter Effort 2 in Tuscaloosa.

23. Mar 17-24, somewhere in Alabama. As previously stated, if the Lord shows the way, this would be BIG WINTER EFFORT 2, probably in Tuscaloosa. An hour southwest of Birmingham, this university city has recently seen an economic resurgence with a Mercedes plant built nearby.

24. Mar 25-29, Tallahassee, FL. The capital of the state of Florida, there is a small work here (20 believers). Where they meet is only one block from a large university campus. Traveling west from Jacksonville on the Atlantic coast, apart from this small work in Tallahassee and another even smaller one in Niceville, there is no NT assembly that we know of until you arrive in New Orleans/Slide!!


25. Mar 30-Apr 4, Clermont, FL. A half-hour drive west of Orlando, the region is a high-growth area. This is a new assembly that has only been meeting since last fall. Brother David Dunlap (from nearby Land O'Lakes) hopes to join the team there for efforts in the community. This week will be followed by the Easter Break (Apr 5-15). The vehicles will have to be transported to SC for the next leg of the trip.

26. Apr 16-22, Charleston, SC. The GNOM team hopes to work with an assembly in nearby Summerville. This group of believers had been seeking the Lord's leading regarding the gospel the day before we called to ask if we could join them in evangelism. We look forward to a fruitful week in this historic city on the Atlantic coast.

27. Apr 23-29, Wilmington, NC. Our hearts were saddened by the sudden passing of a great gospel pioneer, brother Bill King of Wilmington. We were hoping the team would be able to learn from him on our visit there. However that was not to be. We trust our time spent in this seaside city will inspire the men nonetheless to take up the mantle of a great man swept up to glory, Elijah-like.

28. May 7-13, Salisbury, NC. This small town on I 85 between Charlotte and Greensboro is home to Bethany Bible Chapel. The team finds evangelism in a small town environment in some ways more challenging (because small towns can be more insular) and also invigorating (because gospel work in a smaller population seems more “do-able”).

29. Apr 30-May 6, Charlotte, NC. This thriving metropolis sits at the hub of the Carolinas. Here we are hoping to finish out our regular season working with a relatively new assembly pioneered by brother Rex Trogdon and others. Following this week, the team has a two-week break before the Year-End Gospel Finale (possibly somewhere in New England, a very needy area of the country). The break continues from May 14-28. Vehicles will have to be transported to the final gospel effort site.

30. May 29-Jun 1, somewhere in New England? Please prayerfully consider being involved in the YEAR-END OUTREACH. This will be the Prep Week for the team followed by the Good News! New England effort from June 2-9. More details to follow as the Lord opens the way for us. 

Elders I Have Known

Men who practiced what they preached

We're supposed to follow elders' faith, not their foibles or failures. This article is a good example.

Elders have spiritual authority (Heb. 13:17), but the primary way they influence the assembly is through their example (Heb. 13:7). When the sheep see elders with a consistent spiritual walk, enthusiasm, and a servant's heart, they are inclined to follow their example. Anyone who has been saved for a few years should be able to tell of numerous elders who have proved a good example. Here are some examples which have touched my life in assemblies I have attended or visited:


- the elder who made it his practice to pray for every person in the assembly each day—by name and with regards to specific requests.
- the elder who would invite some family from the assembly over for lunch each Sunday.
- the retired elder who wrote me a card when I was a student and was away from the assembly for a summer job.
- the elder who opened his home to us for a Bible study and did so for years.
- the elder who made sure the oversight visited every family in the assembly.
- the elder who visited the hospital.
- the elder who cared enough to give me a word of rebuke when I said something I shouldn't have said.

- the elder who kept going and didn't quit during a time of strife in the assembly.
- the elder who refused to close the doors when attendance was down.
- the elder who made time to listen to me

when I was sad and lonely (even when he'd heard it all before).

- the elder who mowed the lawn for years because nobody else did it.
- the elder who sought out the sinning Christian and tried to restore him.
- the elder who encouraged the young people.
- the elder whose smile I'll always remember.
- the elder who could find a relevant verse of Scripture for any occasion.
- the elder who turned down opportunities for career advancement because it would take him to a different city.
- the elder who, with clear mind and great love, continued to shepherd the flock into his eighties.
- the elder who took me along on a trip when he was visiting a different church.
- the elder who never told us the answers but told us where to find the answers.
- the elder who gave me real, honest feedback after a sermon.
- the elder who decided that even if nobody else came to break bread, he'd be there.
- the elder whose friendship I have never doubted.
- the elder who answered his phone in the middle of the night.

Godly Examples

The list could go on, but what is listed here makes an important point. We spend a great deal of time considering the qualities of character that define an elder, and how to recognize elders, and the doctrine of a plurality of elders. And well we should! But we must not ignore a consideration of the work a man does after he is recognized as an elder. Many very fine men have presented us with good examples. May the rest of us live up to it! 



The State of the Flocks

What kind of shepherd is seldom seen with his sheep?

“Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.” (Prov. 27:23)

Is it really possible to know the state of the flocks by an occasional five-minute conversation at the end of the regular scheduled meetings?

The Old Testament Scriptures were written to a people who were primarily agricultural in their orientation. Keeping and caring for sheep was a way of life for many an Israelite. So the Lord’s people are frequently referred to in terms that would have been quite familiar to the hearers: His sheep and His flock. Of course, the Lord Himself is referred to in the Bible as the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, and the Chief Shepherd.

In the New Testament, we are instructed that local assemblies are to have a plurality of shepherds to care for the Lord’s people under the direction of the Chief Shepherd. Although

of the flocks by an occasional five-minute conversation at the end of the regular scheduled meetings? I think not!

The Bible encourages us to take a more diligent approach to these matters. *“Take heed... to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers”* (Acts 20:28). Surely the term “take heed” means to pay careful attention to this matter. When and how are we to do this? Is there not a place for regular visitation of the saints under our watch and care? Is it not true that when we see them at the regular meetings, they are putting their best front on? In their homes, in a more relaxed setting, we might possibly see the real situation more clearly.

Is there any scriptural basis for elders visiting in the homes of the saints, or, conversely, having the saints into their homes? Certainly visiting the poor and widows is clearly taught in James 1:27, *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”* Moreover, one of the mandatory qualifications for an elder is that he must be hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8). The saints must have access to his home, especially since he is to be an example [pattern] to the flock. His home life should be observed! Finally, the apostle Paul, in his farewell address to the elders at the church at Ephesus, uses two sources to teach them of their shepherding responsibilities. He taught by precept and his own personal example when he was among them. Concerning his example, he reminds them that he taught them both publicly and *“from house to house”* (Acts 20:20).

William Rogers, in his notes on the pastoral epistles, comments that two verb forms

we do not believe in the office of “Pastor,” we had better believe in pastoral work! Caring for the Lord’s people must be taken seriously, and we are to be diligent to know the state of our flocks. (Actually, they are the Lord’s flock and we are stewards (Titus 1:7) acting on His behalf.) Is it really possible to know the state

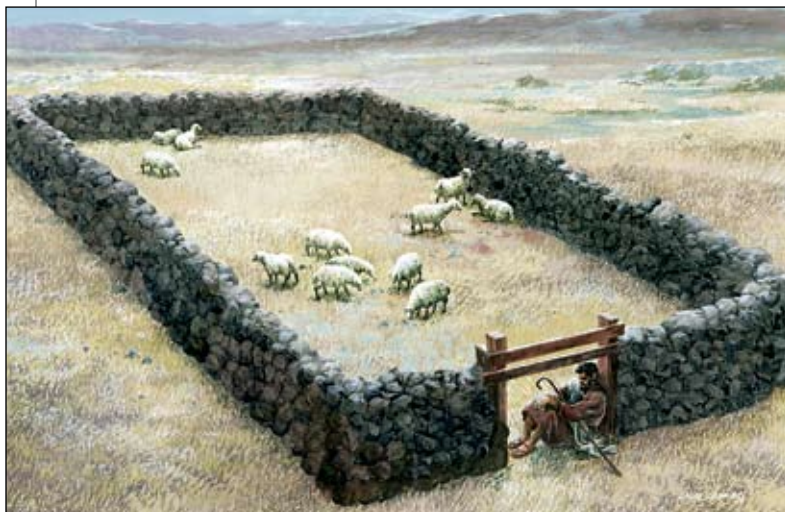


Illustration: New Tribes Mission

THE STATE OF THE FLOCKS *continued*

of the Greek word *episkopos* (which our English Bibles translate as “overseers” or “bishops”) are translated as “visit” in Matthew 25:36, Acts 15:36, and James 1:27, all strengthening the case for regular pastoral visitation.

What then should these home visits look like? Several years ago I read an article that contained some suggested questions for visitation. I have put them to good use since then and found them to be both practical and beneficial to the saints.

1. Are you having a regular quiet time? This question is asked not to chastise but to encourage. If they need help in this area, make practical suggestions. For instance, they may benefit from a reading scheme. It can also be helpful to provide accountability with follow-up visits.

2. If married, are you praying together daily? This ought to be the practice in every Christian home. It is good to at least do this before going to bed at night, as we are told not to let the sun go down upon our wrath (Eph. 4:26), and you can't truly pray if you are angry with one another. Therefore it encourages reconciliation before the sun sets!

3. If you have children, are you teaching the Scriptures to them? Do they have a family altar? Again, this is not raised in order to criticize, but with a view to encouragement. Sunday School was designed to reach kids outside the church, not as a means of teaching the children of the saints—that is the job that we, as parents, are supposed to do. Share with them what has worked for you. Use examples of how you have done it and what has helped you personally to be faithful in this task. We read Scripture after meals, since that is when we are all together. And when our children were younger, we read from Egermeier's Bible Story Book.

4. Do you understand what we are doing as a local assembly? Do they have any questions about why we meet the way we do? How can they serve? You might be surprised to discover that there



needs to be a refresher course about things you thought had been adequately taught.

5. Are there any issues you would like to talk with us about? Major crises can often be headed off by such a question. And with consistent shepherding, elders look less like a crisis management team. They become proactive rather than reactive!

Finally, it is always good to praise the saints for anything they have done for the Lord and His people. We all need encouragement. Read Scripture with them, pray with them, and leave—be sure not to overstay your welcome.

Elders are stewards of God. We will give an account to the Lord for them one day (Heb. 13:17), so we are to watch for their souls. How are we doing with our stewardship of His blood-bought people? Will the Lord entrust more lambs to our care if we are not caring for the sheep He has already given to us?

A motto in our local elders' meeting is, “Do the work of an elder instead of just talking about doing the work of an elder.” Surely, brethren, this is one of the greatest needs in our assemblies today! 📌

Will the Lord entrust more lambs to our care if we are not caring for the sheep He has already given us?

The Gospel of Mark

Watching God's Servant at work


The Gospel of Mark has received much attention in the last century from scholars and Bible critics, but less from those who use God's Word for preaching. This problem is not new. Historians tell us the early church wrote no commentary on Mark until the fifth century A.D. Many saw Mark as more of a summary of Matthew. To this day, few preach entirely through this short gospel. May these two pages encourage us to understand why we must change this pattern.

The Big Picture

To preach an expository message on Mark, one must faithfully set forth Christ as Mark did, with Mark's choice of words, characteristics, and scenes. Expository preaching follows the thought flow of the passage, verse by verse, allowing the passage to structure the message. Too often Mark is broken apart (especially in Sunday school) as if it were merely a collection of unrelated stories. Now and again, each gospel must be examined and preached as a whole. The preacher must show how each evangelist sought to portray Christ by including certain scenes and discourses and leaving out others. He must ask, "How does this gospel portray our Lord?" "Which of Christ's glories does it bring forth?" "What do we see in this gospel that we do not see in the other three?"

Mark's Unique Characteristics

A careful study of Mark in a harmony, or parallel, of the gospels will reveal that Mark has almost no stories or teachings unique to his gospel (except for 4:26-29; 7:31-37; 8:22-26). Mark's portrayal of Christ is not unique in what he includes, but in what he leaves out. Mark leaves out all but the briefest details of the birth of our Lord. In twenty verses he hurries us through Christ's forerunner, birth, introduction, temptation, calling of the disciples, and commencement of ministry! Mark wants to show us Christ at work. He devotes far less space to the teaching and parables of our Lord. While other gospels tell us what Jesus taught, Mark simply tells us that he taught or gives an abbreviation of His teaching. Of



In our comfortable day, where toil and suffering are quickly becoming foreign concepts, it is essential that Mark be preached.

the thirty-one major parables in the gospels, Matthew mentions fifteen, Luke nineteen, but Mark only five. On the other hand, of the thirty-three major miracles in the gospels, Matthew recounts nineteen, Mark seventeen, Luke nineteen and John only eight. In some of these accounts, Mark actually has more details than the other gospels. Finally, His account of the Lord's death remains quite similar to the other gospel writers. Keep these features in mind when ministering on Mark.

A second key to preaching on Mark is to focus not only on what Mark says, but on how he says it. Mark is a book of action, full of snapshots, with minimal commentary. Over one-hundred and fifty times Mark speaks of past tense events with a present tense word¹, increasing the dramatic atmosphere. His use of the Greek word *euthus* (straightway, immediately) forty-two times, immerses our Saviour in activity and provides us with the key word for his gospel. The word "and" (Greek *kai*) begins most of Mark's chapters and is used by Mark more than by any other gospel writer. Mark records the crowds calling for the Lord's attention (1:33, 35-37, 45; 2:2, 13; 3:7-9, 20, 32; 4:1; 5:21, 31; 6:31, 54-55; 8:1; 9:14-15; 10:1, 13, 46; 14:43) to such an extent that twice he mentions there was no time to eat. Finally, a significant feature of Mark is that he constantly adds vivid, eye-witness details not found in the other gospels. A few examples include: "wild beasts" (1:13), "hired men" (1:20), "just as He was" (4:36), "in the stern" (4:38), and "in His arms" (9:36).

The preceding examples are the kinds of things a preacher should use to focus the listener on our Lord in the way Mark sought to portray Him. Most commentaries and introductions will mention some, but not all, of these characteristics. Consult several of them. Out of the many, Merrill C. Tenney's *New Testament Survey*

THE GOSPEL OF MARK *continued*

gives an excellent and enjoyable overview of Mark's general characteristics. And the introduction in the Mark commentary of the Hedrickson-Kistemaker *New Testament Commentary* set gives extremely helpful listings of Mark's unique features. For example, it gives four pages of eye-witness details that Mark adds.

Thus, Mark sets before us Jesus as the Servant of the Lord, fervently at work. One gets the sense of a quick pace, long hours worked, selfless service, and our Lord's determination to give His life at Calvary. All of Mark is outlined in verse 10:45, which nearly every writer cites as Mark's theme verse, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Those that wish to correlate Mark to the ox of the famous four beasts in Ezekiel 1:10 and Revelation 4:7² should remember that while the ox is humble, it is not weak. It is powerful, unwavering, enduring, and productive. Mark presents Christ's deity through this kind of brute power over nature and illness, along with a high number of confrontations with demons. While preaching, compare our Lord's deity and power to His tireless concern for the lost and burdened. Doing so will bring out the true character and moral glory of His person and work.

A Basic Outline

Almost all commentators find Mark difficult to outline. Most structure the book by its geography in variations of the following: (a) 1:1-13 (b) 1:14-8:30 (c) 8:31-10:52 (d) 11:1-16:8 (e) 16:9-20. Some further divide Christ's ministry around Galilee (b) into smaller parts. Peter's pivotal confession (8:27-30) can end section (b) or begin section (c). Be certain to bring out our Lord's shift in focus towards the cross that occurs after 8:30. Here, Christ predicts His death three times (8:31; 9:30-31; 10:32-34), the disciples misunderstand three times (8:32-33; 9:32-34; 10:35-40), and He teaches on the cost of discipleship three times (8:34-38; 9:35-37; 10:41-45).

Additional Topics in Mark


Finally, note how often Mark includes conversations that suggest the question, "Who is this man?" and also records our Lord's hiding of His identity (1:24-25, 34, 44; 3:11-12; 4:41; 5:6-8, 43; 6:50-52; 7:36; 8:17-21, 26, 27-29; 9:9, 30-32; 11:28; 14:61; 15:2). While there was a practical reason for Jesus' secrecy³ (1:45), and a prophetic rea-



son according to Matthew (12:16-20), Mark may be connecting it to his portrait of Christ as the Servant of the Lord. This secrecy vanishes at the cross, when Christ's identity is plainly proclaimed (15:26, 39). It becomes clear that our Lord wanted no major proclamation of His true identity before His work was finished. Disciple and reader alike must understand that Messiah's first coming was not to side with the Jewish aristocracy against Rome, but to do the Lord's work as a suffering servant. There is no true discipleship without understanding this (8:34; 10:38-39). Glory follows suffering. As with the Master, so with His followers (Lk. 24:26, 1 Pet. 2:21). Discipleship in a hostile age includes not only mountain top victories and power over obstacles (Mark 1-8), but also opposition and suffering (Mark 9-15).

Other topics for preaching from Mark include:

- the responses and emotions of our Lord
- the failures of the disciples (1:37; 4:13; 4:40; 5:31; 6:36-37; 6:52; 7:18; 8:4 following 6:52; 8:16-21 with Jer. 5:21; 8:32-33; 9:6; 9:18b; 9:33-37; 10:35-38; 14:10, 19, 50, 66-72)
- a comparison of Jesus in Mark with the suffering Servant of Isaiah (Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12)

In our comfortable day, where toil and suffering are quickly becoming foreign concepts, it is essential that Mark be preached. Without Mark we have an incomplete portrait of Christ. And an incomplete portrait of Christ will impoverish the Christian's life! 

Endnotes

- 1 Look up Mark's use of a grammatical feature known as the "historical present."
- 2 Matthew-lion, Mark-ox, Luke-man, John-eagle
- 3 This famous topic is known as "the Messianic secret" and is clearly emphasized in Mark.

Dangers to the Assembly

From without...from among...from within

The greatest danger facing modern assemblies is a lack of concern for true spirituality, giving emphasis to form over substance.

Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-38 contains words of warning. There were perils that the elders needed to be aware of and to which they had to respond. In particular, there were three dangers facing the assembly: the danger from without, the danger from among, and the danger from within.

The Danger from Without

Paul, by the Spirit, says he knows *"savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."* For the assembly in Ephesus this was a solemn and relevant warning. There were Judaizers traveling around posing as apostles. Their goal was to destroy the liberty the believers enjoyed in Christ and bring them under bondage to the Law. The false teachers had no concern for the flock and would thus destroy the assembly. This type of attack is not so great a danger today, as there are few "wolves" at the door of any assembly seeking to destroy the testimony.

The Danger from Among

The second danger related to people in fellowship and perhaps those already in leadership. There was the problem of a person pushing his own agenda and seeking a following. Sometimes individuals will grab an issue and promote it for their own interest. In these cases, the view is validated and enhanced if others can be convinced to adopt the same stand. This type of scenario has certainly happened in the past and remains a possibility in the present.

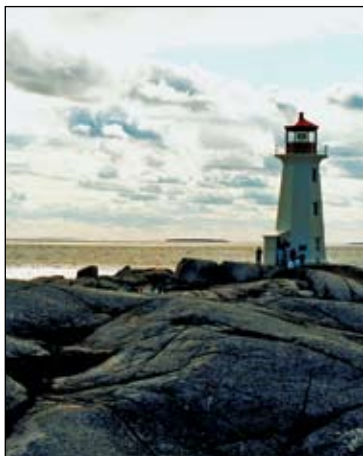
The Danger from Within

However, most assemblies that decline or disappear do so neither as a result of wolves coming in among the flock, nor as a result of men who destroy the work by a particular point of view. Most assemblies that decline and disappear do so as a result of erosion over time, a gradual slide down the slope to extinction. The leadership, and indeed the whole fellowship, fail to take heed to Paul's third warning: the danger within. That is, believers fail to maintain spiritual realities and thus the testimony is affected, and the assembly declines in influence, perhaps fading away entirely.

Acts 20:28 says, *"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock."* Verse 31 reads, *"Watch and remember."* The greatest danger facing modern assemblies is a lack of concern for true spirituality, giving emphasis to form over substance. There are seven thoughts in Acts 20:31-38. In order to give emphasis, we will present them as negatives. These are the dangers from within that can destroy an individual's effectiveness and an assembly's testimony.

1. Carelessness (v. 31). There is the danger of taking things for granted, when complacency displaces watchfulness. We can become careless in devotion or reverence and lose sight of what is important. We grow to care less about the assembly and the gathering together of God's people. It is *"the little foxes that spoil the vines."* A careless attitude may seem insignificant at the start, but there will come a time of reaping the results. The cure is to watch and remember, not allowing important matters to slip.

2. Shallowness (v. 32). There is also the danger of letting the priority of God's Word slip. It is God's Word that is *"able to build you up."*



DANGERS TO THE ASSEMBLY *continued*

But the opposite is also true: without quality time in the Word, one will fall. It is the Word in the heart that is the safeguard against sin and the sword that is to be used against Satan. In a world where there is so much truth on the bookshelf, many believers are malnourished when it comes to the solid meat of God's Word. Time, effort, and energy cure shallowness. God's Word must be appreciated, then it must be appropriated, and finally it must be applied.

3. Covetousness (v. 33). The lure of things is pervasive in our materialistic world. There is constant appeal to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. It becomes easy to believe that the blessing of God in this age is visible by prosperity. All of us can justify every purchase, but individuals know when there is covetousness in the heart. When desire rules a life, then that expression of covetousness is classified as idolatry. The cure for covetousness is contentment.

4. Laziness (v. 34). This is an age of leisure in the Western world. There are more days off than at any time in history, and there are more leisure activities available than ever before. It is so much easier to relax at home than to get involved in serious study or in assembly life and outreach. The cure is to develop a passion for eternal things, to redeem the time, and to be occupied in the service of the Lord.

5. Selfishness (v.35). With limited resources, Paul worked not only for his own support but for those who were with him as well. Beyond this he also found the wherewithal to provide for others who were in need. Though Christians generally give far beyond the levels of the unsaved, there is still great wealth and expenditure on what most of the world would view as luxuries. The cure is to forget about self and get lost in the service of others. To be "*rich in good works*" and to "*meet urgent needs*" that others face.

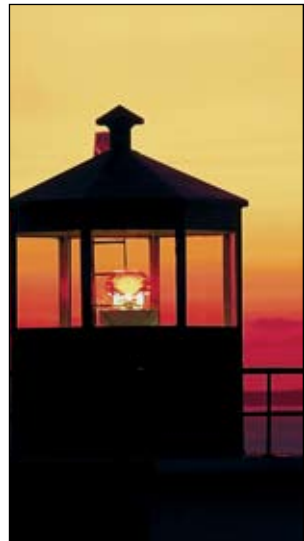
6. Prayerlessness (v. 36). The attendance at most assembly prayer meetings is a testament to the lack of interest in prayer. Prayer is, without a doubt, the most difficult exercise in the Christian life but also the most vital. Programming

and organizing have taken the place of praying and agonizing. The prayer meeting is acknowledged to be the powerhouse of the assembly but is virtually ignored by the majority. The cure starts with time at home developing the discipline of prayer, a living dependence on the resources that flow from the Father through the Lord Jesus.

7. Lovelessness (vv. 37-38). The death knell for any assembly is a lack of love. When tradition and formalism become more important than people, the work is in trouble. The proof of discipleship is that there is love for one another (Jn. 13:34). The world too often sees conflict and dissension when it needs to see a loving community in action. The cure is found in obedience to the Word, "*love one another.*" Love is a choice that flows out from God's love working in us. Love must be seen to be real; it is made visible through sacrifice, service, and supplication for others.

Take Heed

Though elders, and indeed the whole assembly, must be aware of the dangers from without and possible dangers among, most of all each of us must "*take heed to yourselves.*" There must be constant watchfulness and remembrance of the warnings Paul gave to the Ephesians. Assembly life involves work, effort, and energy. Consider Paul's commitment to the assembly as expressed in Acts 20:18-27. He was fully devoted to the furtherance of the work by sharing the gospel and building up the saints. The seven negatives listed above were absent from the life of Paul. The question for us, both individually and corporately, is how many of these are visible in my life or that of the assembly? If these things continue in the leadership or in the assembly, there will be a dim future for the work. It is unlikely that the assembly will rise above the spiritual level of the leadership. So it is thus incumbent that those in leadership "*take heed to themselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit made you overseers to shepherd the church of God.*" 🔔



In all of their watch care, elders must not neglect to watch themselves.

Passing the Baton

From where do new elders come?

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”
(2 Timothy 2:2)



During the tenure of Nehemiah, the threat of attack was so intense that laborers had to repair the Jerusalem wall with one hand and hold a weapon with their other (Neh. 4:16). Every generation will face similar challenges that demand a hand-tailored response if the people of God are to be protected. Our era is no different. The problem lies in the ever-widening gap between fervent servants of yesterday and devoted servants of today. The middle is littered with holes of the once faithful but now absent. In order to seal the breach, today's new elder will have to shoulder the work at a much younger age than those who preceded him. Our call, then, is to carry on the work of shepherding while simultaneously training the generation that follows to fill the gap of those who are now “missing in action.” We must endeavor to perform our spiritual work with one hand and train those who follow with the other.

“...commit these...”

Paul's words in 2 Timothy 2:2 ring with notes comparable to our crisis. In a time when men such as Phygellus, Hermogenes, Hymenaeus, and Philetus were truant, Paul commands Timothy to arm the next generation. “Commit (paratitemi) these things...” carries the image of placing something beside someone else so that he might exercise care over the item—not placing the object directly in his hands, but right beside him, hoping he will share your concern for the item in question. This entails risk and an element of fear. This reality startled me when teaching medical students how to repair a wound. It was agonizing to stand by watching their hesitant, quivering, and inefficient hands use my scalpel and my

needle driver. The stitches were not exactly perpendicular or smooth or snug. Soon my anxiety rose to such heights that I had to leave the room and return when the pupil was finished. I was placing the patient who trusted me to be meticulous and proficient, directly into the hands of a green, somewhat overeager novice. I could only pray they would treat the wound, and the patient, with the same passion and care I would.

We have the same consternation when we are training young people to take the baton. We are required to cross over the chasm of reservations and reluctance, trusting in the Good Shepherd who obviously has a far deeper concern for all involved than we do.

We should not overlook Paul's sense of obligation to teach Timothy. “The things you have heard from me, commit these to faithful men...” (v.2) implies that the mentor assumes responsibility to groom his beloved student. It presumes that Paul was comprehensive not only in his teaching, but additionally in his model for living and endurance in the spiritual race (cf. 3:10f). We cannot let this fact escape us. Those charged with training are required to be faithful both in imparting, and in demonstrating, the truth. Elders have this same mandate if they are to help develop future elders.

“...to faithful men...”

Timothy is commanded to “shop” for a certain brand of individual: One who is “faithful.” This speaks of trustworthiness, as in the case of honest business activities. Timothy is to search for those who will conduct the work of Christ with diligence. This trusted worker stands guard for the owner's best interests. A faithful man of God will do the same. He will

PASSING THE BATON *continued*



reliably tend to the Lord's business as if the Master were always present (for He is!). Likewise, we are to search for the precious commodities of dependability and steadfastness. When they are found we, like Timothy, are to pour our lives into such individuals.

The challenge lies in cultivating faithfulness. To do so, elders may bring four broad categories into focus:

1. Private Life. This refers to an understudy's personal habits and disciplines. It is not merely a spreadsheet of weekly quiet times, but what is gleaned and applied from such moments. It involves identifying bad habits: impulsiveness in decisions, procrastination, illogical thinking, incompleteness of projects, wandering eyes for lustful looks, pleasing one's self, uncontrolled temper, being quick to take offense. An exhaustive list is impossible, but the importance of examination of character cannot be overstated. William MacDonald has provided a hand-crafted tool for this topic: *The Disciple's Manual*, which the mentor and pupil can study together, composing challenging chapter review questions to exchange.

2. Personal life. Encouraging an individual's family life is paramount. It provides the most sensitive thermometer of spiritual health. The degree of respect given by his spouse and the level of trustful obedience demonstrated by his children reverberate in the canyon of his personal life. Furthermore, his reputation with his supervisor and co-workers is vital to consider. All such factors are considered, not to be nosy, but rather as key indicators to help you tailor your assistance to your beloved understudy. Studying 2 Timothy or the godly men and women of Scripture is invaluable in developing a proper personal life.

3. Public Life. There are two arms to this giant. One is the manner in which your student handles people. Does he show grace toward all, especially toward the rude and ill-mannered? Is poor discernment displayed in inappropriate appearance; for example, being alone with those of the opposite gender? Is there balanced, unbiased assessment of others' motives? Does he have a thick skin but a tender heart with others? A systematic study of Proverbs and Philippians cultivates a servant who is both "user friendly" and selfless.

The second arm is demonstrated in how the potential elder conducts himself in public teaching. Is his ministry biblical, understandable, and practical? Is there too much presumption that the audience understands the


point without illumination? Do irritating and distracting habits emerge each time he is in front of people? Is he capable of a tremendous opening story but no sustenance from the Bread of Life? If there are deficiencies, perhaps the answer can be found in more thorough Bible study or a better comprehension of the principles of interpreting Scripture. Perhaps an exhaustive perusal of homiletics such as *The Preacher and His Preaching* (A.P. Gibbs) is all that is needed.

4. Prayer Life. Spiritual work is accomplished by spiritual tools. This should be relatively uncomplicated, for there are only two tools we must know well: the Word of God and prayer (cf. Acts 6:4). Out of the two, prayer seems the most likely to suffer infrequent use. We must teach the immeasurable worth of concentrated, consistent, and continual prayer. Many a biographical testimony adds fuel to this fire. Joint investigation of these resources will serve the student and teacher well.

This arrangement is not meant to be overwhelming, but a simple starting point for shepherding.

"...to teach others also."

This last principle, although visibly concise, has a way of remaining hazy in practice. Simply put, elders must complete the training loop by instilling in the next generation the zeal to train others. We cannot afford another gap in the line where one generation fails to equip those who will follow. It is not enough for us to merely maintain the walls of God's spiritual house. We must inspire those we tutor to assume the responsibility of preparing those who come after them. This is not taught academically so much as it is fervently imparted by a life wholeheartedly dedicated to passing the baton. Indeed, this is the demand and call of our generation.

Will you be the shepherd who faithfully strengthens what remains and also trains the younger to do the same? Will you trust the Lord to the point of laying spiritual treasures beside the next generation and watching them shoulder those cherished possessions? Mistakes are inevitable, but will your reaction serve as a stepping stone or a stumbling block? Will you invest the effort not merely to look for the faithful, but also to cultivate faithfulness? And will you instill the vision in others to re-invest themselves in those who will follow their generation? The call rings loudly in every era of time since the inception of His church. Let us be the people to see it obeyed. 

Is It Safe for the Sheep?

What defense mechanism did our Creator give to sheep?

The roaring lion stalks the flock. They need to be defended!

What are the duties and role of the elders in a local church? W.E. Vine defines an elder in this way: “those who being raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to have spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over the churches.” As a part of this oversight and care, elders are to serve as protectors of the flock.”

In the business world, human resources departments have helped most companies do a better job of laying out their policies, procedures, and practices. They have created manuals that attempt to define everything, particularly job descriptions. It is most likely that in an interview process today, you will receive a detailed job description. This is to ensure that everyone—the employee, employer, and others working alongside—understands what is expected in the organization.

We need not create a manual for the local church—the Spirit of God has already done that. But we do need to know what our manual says about local church government. Let’s look at the elder’s role as protector in three aspects: the Scriptures, the sheep, and the shepherds.”

The Scriptures

This talk of job descriptions leads us to our first consideration: What saith the Scriptures? I once did a study with the express purpose of researching the duties of an elder. In relation to our topic of the under-shepherd as a protector, notice the following references:

Acts 15:1-6, 22, 23 – The apostles and the elders were called together to settle the matter of false doctrine. It is their duty to guard against such.

Acts 20:28-31 – Notice the instruction the

Word gives. There is a real danger: grievous wolves will enter in among the flock. It *will* happen! The elders are to watch out for such. Paul warned the flock. The elders should do the same.

Titus 1:7-11 – Elders protect by holding fast the faithful Word. In this manner they can be sensitive to error. They should then use the Bible to exhort and convince the flock of the truth that refutes those who are in error. The sword of the Spirit is a weapon of protection here.

1 Peter 5:1-9 – The passage begins with an address to the overseers, “*Elders, I exhort you.*” In focusing on our topic, remember that Peter is addressing the elders among the flock when he says, “*be sober, be vigilant.*” The word “sober” means to be alert, to watch. Elders are to protect by watching. The word “vigilant” means to keep awake and to keep watching. That’s double watching. Peter tells us why: “*because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*” There is impending danger from Satan himself. Not just to stumble you or to trip you up, but to *devour* you!

2 & 3 John – In these epistles, the elder provides a good example as he warns of false teachers (2 John) and of problem areas that are negatively affecting Christ’s church (3 John).

The word “elder” is not used in Hebrews 13:17, but here we read of the ones “*that have the rule over you...for they [elders] watch for your souls,*” which once again speaks to us of protection.

Scripture, then, is clear that a major duty of the elder, as under-shepherd, is to be a protector of the flock. He accomplishes this by carefully watching for danger and warning the flock of potential or immediate attacks by our adversary.



IS IT SAFE FOR THE SHEEP? *continued*

The Sheep

What defense mechanism did our Creator give to sheep? Speed? A shell? Strength? Fangs? A roar? Camouflage? In a sheep, we see a small animal which has virtually no way to defend itself. We need protection! The Scriptures tell us that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Great and Good Shepherd. However, He has placed among us those who are His under-shepherds.

Darby translates Acts 20:28 as follows, *“Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God, which He has purchased with the blood of His Own.”* The Lord has placed the elders in the front line of the flock’s defense. In this verse, the King James Version says, *“the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.”* Why? The sheep need shepherds because the sheep need protection!

Sometimes we hear people criticizing their elders for being “closed-minded.” They say, “My elders want to approve what we are going to do before we do it.” Or “When we present an idea they always point out the problems.” Another common complaint is, “My elders are suspicious of anything new!” Often these comments are spoken with indignation toward the elders. But isn’t that part of their “job description”? It is their God-given responsibility to watch and warn, to protect the flock. Do you suppose the sheep criticized the shepherd boy David as he killed the lion? When the shepherd sees danger, he takes action. If the flock understands this aspect of the elders’ role and supports them in it, then all is well and the shepherds can do their job.

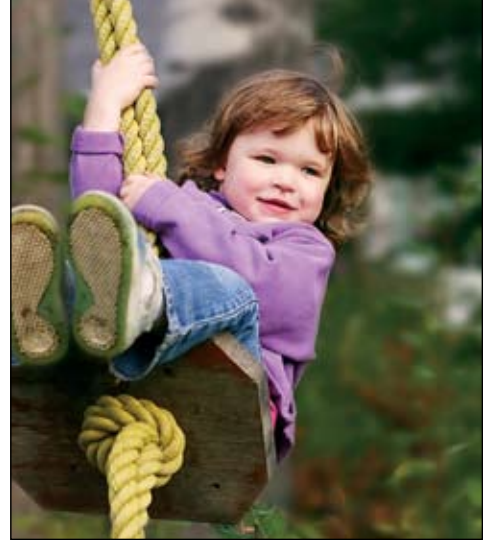
There are grievous wolves that will come in among God’s sheep. There is a devil who walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We need to be defended! In God’s design for the church, He gave us elders as protectors. I’ll take all the help against danger I can get!

The Shepherd

Our friends in Human Resources tell us it is just as important for the one doing the job to understand their duties as it is for the others in the organization to understand their duties. The elders must understand and execute their role as protectors.

Our children were recently given a Zip Line. This is a cable that you run between two trees and then slide down using a pulley. Even though this product came

Just as fathers should be the protectors of their children, so elders should be of the flock of God.



complete with instructions, there were many variables which required trial and error during the set-up process. We experimented with

a few different locations for the new Zip Line. We found that an arrangement that was more dangerous with greater potential for accidents yielded a more exciting ride than the location that provided a safe ride. But I left the Zip Line set up in a location that I knew would be safe for all my children.

However, later, my older two boys (ages 11 and 8), who are quite industrious, decided to find a better location and moved the Zip Line. They wanted a location in between the safe, boring ride and the thrilling ride of danger. My wife, upon hearing what they had done, asked me this question, “Is it safe?” I didn’t know the answer. From a distance and with a quick look it appeared to be safe. But I had not helped them set it up this time as I had done originally. I had not closely inspected the route. I was unaware of what testing they had done to determine its safety for all my children, from the youngest to the oldest. My wife stated, lovingly of course, “Honey, you are their protector”. Message received. I went to investigate it immediately.

It is worthwhile to examine the passages referenced above and then ask ourselves: elders, are we protecting the flock? Are we watching? Are we warning? Would we recognize false doctrine if it were taught in the next meeting (Acts 15)? Would we see a wolf in the distance (Acts 20)? Would we be able to both exhort and to convince the gainsayers (Titus 1)? Where is the lion (1 Peter 5)? Are any being deceived (2 John)? Is there a Diotrefes among us (3 John)? Is it safe?

Dear under-shepherd, don’t lose heart. The Spirit has equipped you and your brothers for the task you have been given. Hold fast the faithful Word!

Let us all take heed to Hebrews 13:17, *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”* These words contain direction for every believer. Shepherds must protect the sheep; and a wise sheep will submit to that protection. 📌

Take Heed *by F. B. Meyer*

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28).

THERE ARE MANY LESSONS IN THIS VERSE:

1. The Christian worker must not neglect his own soul. He must take heed to himself, as well as to the flock. Our temptation is to neglect our close walk with God in our eagerness to save others.
2. The overseer, elder, or bishop is not set over the flock, but is in it. So, to the end of life, the most eminent of God’s servants must remember that he is but a saved sinner, needing the blood and righteousness of Christ as much as the weakest of the flock.
3. The office of the elder is given by the Holy Spirit. It is He who lays on him the burden of souls and equips him for his work. He, too, is willing to direct and use. How awful and solemn the responsibility! Woe be to us if we exercise our ministry only for the eye and ear of our fellow-men!
4. Notice that the church is distinctly asserted to be God’s. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. His by choice, by purchase, by the drawing of the Holy Spirit. The church has been taken out of the world to be God’s peculiar possession and delight.
5. The purchase money of the church is here said to be God’s own blood. It is a remarkable expression. It stands alone in the Word of God, but brings out very distinctly the thought that the entire Godhead achieved man’s redemption in the offering of the cross.

Adapted from “Our Daily Homily”



Why Are Elders Necessary?

Aren't there other options that are just as good?

There is a movement today which emphasizes the importance of the family—and that is good. The family is the basic unit of society and sound families give strength to a culture and nation. Strong families with a father and mother present, marked by reverence for the Word of God, will give children the training and security which they desperately need.

However, some feel that the family is all that is needed. The local church is given a secondary place, if any. There may be an emphasis on the leadership of the father, who becomes the absolute authority in the family and the source of all spiritual training; other teachers and leaders are viewed as unnecessary. The family may meet with other families in a home at times, but the association is rather tentative and easily broken. The family is paramount over the church.

Of course, it is right for the man to take leadership in his family. *“Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church, and He is the Saviour of the body”* (Eph. 5:22-23 NKJV). But in connection with that exhortation, there is an emphasis on the church’s submission to Christ. To minimize the importance of the local church is to neglect the teaching of Scripture. God has emphasized the importance of saints meeting together in assembly fellowship and warns against neglecting this (Heb. 10:25).

The apostles gathered believers together into churches wherever they preached (Acts 2:42). A family isolated in a home lacks the gift and wisdom that can be found in a larger body. The place is not important, but, as groups begin to grow, they often discover that a home is not adequate for meetings.

As an assembly meets together it will need leadership. The apostles could have established churches with

a bishop or pastor in charge, but under the leadership of the Holy Spirit they appointed elders. A plurality of leadership will bring wisdom to the decisions made. *“And in a multitude of counselors there is safety”* (Prov. 24:6). To be without recognized elders was regarded as a lack, a sign of weakness. Paul wrote to Titus: *“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you”* (Titus 1:5). He then spelled out the qualifications for elders. They should be the most spiritual, godly men in the fellowship, models for the saints to follow (1 Pet. 5:3).

Elders are responsible for the teaching and care of the flock entrusted to them. *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”* (Acts. 20:28). They must correct error, *“holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict*

those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). One day they must give an account for their care of the flock to the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4). It is a heavy responsibility.

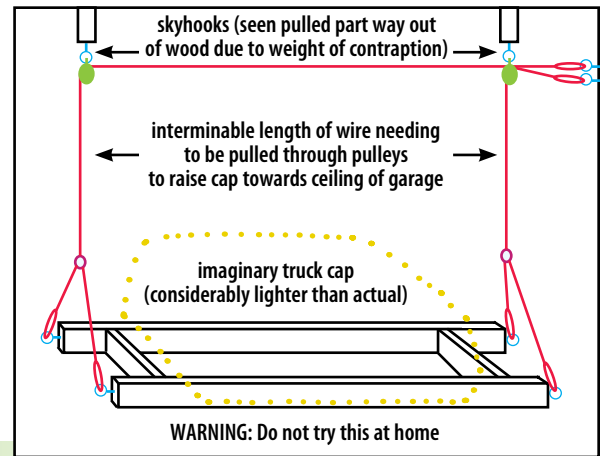
The believers are exhorted to be submissive to the leadership of the elders. A man may be the leader in his own home, but he is not a law to himself. If he becomes extreme in some of his views and slips into false doctrine, the elders are there to help him recover. Of course, the elders’ authority is found in God’s Word, not in arbitrary, human decisions. Be very slow to ignore the leadership of your elders. *“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give an account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you”* (Heb. 13:17). Do not be a rebel—rather *“submit to one another in the fear of God”* (Eph. 5:21). 🕊

—DONALD L. NORBIE



The Failed Project

Gravity wins again.



The Bible narrative is full of stories that prove this point: failures can yield the most valuable lessons we learn in life. Don't be afraid of failures. Rather, be afraid of learning nothing from them.

When my truck is in the camper mode for traveling with the Good News team, the truck cap has to be stored somewhere. It is generally known that ability in art and engineering rarely come in the same person, but this has never deterred me from trying my hand at building things never conceived of, even by the experts at Home Depot.

I took a good look at the limited space in my garage and concluded I could suspend the cap on two-by-fours held with a system of cables and pulleys to the ceiling rafters. When completed, it was something to behold. Unfortunately, it was not something to be used. I had not fully comprehended the gravity of the situation. Gravity, as in the law of gravity. Although a remarkable contraption, it came short in only one point—the thing didn't work! After three heroic tries with various family members setting personal bests in the clean-and-jerk department, I caved in and wrote off two days of work and any pride I had left in constructing the gizmo.


Instead, my dear wife quietly suggested a simple table-like framework over the kids' bikes. Simple. Cheap. Functional. Hernia-free. A one-hour job, even for me. Sigh.

But the exercise in non-functional engineering was not a complete waste of time. It set me to thinking about the distinct role of failure and the keys to success in the spiritual realm. Here were some of the bits salvaged from my Rube Goldberg invention:

1. How thankful I am that there is never any weakness in the forces that hold us from above. My "skyhooks" yielded to the weight placed on them, but the One who upholds us and "is able to keep us from falling" (Jude 24) invites us to cast all on Him. He, after all, hung the worlds in place.

2. How thankful I was to have others willing to share the burden with me. Even though they had their doubts about the project, I never doubted my family's commitment to help me in my need. I was reminded of the scene in Exodus 17. Moses was doing some mighty lifting—his people were under a deadly attack from Amalek, and inexperienced Joshua was leading Israel in battle. "But," we read, "Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun" (v. 12). How much we owe to those, often at a distance from us, who intercede on our behalf like Moses.

However, we also owe a debt of gratitude to those, who like Aaron and Hur, encourage all who grow faint under the heavy burdens of living down here. The word to all such, "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12), is not given specifically in the context of interceders, but an exhortation to stand by those who are passing through a serious time of life training and need to be encouraged not to give up under the strain (v. 11).

3. I'm thankful that little, if anything, is lost to the child of God, even in our mistakes. Not only the two-by-fours and hardware, but the lessons learned can all be used in other, often unexpected, ways. So it is in life. God allows us to fail; but when we fail, He doesn't (Zeph. 3:5). And for God's people, failure is not the end of the story. Often it is the beginning of something far better. 

DEATH IS YOURS

(1 Cor. 3:22)

IN THE OLD CREATION, man belonged to death. Hence it has been truly said that the very moment man begins to live he begins to die. Solemn fact! Man cannot escape death.

There is not so much as a single thing which man possesses in the old creation that will not be wrenched from his grasp by the ruthless hand of death. Death takes everything from him and reduces his body to dust.... The wealth of the universe, were it in a man's possession, could not purchase one moment's respite. Death strips man of all and bears him away to judgment. The king and the beggar, the peer and the peasant, the learned philosopher and the ignorant clown, the civilized and the savage—they are all alike.

But on the other hand, in the new creation death belongs to man. There is not so much as a single thing that the Christian possesses which he does not owe to death. He has life, pardon, righteousness, peace, acceptance, glory, all through death—the death of Christ. In a word, the entire aspect of death is changed. Satan can no longer bring it to bear upon the soul of the believer as the judgment of God against sin. Our Lord Christ has wrested his power from him, and He now holds in His omnipotent hand the keys of death and the grave. Death has lost its sting, the grave its victory; and, therefore, if death does come to the believer, it comes not as a master but as a servant. It comes, not like a policeman to drag the soul to its eternal prison house, but as a friendly hand to open the door of the cage and let the spirit fly to its native home in the skies.

—C. H. MACKINTOSH



Photo montage: John Nicholson