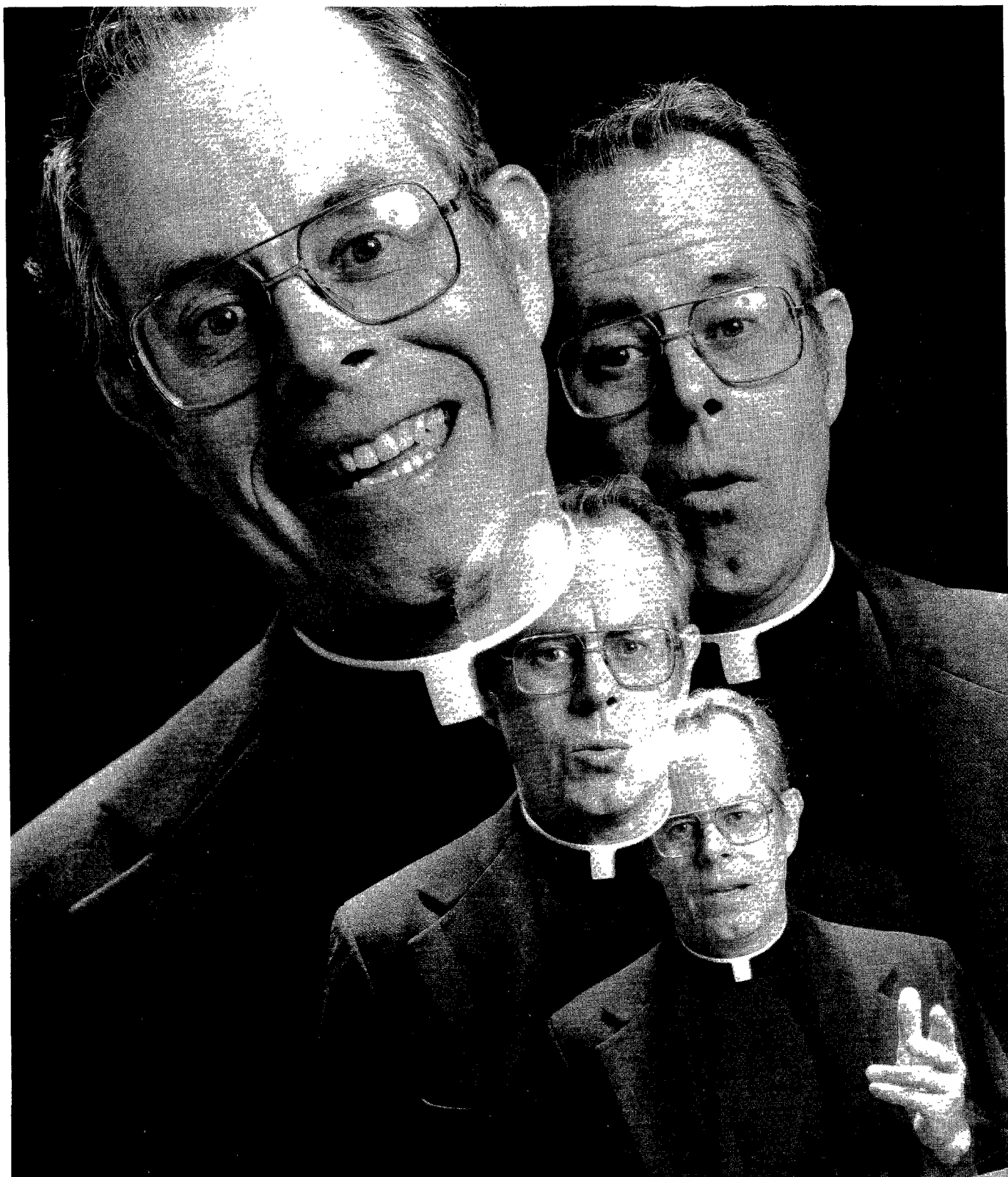


Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/January 1984



Grow, Preacher, Grow

Resurrection or Immortality?

I find most of the material in *MINISTRY* to be well researched, well organized, and convincingly presented even when I am not personally convinced. However, I find Robert M. Johnston's article "After Death: Resurrection or Immortality?" (September, 1983) to be an exception. Regarding Greek thought, Socrates believed so strongly in a life after death that he did not delay drinking the cup of hemlock as some would have had him do. Also, during later Greek thought, paradise and hades came to be thought of as separate places and certainly contained the idea of the disembodied state. Since Jesus accepted this concept in Luke 23:43, it has the authentication of the Head of the church, who should be our supreme authority. It is inconceivable that Jesus meant that both He and the thief would be in their respective graves before the day ended.—Texas.

There is no question that the Greeks believed in conscious existence after death. In fact, Johnston's point is that the Christian church took over such Greek concepts apart from Biblical evidence. In regard to Luke 23:43 ("Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise"), simply moving the comma so that it follows the term to day would make the meaning consistent with the rest of Scripture. (Remember, punctuation was added to Scripture centuries into the Christian era.) John 20:17 indicates that when Mary attempted to embrace the risen Christ on Sunday morning, He asked her to refrain, explaining, "I am not yet ascended to my Father." Placing the comma as suggested makes Jesus say to the repentant thief, "I say to you this very day, when all seems lost and My enemies have apparently triumphed, that you will be with Me in paradise." No time is indicated.—Editors.

The September issue contains a listing of "Prominent Christians in Support of Conditionalism." While it is significant to me that most of the men you list are those who denied that the Bible is the verbally inspired, plenary, inerrant Word of God, I am writing now about

one man you listed who *did* accept that position—John Darby, Plymouth Brethren expounder on prophecy. You have horribly misrepresented this good man, who believed emphatically in the immortality of the soul and the endless conscious punishment of the wicked. Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of his voluminous writings would know better than to make the blunder Leroy Edwin Froom did. Darby strongly insists upon man's immortality and the eternal conscious punishment of the wicked. He describes as a system of error: "That the soul is not immortal at all, and that death means simply ceasing to exist; therefore, life is to be found only in Christ and after a certain quantity of punishment, the wicked will be turned out of existence, or consumed by the fire of Hell, and exist no more."

In *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, "Miscellaneous No. 2," Darby answered the fourteen positions taken by Samuel Minton in a series of sermons at Eaton Chapel. Minton's position was the same as yours, and Darby, in his rebuttal, described it with the following terminology: "false," "claptrap," "idle inattention to the Scripture," "Scripture never says anything of the kind," "extreme carelessness of assertion," "dishonest," "gross blunder," "quite false," "another blunder," "trifling with Scripture," and "wholly of Satan."—Tennessee.

We regret mistakenly listing John Darby as one who supported conditionalism. The error is ours rather than Dr. Froom's. Froom quotes Darby (The Church's Present Hope, 1842): "I would express the full conviction, that the idea of the immortality of the soul has no source in the Gospel; that it comes, on the contrary, from the Platonists. Indeed it was just when the coming of Christ was denied in the church, or at least began to be lost sight of, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul came in to replace that of the resurrection." In reading this quotation we failed to note the final sentence: "It is hardly needful to say that I do not doubt the immortality of the soul; I only assert that this view has displaced the doctrine of the resurrection of the church." Froom also notes several pages

later in his work a reference in the Bible Echo of 1874 to Darby's "early conditionalist positions, later abandoned." Thus we, not Froom, erred in listing Darby.—Editors.

Grief Recovery and more on the resurrection

I found the September, 1983, issue to be edifying (to borrow an adjective from St. Paul). Larry Yeagley's Grief Recovery program is a wonderful idea. I recommend that you make this three-part series available in booklet form.

I was also very interested in Robert Johnston's article on resurrection. He speaks forcefully to the issue in a way that reminds me of Oscar Cullman's classic lecture at Harvard, my alma mater. Your publication is appreciated.—Lutheran church, Massachusetts.

I read Robert Johnston's article on the resurrection (September, 1983) with great enthusiasm. Praise God for a wonderful revival of Biblical theology!—California.

If you're receiving *MINISTRY* bi-monthly without having paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928, *MINISTRY* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers, but we believe the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help to you too.

We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulders, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you cannot use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy; requests should be on church letterhead.

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Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/January 1984/Volume 57/Number 1



COVER: DAVE SHERWIN

Grow, Preacher, Grow/4. W. Floyd Bresee. Are you satisfied with how well you are preaching? The author offers inspiration *and* a course to improve your skills.

Single Is Biblical/9. Kit Watts. What does the Bible say about being single? How should the church relate to its singles? And those who are single to their fellow church members?

Grief Recovery—3/12. Larry Yeagley completes his series on the Grief Recovery program, dealing with after-care, preventive ministry, and the pastor's own grief.

How Much Is a Fetus Worth?/15. Jack W. Provonsha. Is there any basis on which a pluralistic society can reach a consensus on abortion? Is there any other ground for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable abortion than the determination of when the "tissue" becomes human?

Making an Appeal/19. Kenneth H. Livesay.

Confidentiality and Caring/21. The new Parson to Parson feature begins with a question as to how a pastor can lead a church community to provide support to a person unwilling to share his problem with the community.

Why Resolutions Fail/23. B. Russell Holt.

Controversy Over Paleomagnetic Dating/25. Warren H. Johns. The various forms of radiometric dating seem to point to a long existence for the earth. Those who originated paleomagnetic dating claim that it indicates the earth cannot have existed more than ten thousand years. The author examines the validity of this latter method.

Communication, Not Confrontation/29. Anne Elver. Must disagreements always be destructive of relationships? In what ways can married people handle disagreements to bring positive results?

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Grow, preacher, grow

Preaching comprises a major part of the impact a minister makes on the lives of his congregation. Most of us have taken some kind of public speaking course as part of our preparation for the ministry. The author suggests we may grow in our preaching abilities even more easily now—and introduces a course on preaching offered through MINISTRY. □ by W. Floyd Bresee



The old lady entered the church carrying her ear trumpet in a little black box. As the morning sermon began she opened the case and painstakingly screwed the hearing device together. Putting it to her ear, she turned it expectantly toward the preacher—and listened. Gradually a frown clouded her face; hope drained

away. Finally, with a sigh, she disassembled the thing, laid it in its case, and snapped the lid shut!

That woman from a generation now past symbolizes people all over our world today who have stopped listening to preaching. People who claim to believe in Christianity are staying home from church because they're getting no help from Christian preaching. Those who do attend church too often infer that they come in spite of the preaching, and not because of it. Preaching has fallen on hard times.

The fact that, in the vernacular, to

W. Floyd Bresee, Ph.D., is director of continuing education for the Ministerial Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

preach means "to bore unnecessarily," and a *sermon* is "an annoying harangue," proves the pulpit's poor reputation. Helmut Thielicke contends, "Actually preaching itself has decayed and disintegrated to the point where it is close to the stage of dying."¹

Yet, if church history teaches us anything, it is that as preaching goes, so goes the church. H. M. S. Richards challenges: "Read your church history. Read not only what the lines say, read between the lines, and you will see that in every age the fortunes of the church of God on earth have risen or fallen with the fortunes of preaching. Wherever preaching came up, the welfare of the church came up; wherever preaching has gone down, the church has gone down."²

Preaching is neglected

The church isn't taking preaching as seriously as Christ intended it to. Leaders aren't taking it as seriously as listeners expect them to.

Preachers neglect preaching. Why do people usually call their ministers preachers? Preaching is not the thing we do most. Why don't they call us visitors, trainers, or administrators? Because, no matter how we ministers may view preaching, people at large look on it as the most significant and the most visible thing we do.

This is true of Catholics as well as Protestants: "The quality of Sunday preaching is four times more important in the identification of Catholics with their church than are birth control, divorce, abortion, papal authority and

In other words, Jesus picked the thing that would have the very highest priority and said that even that did not provide sufficient excuse for neglecting the preaching of the kingdom.

the ordination of women, all put together. Yet, in the mid-1970's, 20 percent of the American Catholics thought the Sunday preaching they heard was excellent—as opposed to almost 50 percent the decade before. By the end of the 1970's, for Catholics under 30, the proportion went down to 10 percent. The most important thing that priests do, they do very badly indeed.”³

I used to be chairman of the department of religion in an undergraduate college that trained pre-seminary ministerial students. One weekend a teacher from our department preached in a nearby city. Responding to that service, a physician who had been in the congregation wrote me this plaintive letter:

“I don't know what . . . [the speaker's] role at Union is, but after listening to a sermon effectively delivered and one giving evidence of having been the object of much thought, I will rejuvenate my despairing hope. This hope has been that somehow, in that setting from which our ministers arise, there would be someone who senses the deep spiritual hunger we experience. Someone who has a kind of sensitive awareness of the devotedness of people who come to church week after week seeking food, yet too often whose efforts are rewarded with scarcely crumbs.”

Adventist preachers neglect preaching. Theoretically, Seventh-day Adventists stress preaching. When planning a new sanctuary, their architects are encouraged to place the pulpit in the center of the platform, to symbolize the centrality of preaching in worship. In practice, however, Adventists tend to neglect preaching.

Why? The size of the congregation doesn't depend much on the quality of the preaching. If the Methodist minister doesn't preach well, his people may begin drifting toward the Presbyterian or some other church. If the Adventist preacher doesn't do well, though, his congregation has little else to choose from on Saturday morning. Neither does his salary depend on his preaching—it is

based on his years of service and not on the size of his congregation. His job security seldom depends on his preaching. Hired by his conference rather than his congregation, the worst he faces is that some members may complain to the conference president. Administration applies little pressure toward good preaching. If conferences pressed other goals no harder than that of outstanding preaching, I imagine few would ever be reached! It's probably good that little external pressure toward better preaching is applied. The problem is that too few seem able to do their best without it.

Preaching is important

Let's look at three reasons why preaching is important:

1. *Preaching is central to Christ.* It was central to His own ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath

the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:59, 60).

That sounds pretty harsh. I think I never really understood what He meant until my own father died. Word came to me that he was almost certainly on his deathbed and that he wanted to see his children. I was very busy and nearly two thousand miles away. A trip would cost money I couldn't afford. What do you suppose I did? I went, of course. After being with him for a few days I returned to my work just in time to hear that he had died. I went again. Why? Because the death of my father took priority over everything else.

Those to whom Jesus spoke belonged to a society that placed an even higher evaluation on the duty of children to their parents than ours does. In other words, He picked the thing that would have the very highest priority and said that even that did not provide sufficient

If conferences pressed other goals no harder than that of outstanding preaching, I imagine few would ever be reached!

anointed me to *preach* the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to *preach* deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to *preach* the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, 19).

Christ commands His followers to preach: “Go ye into all the world, and *preach* the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Ordination to the Christian ministry is an ordination to preach: “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to *preach*” (chap. 3:14).

Christ, in fact, is apparently unwilling to accept any excuse for neglecting the preaching of the kingdom: “And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and *preach*

excuse for neglecting the preaching of the kingdom. Now, I don't know what excuse people are using today to neglect preaching, but it is not good enough to convince Christ. We just don't take preaching as seriously as Christ intended us to.

2. *Good preaching helps people.* John Ruskin, in speaking of the weekly worship hour, describes it as “that hour when men and women come in, breathless and weary with the week's labor, and a man “sent with a message,” which is a matter of life and death, has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts, . . . to convince them of all their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try by this way and that to stir the hard fastening of those doors. . . . Thirty minutes to raise the dead in!”⁴

No congregation ever lives through

Learning to preach a sermon is a lot like learning to hit a golf ball. No amount of reading, no amount of theory, helpful as they may be in their place, will ever make you good at it.

the 168 hours of a week without some serious hurt coming to someone. The minister never steps into the pulpit without facing someone who looks up at him longing for healing. What a responsibility rests on the shoulders of the preacher during that one golden hour of the week! What a challenge!

3. *Good preaching even helps the preacher himself.* It is exciting to know that the Holy Spirit has used you in the pulpit to help others. If this article is reaching you at a time when you are not feeling good about your ministry, improve your preaching and see how much more exciting the ministry becomes.

Preaching is difficult

Preaching is difficult because it takes time. A young minister soon learns that his work is never caught up. There is always more work than time. His whole ministry tests his good judgment in determining what should come first and what must wait. The ministry comprises three areas: preaching-teaching, pastoring, and administrating. All are necessary. To rebel, as we are all tempted to do at times, and say that one of the three ought to be eliminated is neither right nor possible. But we should take great care that the three are always kept in their right order—preaching-teaching first, pastoring second, and administrating last.

Why are the three always getting turned around backward in the budgeting of our time? Because it seems that the administrating *has* to be done. We need to (1) appraise the priority of each properly, (2) plan carefully to take the greatest possible advantage of our time, and (3) preach the kind of sermons that lay a burden for service on those members in the congregation capable of sharing pastoral and administrative duties.

Actually, good preaching can save time otherwise spent in administration. Hungry animals fight. It's more effective to feed our congregations than to spend our time trying to keep peace while they're still hurting and hungry.

Preaching is difficult because it takes work. We may hate to admit it, but perhaps the greatest reason for our neglect of creative, Christ-centered preaching is simply that it is hard work. But there is no shortcut. I. T. Jones wrote: "Back of all great music, writing, and speaking are hours of grinding toil. Wilfred Funk, editor and publisher, recently said he had gathered definitions of genius by those who are called geniuses. Not a single genius spoke of talent, or inspiration. All spoke of work—hard, brutal work, drudgery—the capacity for taking infinite pains."⁵

Of course you're busy. Most preachers I know are about as busy as a one-eyed cat watching two rat holes. But you are not so busy you cannot find time for those things most important to you. When we say, "I don't have time," we are not so much stating a fact as making an excuse—the one excuse that will appease the conscience for our not doing the hard work that creativity requires.

Preaching is difficult because it requires a love for Christ—and people. Peter said to the lame man at the Temple gate, "Such as I have give I thee" (Acts 3:6). What could be harder than trying to give others something we don't have? Christian preaching preaches Christ. But how can we preach Christ if we don't have Christ—if He doesn't have us?

An old woman was listening to the reasons her neighbors gave for their minister's success in the pulpit. They spoke of his gifts, of his style, of his manners. "No," said the old lady, "I will tell you what it is. Your man is very thick with the Almighty." You may not have had all the training you wish you had. You may not have all the preaching gift you would like to have. But nothing on earth can keep you from having all of Christ you need.

Not only must the preacher love Christ, he must also love people—lethargic, stubborn, self-centered people. When he begins losing his love for people he begins losing the ability to help them through his preaching. Henry Sloane Coffin said, "Preaching is putting the hands of the people

into the hand of God." What a privilege, preaching! What excitement to take hold of God with one hand and of a sinner with the other and help that man place his hand in the hand of God! But you cannot do it without having hold of both hands.

To preach well you must love much. If you love Christ you'll have something to say. If you love people you'll work hard to say it well.

Your preaching can improve

Take heart, your preaching may not have to improve a whole lot to make a whole lot of difference.

The question isn't really whether or not you can grow, but whether or not you can accept help. Many can't. Perhaps they feel threatened—or are just too stuck in their old ways. Those are the only ones who can't grow.

As John 21 records, Peter fished all night and caught nothing. The next morning Jesus said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." If I had been Peter I might have said, "Master, you are a preacher, and I don't tell you how to preach. I'm a fisherman, and you needn't tell me how to fish." But Peter willingly accepted help—and instantly succeeded.

All Christ's biddings are enablings. If He has called you to preach He stands ready to help you preach successfully. Don't give up on yourself. And whatever you do, don't give up on your Lord. Make 1984 the year you place yourself so completely at His disposal that He can make of you the preacher He means for you to be.

MINISTRY magazine can help you grow

MINISTRY has designated 1984 as the year in which it especially wants to help preachers with their preaching. And to do so it has developed a new, innovative, exciting plan. This article begins a series of twelve articles on preaching to be published in the twelve issues of 1984. A study guide has been prepared containing exercises and assignments through which you can apply each month's

Practice does not make perfect. It only makes permanent. Hit a golf ball in such a way as to slice the thing often enough and you eventually develop the feeling that that's the right way to hit it.

article directly to your preaching during that month. The Andrews University Center of Continuing Education for Ministry will offer continuing education units (CEUs) for those requesting them. (As far as we know, this is a first for a professional journal!) Whether or not you want the CEUs, I encourage you to send for the study guide, read the articles in *MINISTRY*, and apply the reading to your preaching month by month as you follow the study guide assignments.

If I were you I think I might be saying at this juncture, "Well, I would like to grow in my preaching. I'll just read the articles on preaching as they come throughout the year." You can do this, of course—but it won't do much for your preaching. Here's why.

In preparing my doctoral dissertation on the teaching of preaching, I interviewed the sixteen teachers of homiletics voted by their peers as being the most outstanding in the United States. It was exciting to have the privilege of in-depth interviews with such men as Grady Davis, Reuel Howe, Edmund Steimle, Merrill Abbey, Ronald Sleeth, Donald MacLeod, James Cleland, and Donald Miller. These well-known homileticians strongly emphasized three points:

1. *You learn preaching best by doing it.* Theory isn't enough. Learning to preach a sermon is a lot like learning to hit a golf ball. No amount of reading, no amount of theory, helpful as they may be in their place, will ever make you good at it. Preaching is at least partially a skill, and you learn a skill only by doing. Your preaching will change very little if you only read the upcoming series of articles. You must put the ideas suggested into practice in some planned, organized manner. You need to apply the theory to your preaching through the exercises in the study guide.

2. *You learn preaching best by doing it in real-life situations.* Seminaries are continuously criticized for doing a mediocre job of teaching in the practicum areas. I find their failures both understandable and excusable. After attempting to teach preaching for sixteen years I became convinced it really can hardly be done in

the academic setting. Homileticians usually attempt to teach the skill of preaching by having their students preach to other students or by setting up some other contrived situation. The student sees too little correlation between what happens in class and what will happen when he "really" preaches. He knows that the teacher might not like his sermon, but don't worry—his congregation will love it.

Continuing education, a purposeful, lifelong learning experience, is so important to the minister because only after life has taught him his lack of ability in such areas as preaching is he really ready to learn. Congregations have an awesome way of informing him of this deficiency. When heads start nodding in slumber rather than assent he knows he's in trouble. When he pours out the burden of his heart upon his people week after week and nothing happens he knows he has a problem.

Merrill Abbey commented: "I'm really beginning to feel, to be honest about it, that much of what we do with communications is with pastors who are already in the field. These guys are very highly motivated. They know the situation. They know what they're up against; students just do not."⁶

This sudden dawning of awareness will likely take the preacher in one of three directions: he decides either that preaching doesn't work or that it doesn't work for him or that under God he must learn to do it better. If you are in the last group, this *MINISTRY* series and the accompanying study guides have been designed for you.

3. *You learn preaching best by doing it in a real-life situation—and following it up with evaluation.* Practice does not make perfect. It only makes permanent. Hit a golf ball in such a way as to slice the thing often enough and you eventually develop the feeling that that's the right way to hit it. To hit a ball straight, you take a swing, evaluate what you did wrong, make an adjustment, and then hit it again.

We learn preaching in the same way. But how do we know whether we've hit

the ball straight? People tend to say about the same thing at the door after we've preached no matter how well or poorly we have done. We want the Holy Spirit to inform us, and I believe He longs to, but too many times we mistake mere feeling for the Spirit's voice. If we make a foolish blunder in delivering a sermon we tend to think we've ruined it. We're listening too much to our feelings. We think if our wives liked our sermon, it must have been good; if they didn't, it wasn't. Our faith in our wives moves us toward becoming the kind of preacher that one person likes rather than the kind all of the people need.

How does the preacher accurately evaluate his preaching? How can he really tell when, under God, he has preached well? The study guide accompanying this series of articles answers those questions.

In Matthew 25 Jesus tells of the lord who gave five, two, and one talent, respectively, to three servants. If we were to modernize the story a bit and apply it to preaching we would learn two tremendous lessons:

First, when the preacher with a small gift refuses to improve what he does have, this displeases God. The five-dollar preacher preached a five-dollar sermon. The two-dollar preacher preached a two-dollar sermon. But the one-dollar preacher didn't feel he was given enough of a gift to make it worth his while to work at his preaching at all. He was so discouraged over having so little talent that he lost what talent he had.

Second, God is pleased with any preacher doing his best with what he has. The parable suggests that the two-dollar preacher who preaches a two-dollar sermon pleases God as much as the five-dollar preacher who preaches a five-dollar sermon. In fact, the five-dollar preacher faces an almost overwhelming temptation to think, Even if I get lazy and become satisfied with a four-dollar sermon, I'm still preaching twice as acceptably as the two-dollar preacher. Not so! God asks only whether you're willing to work hard enough to do your best with whatever preaching gift is

The parable suggests that the two-dollar preacher who preaches a two-dollar sermon pleases God as much as the five-dollar preacher who preaches a five-dollar sermon.

yours.

May God pity the one-dollar preachers who are so discouraged over the smallness of their gifts that they have virtually given up on their preaching! May He have mercy on the five-dollar preachers who, because they have become satisfied with comparing themselves to two-dollar preachers, are preaching two-dollar sermons!

What about you? Whether you are a

five-dollar, two-dollar, or one-dollar preacher is not the important question. Are you willing to work hard enough to do your best with what your Lord has given you? Please accept our invitation and make 1984 the best year of growth in your entire preaching ministry.

¹ Helmut Thielicke, *The Trouble With the Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 2.

² H. M. S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep* (Washing-

ton, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), p. 34.

³ San Bernardino Sun, July 25, 1981.

⁴ Iliion T. Jones, *Principles and Practice of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 50.

⁶ Merrill Abbey, personal interview, June 18, 1970, Edmund Steimle, in a personal interview conducted on May 16, 1970, said, "I see more and more of the practical areas, which were in the seminary curriculum in the past, being turned over to programs of continuing education when the man becomes highly motivated."

Preach your way to better preaching!

Just reading about how to be a better preacher isn't enough to *make* you a better preacher—even when you're reading a series of articles like the one that begins in this issue, a series that carries you step by step through the preaching process. That's why we've developed a course that lets you actually preach your way to better preaching!

You've never taken a course like this one!

The heart of this plan is a study guide that accompanies and builds on the twelve-article series that will be running all during 1984 in *MINISTRY*. Look at some of the topics we've lined up in this year-long emphasis: • logic versus emotion • preaching from the Old Testament • illustration in preaching • organizing the sermon • narrative preaching • practical application • preparing the preacher • Christ-centered preaching.

But the real payoff comes when you allow the specially prepared study guide to focus the article information and apply it to your own preaching. How? The study guide includes exercises to help you analyze your preaching—not in some artificial context, but in the setting

that really counts, your congregation. It contains assignments that you will complete in connection with your actual preaching week by week. It will guide you as you preach your way to being a better preacher. And continuing education credit is available too!

You can take advantage of this unique learning opportunity for only \$3.00.

You have to prepare a sermon each week. You have to deliver it to your congregation. Why not channel all that creative energy into preaching your way to better preaching through a really different and effective approach? Why not make 1984 the year you become a better preacher?

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We don't want those of our readers who are on the complimentary bimonthly list to miss out. You can receive the six intervening issues of *MINISTRY* and have the entire twelve-article series on preaching along with the study guide and continuing education credit for only \$12.00. That isn't very

much to spend on something as important as your preaching.

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Single is Biblical

Are the Old Testament emphases on marriage and the family and Paul's teaching on the value of being single contradictory? Are singles a significant-enough portion of the church's membership to warrant special attention? Are they a relatively homogenous group? □ by Kit Watts



et us begin at the beginning. Adam was a single in a world of partners, and a lonely man. He had challenging work to occupy him during his first hours of life—he examined and named all creatures. And yet this fascinating, creative work did not erase his loneliness. Instead, it increased his awareness that he was the

only one of his kind.

Adam was a perfect man in a perfect world. He literally walked with God. Nothing stood between them. We can imagine that when Adam rose from the dust from which God had just made him, God was standing there smiling into his face. Perhaps they shook hands. Maybe they clapped each other on the back. But they surely talked and talked—after all, God was a God of words. Yet even in this paradise of beauty, diversity, and challenge, even with this open communion

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with the Creator, Adam felt a need. Something was lacking.

I'd like to suggest that the God of three Persons—the triune God—knew what it was, for God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone." God made us in His own image. And what is that image? I suggest that it is an image of fellowship, for our understanding of God suggests that the three Persons relate to one another in a deep, intimate, companionable way.

Within a few hours of his creation Adam realized that he needed that kind of relationship, he needed somebody like himself. Of course, it was the beginning of time, and this beautiful new earth was empty. So God gave Adam not only a companion but a wife, and instituted marriage.

In light of this initial pattern, how can I say, "Single is Biblical"? The New Testament seems to throw a different light on the matter. As 1 Corinthians 7 points out, the apostle Paul approved of the single life style and practiced it. He urges us to consider staying single. His instruction sounds a little contradictory to the Genesis record of God's institution of the first marriage. Let's look at the Old Testament briefly and try to resolve this contradiction.

The day that Adam and Eve sinned they did not run out to meet God for their usual evening visit. The Lord had to find them, confront them, and explain the consequences of their sin. Those consequences included pain, sep-

aration, and death—a rather gloomy picture. But God tempered this darkness with a ray of light. Some day, He promised, a Child would be born who would deliver them (see Gen. 3:15). This promise was plain enough to Eve that she no doubt looked upon each of her own newborn children and thought, Maybe, maybe this is the One! And throughout the Old Testament the birth of a son was like a match struck in a dark night.

As time passed and the nation of Israel emerged, birth by birth, the family came to have an ultimate significance. Marriage was more than an expression of love between a young man and a young woman. Marriage was the way that you linked arms with your forefathers and moved the human chain forward a few steps toward the future, toward the coming of Messiah. In this context, staying single was heresy; it was regarded as a waste and a tragedy.

Paul, in the New Testament, wrote on the other side of Messiah. Link upon link, generation upon generation, Israel had finally reached that horizon of hope. Messiah was born. The match that would never go out had been struck, and Messiah, Jesus, walked among us. He opened a new era in which marriage is no longer compulsory. As Christians we have freedom to choose. Marriage is a gift of God, but remaining single is an option. It is acceptable in God's sight. You can probably imagine how Jews must have reacted to the idea of permanent

We discount singleness partly because we are Protestant. Ever since Martin Luther we've been trying to establish the respectability of marriage, but in doing so we have tended to neglect single people.

singleness. It was radical—an unthinkable idea! And so Paul found it necessary to argue in favor of singleness.

One illustration he uses in 1 Corinthians 7 is circumcision. Paul reminds Christians that circumcision is no longer necessary to prove that you are in the right relationship with God. In the same way he says that marriage does not place you in a better relationship with God. It's your heart that matters. Being a practical man, Paul also goes on to say that staying single does have some advantages. Without family responsibilities you may be more free and flexible to serve God. The work of God's church in the new era is not to populate the earth, but to preach a message. And so Paul tries to establish a favorable climate in the church so that single people can be accepted for themselves. The church, of all places, should be open to and supportive of single adults.

We should not read into Paul's words that marriage and family are out and that singles are in. Nor should we think that Paul says single people are better or holier than married people, as some have interpreted him. But Paul does break the barriers of the past. We are acquainted with Galatians 3:28, where Paul exclaims, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul seems to expand that list. In effect he is saying that in Christ there is neither single nor married. Of course, this does not mean to Paul that we have no ethnic origins, no social, sexual, or marital distinctions. Rather, these distinctions among us are not to be the source of bias or discrimination.

In summary, the Old Testament gives prominence to marriage, children, and sons. And the New Testament provides solid endorsement for singles. Single is Biblical, if you will. It is viable. It is OK. But these things should be brought in contact with the Creation story. For in Creation we learn that because we are made in the image of God, we are made for fellowship.

It interests me that God is not pictured in some type of marriage in the God-head. The relationship of the members of the Trinity seems to be much more basic—a mutual, satisfying interaction on a deep, personal level. The Creation story is an endorsement of marriage. But, more deeply, it says that we human beings have a need for fellowship, for personal relationships that have broader grounds than our sexual drives. All of us realize that it is possible to survive without marrying. But infants die without human love. And adults may be warped or depressed if they don't have significant friends. God is complete in three Persons, and I would suggest that we become complete and healthy only when we are in a fellowship of three—ourselves, God, and at least one other human being.

In New Testament times a new kind of family was created that would sometimes transcend sexual relationships or blood ties. This new family is the church. Paul describes the church in 1 Corinthians 12, using the metaphor of the body. Jesus is the head; we are the other body parts. Some parts, like the eyes and the ears, come in pairs. But other parts are single parts—the head, the nose, the heart. Paul calls each part important, no matter what its function. The head should not say, "I can do without the feet." The church would surely be handicapped and incomplete without each of our contributions. So Paul visualized the church as an oasis, a place where our particular gifts are recognized and valued, where we can feel welcome and at home, whether single or married, and where we can find significant, intimate friends. We are truly the children of God, made in the image of fellowship. We need our Creator, but we also need one another.

Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 7 that some folk have the gift of being single. In our world we tend to discount this idea. We may share the view of a conference president who recently told a single seminarian, "If you're not married by now, there's something wrong with you." We discount singleness partly because we are Protestants. Protestants

protest the idea that celibacy is better than marriage, and rightly so. Ever since Martin Luther we've been trying to establish the respectability, the okayness, of marriage, but in doing so we have tended to neglect single people. Marriage has become so important in our thinking that we suppose unmarried people are abnormal.

Protestants have correctly brought back a Biblical concept of marriage. And in the Seventh-day Adventist Church we express support for families through baby dedications, wedding ceremonies, tributes to mothers and fathers, engaged encounters, family-life workshops, marriage-enrichment programs, and other programs for the family. But marriage is not the only life style the Bible endorses. In fact, a large number of people in our congregations are not married. I'm single and I'm aware of singles, but the statistics surprise even me. As many as one third of our adult members are single. One out of every three or four grown persons sitting in your church is likely to be single! And yet some churches use 100 percent of their time and resources for just 65 percent of the members. In the past five or ten years I suppose I've heard five or ten sermons about some aspect of family life, but I'll have to admit that I've heard only two on singles, and I've preached them both myself. I believe, however, that the church has greater openness than ever before to singles.

It is important to recognize that singles are not a homogenous group, just as married people aren't. I hear about good marriages, marriages made in heaven, marriages on the rocks, of newlyweds, of couples with children, of those without, and of couples whose children have left the nest. Single adults can also be differentiated. And their needs vary with their situations. Here is what five types of single people have told me about themselves:

The first group is made up of widows and widowers. Death sometimes dissolves marriage with a swift and cruel blow. Surprisingly enough, the survivors have some things working in their favor to help them cope with being suddenly

And now to the church and its institutions. Care for all the sheep in your flock. Let your announcements, your prayers, your Sabbath school lesson quarterlies, and your books at least mention singles.

single. For example, they usually have enjoyed the social approval that comes in our society with being married, and many of them have a strong network of friends. A man on our Andrews faculty, speaking of the support he received when his wife died suddenly, told me, "I realized how precious friends are." A woman told me that when her husband passed away she returned from the hospital to find people standing on the porch waiting to welcome her home, to share her grief, and express their comfort.

The second group, those going through a separation or divorce, often get a different response. Some learn how cold a cold shoulder really is, especially if they are seen as the guilty party. Friends tend to rally around widows and widowers. They tend to vanish from the divorcée like dew before the noonday sun. The divorcée returns to singlehood not only with little support from friends and the church but often with their condemnation. It's difficult for someone to survive the loss of a marriage for which he had high hopes, but it is devastating to be shunned by those whom he or she had believed were friends.

If possible an even more difficult transition lies ahead of the third group—the single parents. The single parent has a double grief: his or her own loss and the grief that the children feel. And in cases of separation or divorce, the single parent must attempt to put behind his own failed relationship and yet try to help the children maintain a successful relationship with that absent parent.

The fourth type of single considers himself or herself as temporarily single. The church probably has the most positive view of these. Their biggest problem is how to date and mate.

And there is an important fifth group—singles who choose not to marry—not now, at least. They come to this present choice out of many circumstances. Some feel that in their present situation, getting married would be the wrong thing to do. A young man among my colleagues at the university sent me a

note saying, "Some people don't seem to realize a person can be an adult without being married. . . . They don't know that life can be fulfilling without a spouse. This is not to say I am not planning marriage, it is just that at this time in my life I don't think that it would be best."

Others choose to be single because they take seriously the Seventh-day Adventist Church's strong stand against dating or marrying anyone who doesn't share common religious beliefs—and there aren't enough Adventist partners to go around. And finally, in every generation there are a few singles like Jesus, like Paul, who for the sake of the kingdom commit themselves exclusively to God's work. I wish the church could welcome them and their unique gift.

Now let me conclude as I think Paul might. Let me say something now to singles, to marrieds, and to the church and its institutions at large.

To the singles, I exhort you to value yourself as God does. The shepherd went out not to find a couple, but a single, sheep. Remember that you are an important part of the body of the church. You help to make it complete. Without the heart, the stomach, how could the body live? Let no one despise your singleness. Jesus is a worthy example. The Bible proclaims that marriage and singleness are options. Choose freely.

Be friendly. You cannot live a happy life without human love. Actively search out friends who are kindred spirits. Invite other singles and couples and families to eat with you, to go out with you, to play and pray with you. You must have a support group, people who like you and will share their inmost selves with you.

Also, be aware that although you have friendship motives that are as pure as the driven snow, there will be times when you may be misunderstood. Not all married people are as secure and happy as they appear to be—some will be unable to tolerate the threat that you unknowingly pose. Be kind to them. And have other couples among your friends so that the loss of one will not overwhelm you.

Finally, singles, share your success as

singles with others. We must, as singles, learn from one another and help one another.

To the married folk, Thanks to the many of you who have opened your hearts and homes to singles. A widow told me, "I love to be invited to my married friends' homes; and I especially appreciate it when they tell me that I can bring along a friend, and then at a table of couples I am not alone." Personally I've been blessed by many married people who have consciously determined to widen their social circle to include singles. A retired librarian taught me how to play racquetball recently. A lawyer in the city where I used to live is helping me build a grandfather clock. Willingly a couple whose children had left home let me adopt them as my parents. Many a Friday I call to say, "Hey, I'd like to come over this weekend," and they never turn me down.

And now to the church and its institutions. To you I say, Continue to support marriage and family life. But realize that you have tended to forget your New Testament roots. Care for *all* the sheep in your flock. Let your announcements, your prayers, your Sabbath school lesson quarterlies, and your books at least mention singles. It helps us know that you know we exist and that we matter. Provide for singles in your policies. Continue to include them in your family-life programs. Singles will always be sitting in the church's pews. Consider groups and seminars for singles of different ages and personal circumstances. With your encouragement, singles will often lead out in this needed work. Plan a pastoral ministry for singles. It will not only help the singles already in the church but could be a means of outreach.

And finally, I urge the church and its institutions to aid us in recognizing capable singles. We need role models. Singles we can look up to and emulate. Christian singles. Give them public responsibilities. Let single people pray and preach and administer. Give them your blessing, for a small investment in your singles may produce a large return.

Grief Recovery—3

Dealing adequately with grief involves not only intensive support through the critical period immediately following the loss but also longer-range follow-up and even preventive ministry. The author concludes his three-part series on the Grief Recovery Seminar with this article, which suggests ways in which you can provide this ongoing help. □ by Larry Yeagley



Grief does not end with a five-week group program called Grief Recovery. The five sessions merely help a grieving person to get off the launching pad. Adequate after-care must complement the group dynamics of the Grief Recovery sessions if that person is to be locked in the orbit of recovery. Such care must continue for at

least a year. For some individuals the parish will need to provide support for several years.

After-care is not an accident—careful planning and training are required. I know this sounds foreign to some pastors. They have been schooled in planning for evangelism, financial management, church growth, Vacation Bible School, and dozens of other programs in which concrete results occur early. But caring for grieving people over a period of years is slow and painful work. Growth can take place only at a certain rate, often so gradual that the pastor has difficulty putting his finger on the gains made. It is not easy to get excited about planning and training for grief support, but it is one of the most important ministries in the life of the parish.

Every member of God's church is a minister. This Biblical concept has been solidly entrenched in the New Testament church by the Great Commission given by our Lord: "Go ye into all the world." I am suggesting that the church is the greatest resource of healing. It must go into the world of those who grieve. That world of grief may be caused by death, divorce, separation, illness, senility, or geographical relocation. It may be created by the loss of body structures and functions as in mastec-

tomy, amputation, colostomy, disfigurement, or surgery. It may be brought about by the loss of a valued relationship because of death, divorce, or estrangement. That world can be caused by the loss of material possessions or by the developmental losses that result when all the children leave home or when an elderly couple separates. The members of God's church are to be living reminders of Jesus' love. People in the world of grief need to be reminded not by empty words, but by living reminders who speak with eloquent action.

Plans for adequate grief support in the parish begin with the development of a "pain bank" from which grieving persons can draw helpful resources when necessary. Parishioners who have experienced and adjusted to various losses can be trained to form such a "bank" through adult education courses in grief counseling or related topics. Motion pictures and filmstrips, as well as a number of books, are available for such training. A dedication service that is open to the congregation could be an excellent way of opening the pain bank. The idea is to join parishioners who have suffered loss with pain bank members who have had similar losses. This matching of losses in after-care is a very efficient use of the church's resources.

A pain bank secretarial pool is invaluable. The secretaries keep accurate records of those who have suffered a loss, the type of loss, and other information

pertinent to good follow-up. This information is given to the appropriate caregiver from the pain bank. A summary of after-care visits and services are recorded. The secretaries call a random number of parishioners prior to the anniversary of someone's loss and invite them to call, write, or visit the grieving person on what might be a very painful day.

Care conferences can be held periodically to discuss progress in particular after-care cases. The pastor should be present at the conference. The pastor and the pain bank personnel can develop care plans for each family in grief. This will prove to be a real conservation of the parish's energy, and it will guarantee that no grieving parishioner is missed.

If you really wish to be progressive, invite the family members being discussed at the care conference to meet with the pain bank. Together both groups can assess growth, plan future care, and pray for the continued peace and healing of the family.

The pastor and the parish are in touch with many church and community resources. These resources can be tapped, in conference with the family, to assist with specific needs.

The length and intensity of after-care are gauged by the needs and the response of those who are grieving. After a sufficient amount of adjustment has been achieved and a reasonable time has elapsed, the grieving person can be

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invited to be a part of the pain bank. This takes the person's focus off of self and places it on others. It increases self-esteem and restores a purpose in life.

Organizing the parish for after-care is different for smaller churches than it is for larger churches. In a smaller church the pastor may train the whole church to be a pain bank. The after-care plan should be adapted to meet the unique needs of each parish.

It is not uncommon for me to have a series of counseling sessions with 25 percent of those who attend a Grief Recovery program. One woman who attended the sessions referred five of her family to me for counseling!

This happens for several reasons. Some people do not feel free to share their emotions or their loss situation with a group. Sometimes the grief is so deep that there isn't sufficient time to talk about it in the group. Others have such a small support system that they need to talk things out privately with the presenter. A few persons will begin to do their grief work toward the close of the sessions, and they need further help. Yet another reason is that problems unrelated to the loss are exacerbated by the loss. These problems can be solved better in the private counseling setting.

During the five sessions of Grief Recovery I always give my phone number to the group. I urge them to talk to me either on the phone or in formal counseling sessions. Going through grief can be very frightening, and people need to know that I am available. They need to know that I am not going to leave them "high and dry" after Grief Recovery is over.

I recently took a survey of participants who went through Grief Recovery as long ago as three years. They unanimously suggested that follow-up group sessions be held about three months after the program ends. These sessions are really group counseling sessions.

For the first twelve to eighteen months after the sessions are over I suggest that the presenter or a member of the pain bank call each participant on the phone. The calls should be weekly or biweekly

for the first three months. As adjustment progresses, the calls can be reduced gradually. Phone calls sometimes uncover a need for pastoral counseling.

In one-to-one counseling sessions the pastor should feel free to lead the grieving person to the Master Healer. This is the ideal time to help the person back to a renewal of a faith so rudely shattered by loss.

The practice of preventive ministry is the key to paving the way for adequate grieving. This is a method of ministry that notices losses and reactions to losses early enough to prevent the devastating effects of unresolved grief.

Nothing will ever replace pastoral visitation. In the homes of the parishioners the pastor touches the sensitive nerves of the family. Here the pastor learns about the major and minor losses of the young and the old. The parishioner's home provides a comfortable environment where the losses can be discussed, solutions can be found, prayers can be personalized. In the home the pastor learns of future events that could spark a crisis and can help the family lay a strategy for meeting the crisis.

The alert pastor will keep a file on each family. This should include names, ages, notes on loss, and reactions to loss. Follow-up plans can be noted as well.

The midweek prayer meeting is another ideal time for preventive ministry. Short series can be presented on family relationships, loneliness, meditation, crisis management, worry, and other practical topics.

The discussion of a topic at the prayer meeting should not consume the whole hour. Plenty of time should be allowed for testimonies, prayer requests, and prayer. The pastor can guide the congregation in helping a particular parishioner who shares a problem. This reaching out by the congregation to a person who is experiencing a loss creates a support group for the person. Church is no longer just a place to spend a quiet hour or two on the weekend.

The hour of worship on Sabbath morning should offer healing for those who are grieving. Preventive ministry

calls for an occasional sermon about grief. I preached on this topic in a small rural church, and an old man shook my hand at the door and said, "That was a strange sermon." I controlled my tongue. After an awkward silence the grandfatherly saint added, "But I guess a fellow needs to think about these things sooner or later—maybe sooner than he thinks." My reply was "That's why I preached the sermon."

I never apologize about preaching on grief and grief recovery. I have done it many times. Without fail, someone in the congregation finds peace and encouragement. Frequently there have been great losses in a parish shortly after I have spoken, and my sermon prepared the congregation to adjust to the loss and equipped it to support the grieving family.

The subject of the sermon is not the only factor in healing. The tone of voice and facial expressions contribute to the therapeutic effect of worship. There is very little healing to a broken heart when the pastor shouts, scowls, and scolds. A warm smile and a friendly voice are healing agents. And it is not only the sermon that is involved. Every phase of worship may address the brokenness of the human spirit, or at least be conducted with a sensitivity that will not add to the pain of those who are suffering.

My convictions about preventive ministry grow out of sharing tragic losses with many people. Frequently I see people suffering needlessly because of misconceptions of God's nature. I was called to a hospital room late one day. A man facing major surgery had dreamed two nights earlier about his surgery. He saw the physician operating on him. He saw himself die on the operating table. The dream did not make him afraid; he simply wanted to know how to get ready to meet God.

"I haven't been much on religion for the past twenty-two years, Chaplain. I went astray, but I want to come back to God again."

"What happened to take you away for twenty-two years?" I asked.

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"Well, I'm not judging anybody, you understand. It's my fault for getting discouraged. Twenty-two years ago my 3-year-old boy died. I was going to church regularly then. When the preacher came out to the house, he said God was punishing me for some wrongdoing. That's why Jimmy died. And, Chaplain, I've been angry at God ever since."

Dozens of tragic incidents like this lead me to appeal to pastors to examine the concepts of God that are being presented in the services of the church. Are the concepts Biblical? Are they presented in a healing manner?

Preventive ministry, like after-care for the grieving, is no accident. It is the result of careful planning. If a pastor is serious about preventive ministry, he can arrange for a needs-assessment conference in which the pastoral staff and the leadership personnel of the parish sit down together and study the needs of the parishioners. Once the needs are identified, the methods of meeting them can be defined. The pastor is advised about the kinds of sermons, midweek prayer meetings, and seminars that are considered important.

It is amazing how much elders, deacons, and deaconesses know about the losses and the griefs of a parish. A whole sermon calendar often jumps out at the pastor as he listens to the conversation at a needs-assessment conference.

If a pastor is very courageous, he might try exposing himself to a congregational critique. A survey can indicate how well

the pastor has spoken to the needs of the congregation over the past year. Let the people tell the pastor if the services and sermons have been healing and hope building.

Another form of preventive ministry is casual conversation with parishioners. The pastor who has learned to listen to deeper levels of hurt will detect troubled waters long before they become tidal waves. The problems that are perceived can be addressed early.

Preventive ministry is more apt to be practiced when the pastor remains in the same parish for a long time. The pastor with long tenure knows the parishioners intimately. He knows the resources for healing both in the parish and in the community. Short tenures sometimes make aloof pastors. Aloof pastors add to the pain of the parishioners.

Nearly every time a pastor moves from a parish, the parishioners grieve. The new pastor may experience difficulties as a result of the unresolved grief of the parish. When pastoral moves are frequent, the parishioner may remain withdrawn to prevent future hurt. This means the pastor cannot be present with people in the fullest sense of the word. Entering into the pain of grieving parishioners is more unlikely.

It is imperative that I mention the personal grief of the pastor. A pastor's grief can be caused by being with parishioners who have lost. It can also be caused by personal loss of family members. In addition, the pastor suffers a multitude of other losses that can cause

cumulative grief.

If the pastor has no opportunity to resolve personal grief, the needs of the parish will not be met. Every pastor needs a group of colleagues or a close friend who will share personal grief emotions. This can't be done in clergy conferences that deal predominantly with promotion and competition. All pastors require healing for their own pain if they are to minister to others in a healing manner.

I know pastors who have kept their grief feelings to themselves in the interest of being "pillars of faith" and "examples" to their parishioners. Some left the ministry. Others were misunderstood by parishioners and by denominational administrators. Transfers were arranged for some—changes that deepened the pain of their grief.

Preventive ministry, then, is a ministry to the minister as well as a ministry to the parish. It has been my observation that when the pastor educates the parish to reach out to those in brokenness, and when the pastor openly admits his own brokenness, the parishioners are more than willing to enter into the pain of the pastor and lead him to the portals of recovery.

I invite you seriously to consider conducting a regular Grief Recovery program for your parish or community. This dual approach of preventive ministry and curative ministry will bring a sensitivity to your congregation and to the pastoral staff never experienced heretofore.

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How much is a fetus worth?

In a pluralistic society it is difficult to reach a legal consensus, much less an ethical one. People may never agree on what it is that gives value to the unborn. They may never agree on the precise moment tissue becomes human, or indeed on what it means to be human. But a collective concern cuts across these diverse positions. It is here that the author makes his contribution to the controversial abortion issue. □ by Jack W. Provonsha



he frequent association of the feminist movement and pro-abortion groups is neither illogical nor unexpected, in light of the fact that both involve resistance to the traditional male-dominated social model. Nor is it difficult for those males who support general feminist aims (as I do) to agree that because women run

the risk and experience the discomfort of childbearing, they should have the most to say in the matter. But should that final say be absolute? Does no one else have a stake in the issue—the fetus, the father, the larger society? For example, we quite legitimately refuse a woman absolute rights over her newborn infant. She has no freedom to destroy it or even to abuse it. The newborn has a say, even if the rest of us temporarily have to speak for it. So far I have heard no feminist organization advocating freedom to practice infanticide. Apparently, somewhere between the warm fluid darkness of the uterus and the light of day, a value transformation takes place.

A similar transformation is apparent in the thinking of those obstetricians who view the fetus, at least the early fetus, in objective tissue terms—"the commonest tumor in the female uterus." Such doctors would never allow purely medical or even preferential considera-

tions to govern the care or lack of care given to the healthy newborn. Apparently, for them too something happens on the way to the delivery room.

Much of the abortion conflict, of course, has revolved around the question: When does a fetus undergo this value metamorphosis? Does it happen at conception, when supposedly it receives its human soul? (For centuries the church simply followed Aristotle's concept of soul-implantation at forty days for males and eighty days for females.) Does it happen when the embryo attaches itself to the wall of the uterus, giving it at least a creditable physiological future (a consideration, by the way, legitimizing abortifacient IUDs or "morning after" injections)? Does it occur at quickening, that mythical boundary between embryo and fetus when the fetus announces its nontumor presence (a concept that formed the basis for old English and early American law)? Does the change take place at viability, with its calendar arbitrariness? And what does *viability* mean when we compare the intensive-care differentials between Appalachia and a modern teaching hospital? Does it

happen at delivery when most of the baby is out (as some of the older rabbis taught)? Or at respiration ("God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul")? When does the transformation take place—ethically, not just legally? Lawyers and ethicists do not always see eye to eye on such matters. Law by its nature has to be precise and well-defined even if arbitrary; ethicists lie awake nights.

The higher question behind all of this concerns humanness. We are trying to discover when, in the course of its development, does tissue come to make human claims upon us? But this question presupposes that we have first decided what it means to be human, a question that haunts most of the bioethical issues modern technology has thrust upon us.

The field of inquiry is divided between those who draw a *qualitative* distinction between man and the lesser animals and those who do not. For those who do, such a distinction is usually defined either in terms of a unique human soul or in terms of functional capabilities such as making choices and being accountable.

Those who opt for an implanted immortal soul as that which gives

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I have heard no organization advocating freedom to practice infanticide. Apparently, somewhere between the warm fluid darkness of the uterus and the light of day, a value transformation takes place.

humanness to tissue have at least one advantage when it comes to the abortion issue. Conception is the only occasion in the whole course of events when something happens in a brief moment of time that is truly momentous. Those shades of gradations represented by terms like *implantation*, *embryo*, *fetus*, *quickening*, and *viability* are difficult to nail to the wall. Even delivery and breathing represent not so much profound modifications in the fetus as changes in location and adjustments in physiology. Is the fetus, ten minutes before birth, different in a way that would affect its value from what the child is ten minutes after?

Those who view humanness primarily in terms of function, who maintain that it signifies the ability to do something more than the brutes do (reason, choose, become creatively accountable), are the ones in real trouble with the abortion issue. Surely embryos and fetuses do none of these things. But neither do newborns—and there's the rub. Presumably it would be as acceptable on this basis to destroy newborns as to destroy fetuses, since both are in the same "prehuman" condition. Infanticide would be as permissible as feticide, and abortion would be ethically, if not medically, practicable in any trimester prior to birth. In this case the human question becomes *When?* When does one become accountable and thus human? At age 7? At age 12? (Surely not at 24 gestational weeks!)

The point is that in a pluralistic society, in which people's beliefs and value systems differ widely, it is difficult to achieve even legal, let alone ethical, consensus. We may pass laws based upon voting majorities and submit these laws to the scrutiny of an olympiad judiciary—which simply represents another level of voting majority—but we shall experience great difficulty making everybody happy with the results, as we have all learned by now.

It is difficult, but we must try. What follows in this article may be considered an attempt to bring a measure of rational tranquillity into an intensifying ethical storm. It may even serve to promote

more meaningful public practice.

I submit that the abortion issue cannot be resolved ethically by attempting to discover the *precise moment* when tissue becomes human. This is true, first, because a large segment of society does not accept the notion of an implanted immortal soul. In fact, I do not, in spite of the current rash of books and articles supposedly confirming the existence of such a soul after death. As an unabashedly Christian believer, I find that my conception of man's nature is conditioned more by the Hebraic, and thus Biblical, concept of man than the Platonic Greek dualism implied by the soul doctrine. But I must also be respectful of other people's points of view, as we all must be if we expect to live together on this troublesome planet.

Second, knowing the exact moment cannot solve the abortion issue, because all the moments after the first are moments only arbitrarily. Certainly the legal definition of viability as a precise number of weeks, however necessary for the convenience of jurisprudence, is nonetheless artificial.

And if one defines humanness only in terms of human function—or even the *potential* for such human functions as choice, accountability, et cetera—one opens up a Pandora's box and releases a host of other troubling questions. We readily recoil at the prospect of legitimizing infanticide, as such a definition might. And what of those individuals who by reason of brain defects occurring in genetic or intrauterine life can never, now or in the future, do any of these requisite human things? We have institutions overflowing with such blighted persons. What would happen to such individuals if we defined humanness in terms of certain functions? That ready-made source of nonresisting experimental subjects and organ-transplant donations has already been eyed with some eagerness. And what of our responsibilities toward those who can do such human things no longer, our senile, demented elderly? They too are "cluttering up" our institutional and financial landscape.

It is possible, of course, to grant intrinsic worth to a fetus, at whatever stage—even an embryo—on other grounds than its soul. Embryos and fetuses are of greater value than mere tissue largely because of what they may become. They borrow at least a part of their value from that possible future. But they also possess another intrinsic value, to those of us who are sensitive to such things. They possess the marvel that is the genetic code. As soon as all of those genes and chromosomes have come together, it has happened! Those fantastic, incredible things that will be taking place over the weeks, months, and possible years that follow are already established in that microscopic miracle of creation! Forgive the hyperbole, but one is almost tempted to bow one's head in awe and reverence at the vision. (I personally cannot understand how molecular and cellular biologists can avoid becoming deeply religious people.)

But even if, owing to a genetic or other defect, fetuses and embryos have no really human future, their value still transcends mere tissue value because of another quality that defines humanness. And this is my main contribution to the ongoing discussion.

Along with his ability to reason (*homo sapiens*) and to create (*homo faber*), man possesses another quality that is in a measure derived from these. He is *homo symbolicus*. (None of these qualities is possessed in absolute degree, of course, but their relative extent is so great, compared with other life forms, that we can almost speak of absolute distinctions between man and even those animals most similar to him.)

By *homo symbolicus* I refer to that quality in man that enables him to posit representative values. The term *symbol* in this case indicates any entity, object, thing, or action that refers to, points to, or stands for something else. It is this gift in man that forms the basis of his human activities. It is the basis, for example, of his articulate speech. Sounds or inscriptions come to have meaning for those in on the secret. When one reads or listens

When, in the course of its development, does tissue come to make human claims upon us? But this question presupposes that we have first decided what it means to be human.

to another talking, one does not merely see markings on the paper or hear sounds; one sees and hears ideas. The markings and sounds are thus symbolic. They refer.

The use of symbols is the foundation for most of our complex social interactions, including economic ones. Without the ability to attribute representative value to pieces of paper, bars or slugs of metal, or shiny pieces of mineral, some of which might be relatively worthless intrinsically, all of the "Wall Streets" of the world would grind to a screeching halt, and we would be reduced to a crude system of barter—a sack of wheat for a shirt.

Symbols are thus enormously useful to us humans at all levels of life. And they are not to be taken lightly—if humanness is to persist. Religious people have always understood their significance—in part because of another feature of symbols. Not only do they stand for, and thus communicate, attitudes, but they also *condition* attitudes, including value attitudes, toward the reality symbolized. The way one treats or regards the symbol may very greatly affect one's attitude toward that to which the symbol points. This is why religion has generally abounded with symbolic richness—rituals, liturgies, objects. Some religious structures almost overwhelm us with a sense of awe and reverence just by our stepping inside them. A holy book becomes a holy object because it points to, that is, represents, what religion is about.

It is this symbolic quality in man that is too frequently overlooked in the abortion issue. To illustrate it most effectively, I ask you to take a brief look at the opposite end of life. May I illustrate from a patient of my own? She was an elderly lady in her late 70s who had suffered a number of small strokes, diminishing her capacity in a variety of ways. She had become something of a care problem but was still kept in the home of her daughter who loved and looked after her.

One night the daughter called in great distress. "Doctor, please come; some-

thing terrible has happened to Mother." I arrived at the home to find the old lady lying in bed in a profound coma; her respiration was labored and erratic, her pulse irregular and difficult to palpate. It took no special degree of medical acumen to recognize that she had suffered a serious cerebral accident and that her survival was in question.

She was taken by ambulance to the hospital, where further observation confirmed the seriousness of her condition. I tried to prepare the daughter for the obvious. Her thoughtful response after listening to me was "Doctor, I don't think I want you to do anything for Mother."

Now, of course she did not mean that to be taken literally. If she had, we could have wheeled her mother down to the

coma) was about as "comfortable" as anyone can become.

I acted as I did because I care about my attitude toward people. I want to preserve my humanness, my compassion. The old lady was no longer "human" by any functional definition. She was already a "functional" corpse, although we probably could have kept her cadaver "alive" for a fairly long time if we had hooked her up to the gadgets. But the point is, she still *meant* humanness at this point in her life and thus retained human (if symbolic) claims upon us. And until the changes should take place in that symbol and be confirmed so that she could come to mean corpse—and we have fairly well-established, even ritualistic, ways of doing this—it was important that we honor the claims of that

The way one treats or regards the symbol may very greatly affect one's attitude toward that to which the symbol points. This symbolic quality in man is too frequently overlooked in the abortion issue.

morgue and laid her out to cool off on the slab table there. She was thinking of all those fancy gadgets, respirators, cardiac pacemakers, and the like, by which we can almost endlessly prolong the dying process these days.

Understanding this, I replied, "There really isn't very much we can do for your mother. [Which wasn't strictly true either. What I meant was "There is nothing we can do to bring her back to normal mental function."] But," I went on, "we will do all we can to keep her comfortable."

Now, whom was I treating? The daughter, of course. There was no reason for her decision to leave her with a residue of guilt. But I was also treating me, and the nurses, and others who were responsible for her mother's care. I obviously was not directing my remark to the patient, who by definition (deep

symbolic human life for *our* sakes.

I submit that what is true at the end of life also speaks to life at its beginnings.

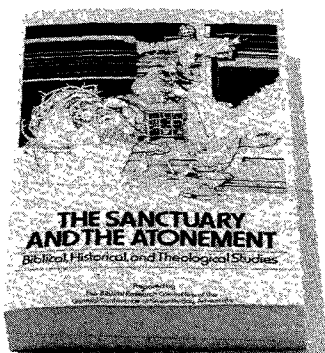
The original claims that give birth to symbols come to us out of our traditions and collective experiences. Fetuses have always meant something special. One does not carry a fetus like one "carries" an appendix. One is with child, one is going to have a baby; and that's one of the things that has kept human life human since time immemorial. It is this attitude that provides the open arms at birth and thus a sense of acceptance and value on the part of children without which there can be tragic deprivation.

Symbols are usually not consciously created, though they may be consciously or even unconsciously destroyed. Symbolic values can be stripped of meaning as when, for example, we objectify and

(Continued on page 24)

Use these winter months to grow!

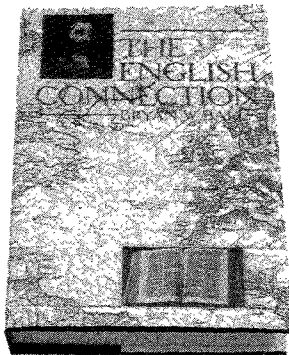
Many people find this slowest season of the year an ideal time to do serious study, to challenge their thinking, to stock up on ideas on which they can meditate through the rest of the year. And now, through February 29, the Biblical Research Institute is offering four "heavy" books at very special prices. Not only will these books offer you food for thought, they will enrich your sermons, and maybe even suggest a few new topics!



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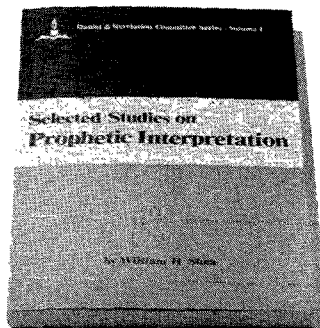


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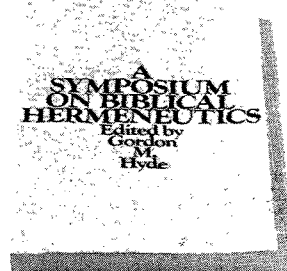
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Making an appeal

The sermons we preach are pointless if they do not in some way lead people to Christ or challenge them in their Christian life. And positive change does not come without a decision on the part of those changing. In this article the author shares what he has found helpful in making these life-changing appeals. □ by Kenneth H. Livesay



any events in life sharpen a minister's conviction about his calling to the gospel ministry. The ordination services of a number of churches charge the minister to call people to Christ. In many religious services people are present who are seeking something better than what they have. We should seriously and prayerfully

consider our responsibility to those who attend the service where we are speaking.

On Sunday evening, October 8, 1871, Dwight L. Moody preached to the largest congregation that he ever addressed in Chicago, having taken for his text Matthew 27:22, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" (K.J.V.). "After preaching . . . with all his entreaty, presenting Christ as a Saviour and Redeemer, he said: 'I wish you would take this text home with you and turn it over in your minds during the week, and next Sabbath we will come to Calvary and the cross, and we will decide what to do with Jesus of Nazareth.'

"'What a mistake!' he said, in relating the story to a large audience in Chicago on the twenty-second anniversary of the great fire in that city in 1871; 'I have never dared to give an audience a week to think of their salvation since. If they were lost they might rise up in judgment against me. . . . I have never seen that

congregation since. I have hard work to keep back the tears today.'

"'I have asked God many times to forgive me for telling people that night to take a week to think it over, and if He spares my life, I will never do it again.'"—William R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, pp. 145, 146.

Perhaps you will not experience a major disaster in your ministry, such as the Chicago fire, but death and tragedy come just as certainly to individuals. People who are struggling with the decision whether to serve Christ or not may be attending any service where you are speaking. Heart attacks, accidents, or even just a change of situation may prevent those to whom you speak from ever deciding for Christ.

The introductions in Paul's Epistles reveal his strong sense of his call to the ministry. "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:1, R.S.V.),* "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" (2 Cor. 1:1), "Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Gal. 1:1). And Paul saw a very definite purpose to his calling. "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through

us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Our calling as ministers also centers on the eternal destiny of those whose lives we touch. We also must present the claims of Jesus Christ.

Of course, we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to lead people to a decision for Christ. While we are preaching the Word, the Holy Spirit uses us in His own way to appeal to people's hearts. If we make ourselves available, God will work through us in a mighty way for the lost. We are to be representatives of the King of kings, to establish the kingdom of God in the lives of the unsaved. This means we must be in constant contact with Heaven; we must be men who are Spirit-filled preachers. Before the Holy Spirit can work *through* us, He must be allowed to work *in* us so that we may be instruments He can use.

Naturally, the way we make our appeals will vary. We are individuals, and what I may use effectively may not work very well for you. Then, too, we will want to vary our appeals as our audiences' needs vary. As we study the appeals of Jesus, we note that His approach to each person was different. His appeal to the woman at the well was

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Some will never again be so situated that they can have the chain of truth brought before them and a practical application made of it to their hearts. That golden opportunity lost is lost forever.”

entirely different from His appeal to Nicodemus; His invitation to Zacchaeus was different from that given to Mary Magdalene. Their problems were all different. He sought in each case to meet some felt need.

The Holy Spirit knows your personality, and He knows the needs of those listening to you. He knows how to speak through you and what appeals to the souls of people. Trust the Holy Spirit to lead you and the people. This is His work.

With this in mind, let me share with you what I do. I usually use four texts in making an invitation. John 1:12 emphasizes that it is God who accomplishes the new birth in the life of the individual. A person may experience God's power in his life through surrender to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The next text I use, 1 John 2:1, deals with the fear of making mistakes, of making a commitment and then slipping back into the old patterns of living. The promise is “If any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The third text extends the invitation in a simple, easily understood metaphor. And it offers Jesus' promise. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20). I emphasize that Jesus will do exactly what He says He will do. The moment a sinner believes that Christ will fulfill His promise to come in, the kingdom of God begins in his life. At this point I walk to the front of the pulpit and make a comment or two using Matthew 10:32, “So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven.” This leads quite naturally to a call for a public decision. I generally ask those desiring to make this commitment to Christ to come to the front of the church, where we will have prayer with them and answer any questions they may have.

To use the same appeal or even the same texts when you are preaching to the same congregation week after week may not only lose its effectiveness in bringing

people to a decision but may also become difficult for your congregation to bear! Variety is important. With some sermons a full and elaborate appeal is appropriate. On other occasions you may want to use only one Biblical verse or just a sentence or two. You can also make your appeals broad enough that people who have served the Lord for years can respond, indicating their desire for growth in some aspect of their Christian life without calling into question their previous experience. Those who respond, then, should be dealt with carefully and sensitively to determine what they are seeking. Do they want aid in coming to Christ? Or are they making some other kind of commitment?

Several years after I started making appeals at the end of my sermons, I began telling my audience during my opening remarks that there would be an invitation to become a Christian at the conclusion of the message. Knowing that there will be this kind of an opportunity for response allows people more time to be considering what their response will be. I have found this statement at the beginning of the message to be helpful.

It seems to me that extending a call for commitment to Christ is appropriate almost any time when the Word of God is being explained. Give the call even if there are only a few in attendance. And if there is no one to whom we can extend the invitation, let this motivate our members and ourselves to visit and invite people to our churches until there are people attending to whom we can appeal.

We also can make appeals when we are ministering as guest speakers. In fact, it may be an advantage to be without any preconceptions about the people in attendance. In some churches no appeal has been made for years—and we may have the opportunity to reach someone who otherwise might never make a commitment to Christ.

We may expect a number of different responses when we have made an appeal for people to receive Christ. Many times people respond immediately and come forward. Then we must be prepared to

assist them in becoming disciples of Christ.

Sometimes individuals will wait to talk to the speaker after the close of the service. One couple indicated to me their desire to become Christians as they were leaving the church. We went back into the sanctuary. After I answered some of their questions, we knelt in prayer. They tearfully invited Christ to come into their lives, believing fully that Christ was doing what He said He would do.

On other occasions, no one will respond. This happened when I made a call at my last service as pastor of a church. That evening at a farewell party a church member remarked that he had felt sorry for me standing by myself in front of the congregation during the call. I replied that I had fulfilled my duty by giving the invitation for people to receive Christ. When we have made the invitation, the Holy Spirit takes the responsibility for the results. This leaves us without embarrassment and releases us from a feeling of failure if no one responds. (I might add that at that same church an invitation was given nine times in a period of thirteen weeks—with a response every week. And on several occasions as many as three or four came forward.)

Ellen G. White wrote, “In every discourse fervent appeals should be made to the people to forsake their sins and turn to Christ.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 396. “Some may be listening to the last sermon they will ever hear, and some will never again be so situated that they can have the chain of truth brought before them and a practical application made of it to their hearts. That golden opportunity lost is lost forever.”—*Ibid.*, p. 394. There are multitudes in the valley of decision. God will richly bless your ministry as you invite people of all walks of life to receive, to know, and to share the person of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

* Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts used in this article are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946, 1952 © 1971, 1973.

Our Parson to Parson column begins with this issue of MINISTRY and will be a regular monthly feature. Each one will consist of a question and a sampling of responses from our readers, indicating how they would meet or have met such a situation.

We need your response to the following problem:

How do you rechannel the energy and enthusiasm of certain individuals who feel they are God's gift to the church? They want to teach the adult classes (no kids' stuff for them), preach the sermons in the pastor's absence, sponsor the teen organization, et cetera. But they are not well-balanced Christians; their lives do not witness to Christianity as well as the

lives of most of the other church members. Except for the few who can be used by these individuals to rally support for themselves, most of the members are uncomfortable around them.

I cannot see using them in leadership capacities. When leadership positions are available, how do I continue to bypass them and withhold my endorsement without undue offense either to them or to those few who do support them?

Have you faced this situation successfully? Or have you some ideas as to how you would? Then please sit right down, put your suggestions on paper, and send them to us.

Because of the lead time

required for the publication of MINISTRY, the situation we have given above will be published, along with your responses, in the May issue.

We are still soliciting questions, as well. We will pay \$15 for any question you submit that is used in Parson to Parson. (The remuneration for your suggestions in response to a question will have to be the satisfaction of having helped your fellow ministers—and the notoriety you may gain by having your name in print! We plan to publish the questions anonymously as a protection for those who submit them.)

Our address is Parson to Parson, MINISTRY, 6840 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012.

Parson to Parson: What would you do?

Confidentiality and caring

*I have within my church a member struggling with alcoholism. I have been working with him myself, but also feel he needs the support the community of church members can provide. However, he refuses to let the church know of his problem and he refuses to allow me to tell them of it. How can I, without breaking his confidence, get the members to provide the support—or at least a measure of it—that he needs? And what can I do to help this person trust the church members enough to reveal his problem? **

Make the church a supportive community

Many times we find a kind of spiritual voyeurism in the church, with some church members seeming to enjoy sin vicariously as they hear the gruesome details of another member's fall into sin. Too often we cater to that sickness in the church because of a misconception that we must expose the sins of members in public in order to rally the community around the struggling believer. I do not believe that it is necessary to expose any of the details of a member's sin or even the general nature of the problem in order to provide that member with the

support of the community in the time of crisis. In a truly supportive fellowship, the members need only to know that one of their number is in the midst of a time of personal crisis, and it will rally support from the community.

Every church member has some problem that he needs the support of his brothers and sisters in the church to deal with. I see as one of my primary tasks as a pastor the development of a supportive community where members know that their brothers and sisters really care about them and their needs. In my

sermons, in my interactions with members in Sabbath school classes or other small group settings, and by personal example in one-to-one dealings with individuals, I try to build that kind of community. I strive to develop an atmosphere of acceptance in which every individual knows that he or she is a valuable person. In my preaching I draw parallels between the forgiveness that God gives us and the forgiveness that we are willing to give to others or even ourselves. (Sometimes we need to ask ourselves whether our way of thinking is

different from God's, because He forgives so freely, while we find it very difficult to forgive ourselves or others.) I draw lessons from the lives of such Bible characters as David—who found forgiveness, cleansing from unrighteousness, release from guilt, and full acceptance with God in spite of his great sins—and the woman of Samaria who found acceptance with Jesus even before she admitted her sin.—Wayne Willey, Hartford, Connecticut.

Small group ministry or . . .

I think it is important not to betray a person's confidentiality. I believe that people can give support to the person with the problem without knowing exactly what the problem is. I would do one of three things, depending on the situation in the church.

First, and perhaps ideally, if I had a small group ministry in the church, I would get this person into one of these small groups. There he could get to know some of the members of the church in a very personal way, in a very supportive environment, and in that environment, without people even knowing his drinking problem, he could get the kind of spiritual support he would need. And it could be that, getting close to people, he could even trust them and share his problems in a close, caring environment.

If I did not have a small group ministry going, but had an elder-shepherd kind of program with lay leaders assigned to work with small groups of people, I would ask one of these leaders to take a special interest in this person. I would not divulge the alcoholic's problem, but simply tell the lay shepherd that this individual needed some extra attention. I would choose someone who is a very caring and supportive person, and who I knew would not gossip or betray any confidence. Perhaps eventually the alcoholic would come to trust him and share his problem, but even if he didn't, he could still have a degree of support.

If I did not have either some form of small group ministry or elder-shepherd program, then I would find some lay person in whom I had confidence, who I knew was caring and would not betray confidences, and I would ask him to take a special interest in the alcoholic. I would not give the lay member any

instructions or betray any confidence, but simply request that he try to get to know him. Through one of these three channels, hopefully, the alcoholic could learn to trust some people and find a supportive environment in which he could share what he is going through.

I think the ideal is to build into the church some sort of structured program of small caring groups. Not many would share their problems in a large group, and they are not likely to receive the support they need there, either. I think ideally they should have a small group or an elder-shepherd ministry where there is personal attention given, where caring is built into the system. I would go to the third option if I didn't have the other two operating.—Rob Randall, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Spiritual nurture

Unfortunately, not many people are willing to admit to a problem with alcoholism. Often the person struggling with the drinking habit is guilt-ridden, insecure, and lonely. He drinks to escape his pain.

Besides placing him in a small fellowship group and preaching sermons designed to teach what it means to be a caring church, I would—

1. Assign the individual to a prayer partner.
2. Get him involved in some type of outreach ministry sponsored by the church, based on his interests and spiritual gifts. This will enable him to use much of his time constructively in reaching out to others and give him an opportunity to draw closer to God and his fellow man. This will also help to increase his sense of self-worth.
3. Encourage the member to spend time in fasting, prayer, and the study of God's Word, emphasizing to him the importance of the daily personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I do not feel that it would be wise or helpful for this member to reveal his problem to other members of the church. If this were done it would probably result in more embarrassment, hurt, and alienation.

The pastor, besides continuing to pray for and encourage this member himself, should recommend to him some professional person or organization qualified to

help him overcome the problem of alcoholism.—W. C. Scales, Jr., Adelphi, Maryland.

Can it be kept secret?

Since the alcoholic recognizes his problem, the first big hurdle has been surmounted. The next hurdle is to help him see his problem in the light of Calvary. Any of the sins we have not conquered by God's grace required the death of His dear Son as certainly as the revolting and offensive ones that victimize others.

Point out that it is highly unlikely for this problem to be kept secret indefinitely. Sooner or later there will be whispers, suspicions, sightings, et cetera. How much better to deal with it on an open basis, or at least on a basis in which some selective support can be had—perhaps from someone who has had an alcohol problem and conquered it.

Teach the church that it should be a community in which concern about and support for one another must be practiced by the members before such will be evident to visitors. Use (1) sermons and (2) discussion groups, panels, and seminars that involve problem-solving and role-playing—and perhaps in your role-playing use a situation similar to this problem.

If the pastor has one or more mature, responsible members whom he could take into his confidence, he might solicit support in providing the caring atmosphere and supportive activities needed. Such individuals might serve as models for others to become involved in this manner.

Whether this could be done without breaking confidence would depend on several factors, but if I felt such support were crucial to the member's conquering his alcohol problem, I would consider breaking confidence a viable option.—Don Reiber, Heppner, Oregon.

*Please note that in the Seventh-day Adventist Church the use of alcohol violates church standards and that the persistence of the problem would necessitate some form of church discipline. The focus here, however, is on obtaining the support of the church community for a person with an unrevealed problem, and so comments on discipline and on how to deal with alcoholism were not included.

Why resolutions fail

A disillusioned resolutionist decides to quit taking on the whole year every January 1. Change is certainly possible, but the Lord, who must bring it about, can do so as effectively in March as in January.

I no longer make New Year's resolutions. I made hundreds, but no more. Quite a few were stillborn; hardly any survived the end of January. I have tried to determine why my resolutions failed so consistently. I believe the following are some of the reasons:

1. *The power of habit and resistance to change.* Obviously, change isn't easy. Habits die hard. It may seem likely, in the flush of enthusiasm for a new idea, that I will get up at five-thirty each morning and jog. It seems infinitely less likely when five-thirty arrives and it is cold and foggy outside and warm and dry in bed. Willpower may push me out on the street a few mornings, but in the long run, willpower just isn't strong enough to overcome years of sleeping past five-thirty. My all-time jogging record is three consecutive weeks in 1976!

2. *Too ambitious.* I wish I had a dollar for every book I swore to read during a particular year. I used to make reading lists each January, with the Bible at the top, followed by thirty or forty titles! Anyone except a confirmed resolutionist would have realized that the chance of getting through that list was roughly equal to getting out of bed at five-thirty every morning! Now, I'm a much better reader than I am a jogger, so I fared better here. But I never actually completed an entire reading list. A less ambitious program might have ensured success.

3. *Too trivial.* A determination to put the cap back on the toothpaste hardly qualifies as a resolution. It dilutes the rest of the list and helps pull the whole thing down on itself.

4. *Trusting my own strength.* Here is the real reason for failing resolutions. The prevalent idea seems to be that anything is possible if a person just grits his teeth, rolls up his sleeves, and gives it all he's got. Failure becomes, then, a lack of commitment, a loss of determination, a lack of effort. A little more push and the thing would have succeeded. I've come to believe that most of what I try to

change about myself is impossible as long as I rely on myself.

What is a disillusioned resolutionist to do?

Even for those of us who resolve to make no resolutions, there is something about the beginning of a new year that cries out for taking stock of one's life. Somehow the transition from an old year to a fresh, uncharted one causes us to dream dreams and see visions of what might be, in spite of the fact that it hasn't been. And this is good.

As ministers, we work in the realm of change and miracle. Our efforts are largely directed toward bringing about change, divinely inspired change, in the lives of people. We must never decide that this is unlikely or impossible in our lives or in our churches.

We must do what the apostle Paul did: "One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13, 14, R.S.V.). I suspect Paul must have penned this cry of despair and faith about January 17 or 18, just when his list of resolutions was coming unraveled. (At least that was just about the time my list always began to fall apart.)

What help does the inspired apostle give us in these words? First of all, he counsels us to forget past failures. Was 1983 a terrible year? Did you really mess things up? Put it in the past, where it belongs. Wipe off the clinging smell of failure. Learn from mistakes, and then don't look back. The past can paralyze us if we allow it to dominate the present and cripple the future.

Second, the apostle says he continues to strain forward and press on. Life without the possibility of change may be comfortable, but it is sterile, as well. There must be purpose, goals, plans, dreams, and efforts.

And third, Paul says he goes forward at the call of God in Christ Jesus. Here is

the heart of success. God in Christ Jesus determines the goal, gives the initiative to press toward that goal, and wipes the damage of the past away. A few verses later Paul sums up the whole experience: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (chap. 4:13).

And that brings me to a fifth reason I believe my resolutions were such spectacular failures. Most of them were things I had decided were important. Maybe the Lord wasn't terribly concerned whether I got up and jogged in the dark or not. Perhaps He had other books He wanted me to read besides the ones on my list. I'm not saying we don't allow God to set the agenda if we make resolutions, but we need to be sure to leave Him room to work. And we need to recognize He doesn't work only in early January. If we are willing to live in a continuing relationship with Him the Lord may impress us in March or August as easily as in January—and maybe more effectively.

If making resolutions works for you, fine. I don't want to discourage you from doing so. But I've decided to quit taking on the whole year every January 1. I'm going to concentrate on one day at a time and I'm going to try to keep Philipians 3 and 4 in mind while doing it.—B.R.H.

The Bible for everyone

First, the editors at *Reader's Digest* discovered that God was a bit wordy when giving the Bible. Repetitious lists and excess verbiage littered the scriptural landscape unnecessarily. No problem, however. Under the *Digest's* condensing magic such superfluities melted

away until we had a concise Bible that said what God would have said if He had realized that modern man would invent outlines and speed-reading.

Next, the NCC people began to realize that God was not only verbose but a chauvinist, as well! Someone pointed out that not a single *he/she* could be found in either Old or New Testament. And God had a penchant for referring to Himself by masculine pronouns alone. Clearly something had to be done. With the zeal of a *Digest* editor, a committee was formed and went to work rehabilitating God's Word into something a bit more inclusively respectable. Released late last October, the book of selected readings, *An Inclusive Language Lectionary: Readings for Year A*, sparked a lot of criticism, but it was undeniably free of male bias. "Son of God" has become "Child of God"; "Son of Man" now reads "Human One." God is no longer just our Father in heaven; He/She is our Mother, as well!

Such "worthy" efforts to help God communicate more effectively are clearly the wave of the future. The *Reader's Digest* and the NCC have made a good beginning, but they don't go far enough. Others will have to take up the challenge of making the Scriptures acceptable to all the special interest groups of the twentieth century. Here are my suggestions for some logical next steps.

The violence-and-crime lobby. Violence on TV is bad enough; in the Scriptures it's intolerable. All that fighting and killing in the Old Testament, the persecution of Christians in the New, and the Crucifixion itself are pretty gory reading. Surely the world deserves a Bible that qualifies for a G rating. As it is now, no one under 18 ought to be allowed to read it unless accompanied by an adult!

Homosexuals. A judicious emendation of such texts as Genesis 19:1-11; Leviticus 20:13; and Romans 1:18-32 could result in a gay Bible.

Children's rights groups. Activists supporting the right of children to sue their parents if mom and dad don't measure up surely can't be too happy with the fifth commandment or Paul's counsel in Ephesians 6:1-3 (although they would probably allow verse 4 to remain). It shouldn't be too hard to go through the Bible and take care of the problems in this area.

The Humane Society, and Friends of

Animals. The first chapters of Genesis are fine, as they describe God creating all the animals, birds, and fish, but what kind of attitude will Bible readers get if they are allowed to see Balaam beating his donkey? And what about the thousands of sacrificial animals prescribed in the Old Testament sanctuary services? Some work needs to be done in this area.

Others will no doubt be inspired to contribute their perspectives once these groups begin their work. At last the Bible could truly become what it has always claimed to be—the Book for everyone

and all cultures. I suppose it wouldn't really be the Word of God anymore, but then everything is done by committees these days. It's the modern way.

One warning, though. Each group will have to work separately. If anyone ever tries to combine all the revisions into a single volume suitable for everyone, he'll quickly find that nothing at all is left. Perhaps that is the ultimate bible for everyone.—B.R.H.

The Scripture quotation marked R.S.V. is from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946, 1952 © 1971, 1973.

How much is a fetus worth?

From page 17.

depersonalize individuals to whose human claims upon us we do not wish to listen. The horrors of war—the Mylai incident in Vietnam and the revelations of the Nuremberg trials in Germany—come easily to mind.

We can desymbolize fetuses, too. And we seem to be doing so in some segments of our society. But we ought to take a long look at the general consequences of this tendency if what I have been suggesting about the attitude-conditioning potential of symbols is true. To desymbolize may also be to devalue, and we have enough of that going in our society to keep us all awake nights.

What is a fetus worth? The fetus may gain its value from several directions, depending upon one's beliefs and personal value system. It can be of value as one possessing a human soul. (Not all share that belief, of course.) It can be of value as a miracle of creation with profound future potential (a position I hold, but I realize not everyone agrees). It can also be of value because of our collective concern with keeping human life human on this planet. And this is one concern that I do think all of us generally share. But to protect that concern means we must also be prepared to protect those supporting symbolic values that serve it. This includes looking after the marginal, even sub-marginal, individuals among us. It includes protecting our ability to feel compassion for our senile elderly. It also includes resisting fetal devaluation.

To be sure, sometimes values, even human values, compete, and ethics must also wrestle with these. Sometimes it is

necessary to give priority to one value over another. What this means, in the present case, is that sometimes a fetus (as symbol) must be sacrificed because of its threat to the humanness (not merely life; humanness is a quality of life) of its mother. The thing symbolized always stakes a prior claim over the symbol but *never* unless the threat is severe enough to require it. And that is a judgment, I suggest, involving all of the persons directly concerned. An abortion must *never* become a trivial action. The decision must always be carefully considered by others even if it finally rests in the hands of the one most threatened. There should be counseling, and there should be wrestling. It ought always to pain our souls for the sake of all of us and our common humanity. We should all be prepared to share the burden *and* we ought to be prepared to pick up the tab. Providing viable alternatives to abortion could be a costly matter, but I submit that, on the above terms, a fetus is worth the cost.

Naturalist Edwin Way Teale once said, "It is those who have compassion for all life who will best safeguard the life of man. Those who become aroused only when man is endangered become aroused too late." Perhaps this applies also to symbolic man, as well as to endangered species. Actually, man, at least moral man, may be the most endangered species of all.

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Controversy over paleomagnetic dating

Extrapolating from the rate of decay of the earth's magnetic field, Thomas G. Barnes says the earth cannot be more than 10,000 years old. MINISTRY's Warren H. Johns takes a careful look at this suggestion.

It was in 1952 that Willard F. Libby published a book that carried the inauspicious title *Radiocarbon Dating* (University of Chicago Press) and touched off a total reappraisal of ancient history and prehistory known as the "radiocarbon revolution." Libby later received a Nobel Prize for his pioneering work in this new dating method. Most creationists reacted against radiocarbon dating because of its threat to Biblical chronology. In 1971 Thomas G. Barnes, of the University of Texas at El Paso, wrote an article under the title "Decay of the Earth's Magnetic Moment and the Geochronological Implications,"¹ thus proposing a new method of dating the earth based upon the decay of its magnetic field. One purpose for the development of the magnetism method of dating was to explain why radiocarbon dates are in direct conflict with the early Biblical dates.

In contrast with the radiocarbon system of dating, the magnetism system was developed and refined solely by creationists because of its claim to limit the earth's age to ten thousand years. In fact, for the first decade of its existence noncreationist scientists never even took notice of Barnes's proposal. It wasn't until 1981 and 1982 when the creationist controversy erupted in the classrooms, when the Arkansas and Louisiana creationist legislation was being challenged in the courtrooms, and when scientific societies were beginning to have papers attacking creationism at their annual conventions that Barnes's ingenious method of dating the earth by its magnetism was brought to the attention of the scientific world. A comprehensive rebuttal of the magnetism-decay method of dating was recently published in the *Journal of Geological Education* by G. Brent Dalrymple,² who is employed by the U.S. Geological Survey as an expert in radioactive dating, especially the potassium-argon method. In reaction to Dalrymple's criticisms, Barnes

has written a four-page response for the Institute of Creation Research's *Impact* series entitled "Earth's Magnetic Age: The Achilles Heel of Evolution," which begins with these words: "There is nothing more devastating to the doctrine of evolution than the scientific evidence of a young earth age. That evidence is provided by the rapid depletion of the energy in the earth's main magnet, its electromagnetic dipole magnet in the conductive core of the earth."³

Creationists who believe in an old earth have also attacked Barnes's model because it limits the earth's age to a maximum of ten thousand years. For example, an associate professor of geology at Calvin College, Davis Young, has devoted a whole chapter in his latest book to pointing out the flaws in the magnetism method of determining the age of our planet.⁴ As a result of Young's criticisms, Henry M. Morris, whose name is almost synonymous with creationism, wrote a pamphlet under the title *Science, Scripture, and the Young Earth*.⁵ Three pages in this thirty-four-page work are devoted to rebutting Davis Young's critique of Thomas Barnes's model for the decay of the earth's magnetic field.

Because the controversy surrounding Barnes's geomagnetic age model has spilled over from the pages of creationist periodicals into the classroom, the courtroom, convention halls, and even into pulpits, it certainly behooves clergy and Christian laymen alike to be aware of its implications and to have the means whereby each can evaluate its validity from both a scriptural and a scientific standpoint.

Without becoming intricately involved in all the scientific ramifications, we can summarize what the model being proposed by Barnes is about. The earth can be compared to a gigantic magnet having two poles, which is why its magnetism is called dipolar. The two

poles are oriented within the earth along the north-south axis of the earth's rotation. While the magnetic forces are very complex and are continually in a state of flux, we can clearly identify the main component of the total magnetic field, and it is called the dipole field. The other components, which are lumped under the nondipole field, comprise only a fraction of the total magnetic field. Barnes's theory is restricted solely to the dipole component.

The strength of the earth's dipole field can be described in terms of the geomagnetic moment. Precise measurements from various observatories have indicated that the magnetic dipole moment has been decreasing in intensity from 1835 to the present time. For understanding the magnetic record prior to 1835, scientists turn to geology and archeology and look for evidences of paleomagnetism in the earth's crust. The magnetic forces have left their imprint upon rocks, such as lava flows, and in loose sediments, such as lake beds and deep-sea sediments, and sensitive instruments can decipher what some of the magnetic forces were at the time the rocks and sediments were first deposited. One branch of paleomagnetism, called archeomagnetism, attempts to analyze the forces of the magnetic field as derived from archeological artifacts subjected to high temperatures, such as pottery and bricks from kilns. The imprint of the earth's magnetic field was left upon tiny slivers of magnetic minerals that were reoriented according to the lines of the earth's magnetism at the time the kilns were fired. The magnetic record then was "locked in" the ancient artifacts, allowing modern man to unlock through special instruments the intensity and direction of the earth's field in the past. The controversy centers upon the accuracy of these paleointensity measurements derived from rocks, sediments, and artifacts. Barnes contends that the only accurate measurement of the earth's

dipole moment is through actual observational measurements that are averaged on a worldwide basis.

The calculations for the earth's age using changes in the earth's magnetic moment are derived from thirty-four observatory measurements over a 150-year period starting in 1829. Such measurements of the earth's dipole moment can be graphed, showing the relationship between intensity and time (see figure 1). Equations can be developed for the continuous decrease in intensity, or "decay of the earth's magnetic field," as Barnes calls it. The graph can be extended backward in time. Assuming a more or less constant "decay rate," one can estimate what the intensity of the magnetic field was at any time in past history by means of extrapolation from present conditions. According to the equations used by Barnes, the strength of the earth's magnetic moment would have been fifty thousand times greater some twenty thousand years ago than what it presently is. Of course, this would be impossible because of the amount of heat energy generated through the flow of the associated electric currents—some 250 million times greater than today's values as estimated by Barnes.⁶ With the presumed electrically generated heat twenty thousand years ago, according to Barnes, the entire earth would have been a molten liquid, and life could not have existed. Based upon a decaying magnetic field, Barnes feels that the earth could not be more than ten thousand years old, and more likely has an age of six thousand or seven thousand years, thus conforming with the Biblical record.

The magnetic decay method of age dating has been proclaimed as the most reliable evidence available for establishing a young age for the earth. As Henry Morris puts it, "If any process should be a reliable indicator of the earth's age, this should be—and it indicates an upper limit for the age of about ten thousand years!"⁷ It merits therefore a close scrutiny by creationists first from a Biblical standpoint and second from a scientific one.

The Bible neither confirms nor denies the validity of age dating by the decay of the earth's magnetic field. However, some creationists feel that in general it addresses the question of whether physical processes are going from a high energy state to a lower energy state based upon the second law of thermodynamics.

They feel that it is part of the curse placed upon the earth when man sinned (Gen. 3:17-19), thus becoming the reason why "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22). The "whole creation" would include the interior of the earth and the magnetic field that is generated from the earth's core. The fact that "the earth shall wax old like a garment" (Isa. 51:6) is thought to be another evidence of the inexorable law of decay affecting the physical world. Even the "foundation of the earth"—its core—is included in this aging process (Ps. 102:25, 26). Whether the second law of thermodynamics was indelibly inscribed on the fabric of nature because of man's sin, and whether this law mandates the decay of the earth's magnetic field, are essentially theological questions and therefore must be evaluated further by Biblical scholars.

Actually, the magnetic decay method of age dating must stand or fall upon its scientific evidence, even though there are scriptural implications as well. It is exhibit A among the various scientific evidences for a young earth—number one in a list of sixty-eight such evidences.⁸ In spite of its seemingly impressive scientific credentials, it falls short of being a valid scientific method of dating because of at least four major weaknesses. (In my critiquing of this method of age dating please note that I am not criticizing the Christian integrity and dedication of those who have promoted this view, nor am I departing from the theologically based creationist stance of MINISTRY magazine. The criticisms are from a creationist viewpoint.)

1. *Magnetic age dating is more rigidly uniformitarian than the principle of uniformitarianism as currently explicated by geologists.* Uniformitarianism is the dogma that "the present is the key to the past"—that past conditions in earth history can be adequately understood in terms of present earth processes. When applied to radiometric age dating, geologists must assume that the rate of radioactive decay has been constant with respect to time. If it has not been, then all radiometric dates are spurious indicators of real time. Radioactive dating extrapolates backward in time on the basis of radioactive decay at a constant rate. However, the extrapolation is not done in the dark, because certain checkpoints are sought out that might be tied to the time scale being developed,

and these are used to verify the accuracy of the method. The magnetic decay dating of Barnes looks for virtually no checkpoints prior to 1835; it ignores any possible evidence from archeomagnetism, paleomagnetism, geology, or historical records to test the validity of its extrapolation. It is based upon observations made solely in the past century and a half, which are then extended backward into the unknown of the past. It is literally a "stab in the dark"—more rigorously uniformitarian than the age-dating methods used by geologists. Whether one accepts any validity for radiometric dating, one would have to recognize that each method of radiometric age dating must be calibrated with one or more other methods. The magnetic decay method has no such calibrations. It is a strictly theoretical extrapolation back into the past over a time range seventy-five times greater than the time range over which the magnetic measurements were made. Strange indeed is the fact that those who are most vocal in advocating this method, which is thoroughly uniformitarian in its logic, are the most outspoken in rejecting uniformitarianism as a means of understanding earth history!

2. *Paleomagnetic measurements indicate that the earth's magnetic field several thousand years ago was the same as today's values, not drastically higher.* Figure 2 portrays the global average for dipole intensity for the past ten thousand years based upon a 1982 study.⁹ Obviously those who use the magnetic decay method of dating must disavow any connection between recent dipole intensity measurements and the paleomagnetic record. For example, Barnes states: "Over the last two centuries the work of Gauss et al. has shown a continuous depletion of the earth's magnetic field. That is generally accepted as fact, whereas the magnetized rock-artifact method fails to show any trace of this trend."¹⁰ Such a statement is simply erroneous. Figure 2 demonstrates that for the past eight hundred years the paleomagnetic record depicts a sharp decrease in magnetic intensity, averaging 3.3 percent per century. The data based upon more accurate observatory methods of calculation indicates a corresponding decline of 4.6 percent per century since 1835. In light of the fact that bricks and pottery burned in kilns do not register the magnetic intensity as accurately as very sensitive laboratory

instruments would, we are surprised to find a correlation so remarkably close. In fact, paleointensity measurements from archeological sites in Poland and the Ukraine spanning the past 750 years depict an average decrease in intensity of 4.7 percent per century—essentially no different from recent observatory data.¹¹ I have examined a half-dozen paleomagnetic studies of ocean and lake sediments, and in each case I have found a sizable constant decrease in paleointensity during the past several centuries.

Having established a fairly good link between observatory measurements and paleointensity data over the past few hundred years, we can be confident that the paleointensity data for the past several thousand years does give useful approximations for the earth's dipole moment in the past. Again examining figure 2, we find that on occasion the earth's paleointensity was the same as or even lower than today's values. This of itself is sufficient to invalidate the use of the earth's magnetic decay for dating purposes.

The magnetic decay dating method ignores what I have called the "roller coaster effect" upon the earth's dipole moment. Over a short term it may indeed appear that the magnetic field has been rapidly decaying, but over the long term we find rapid increases in intensity to counterbalance the sharp decreases. To use a method of extrapolation for dating purposes is no different than a nearsighted man who attempts to judge the original height of the roller coaster track at its start by examining the last hundred feet of the track only. If he finds a fifty-foot drop in the last hundred feet,

and if he is told by the operators that the total length of the track is one thousand feet, then he calculates that the track must be five hundred feet high at its start! Likewise, to assert without observational data that the intensity of the earth's magnetic field must have been fifty thousand times greater some twenty thousand years ago is to ignore this crucial "roller coaster effect" upon the fluctuating magnetic field.

3. *The magnetic decay method of age dating is inconsistent in its use of radiocarbon data.* One outcome of the development of this method was that it offers an easy explanation as to how radiocarbon dates in the range of ten thousand to forty thousand radiocarbon years can be easily compressed to a span of fewer than ten thousand solar years. This is based upon the fact that there is an observable direct correlation between the intensity of the earth's magnetic field and the production of radiocarbon in the earth's upper atmosphere. Radioactive carbon atoms are produced when cosmic rays bombard the atmosphere, but the magnetic field acts as a shield to block the entry of cosmic rays. When the strength of the magnetic field increases, the production of radiocarbon decreases, and the radiocarbon time scale is altered. Radiocarbon ages then become older with respect to real time. Whereas if the magnetic field strength were to decrease, the opposite would be the case. Barnes suggests that the effects of cosmic ray intensity in producing radiocarbon were lowered by some 10 percent about 2,800 years ago when the earth's magnetic field was said to be four times stronger than today.¹² Radiocarbon ages going back to

800 or 900 B.C. then should be a few hundred years older than calendar ages.

Using the science of dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) as it has been applied to bristlecone pines of the American Southwest and the oaks in Northern Ireland and Germany, we can deduce the level of radiocarbon production at any particular century in the past five thousand years or so. A master tree-ring chronology is composed of hundreds of trees forming overlapping tree-ring sequences. This gives an age for any tree in the sequence. Certain trees in the sequence are then dated by radiocarbon dating, and the radiocarbon age is compared with the dendrochronological age. If the intensity of the earth's magnetic field were many times higher five thousand years ago, the radiocarbon age should be hundreds if not thousands of years higher than the dendrochronological age, providing the dendrochronological age is equal to the calendar age. But the very opposite is the case; the radiocarbon age is consistently lower by several hundred years than the tree-ring age. This indicates that the earth's dipole moment in 3000 B.C. was actually weaker than today's values. It is interesting that the magnetic decay method of dating, which is supposed to offer a ready explanation as to how radiocarbon dates have become greatly expanded beyond real time, is now being challenged by the radiocarbon dating of tree rings.

The only way out of this dilemma is to deny the validity of dendrochronology, but in doing so one would have to proceed one step further and deny the validity of Egyptian chronology. That's because radiocarbon dating of Egyptian

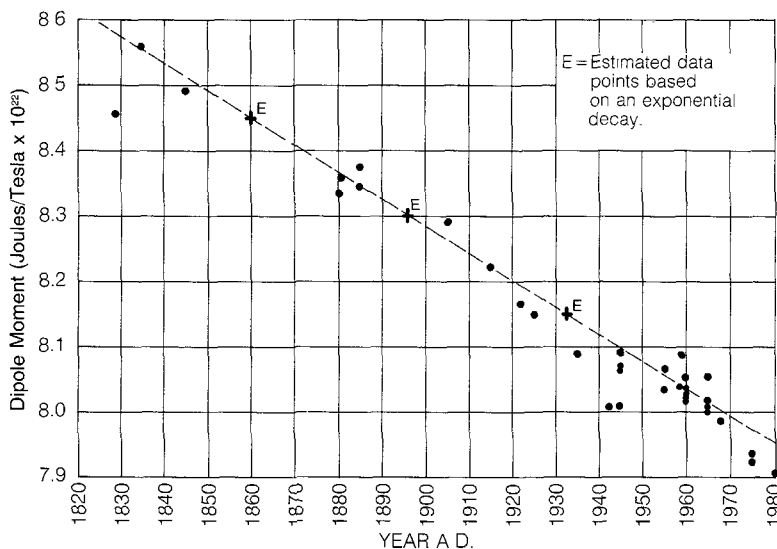


Figure 1

Figure 1. Measurements of the earth's magnetic intensity, 1829-1980. (E = estimated data points based on an exponential decay.)

Figure 2. Global average of dipole intensity based upon archeomagnetic measurements.

Figure 3. Paleointensity median measurements for the 15th through the 18th centuries compared with 19th and 20th century measurements.

artifacts that have been dated historically yields radiocarbon ages that appear several hundred years too young, just as the dating of tree rings from the same period also yields radiocarbon ages several hundred years too young. An attempt to revise drastically Egyptian chronology for the first two millennia B.C. has repercussions on Biblical chronology that is linked with the Egyptian at certain points. The safest course is to allow the synchronisms between Egyptian and Biblical chronology to remain intact, thus calling into question the whole magnetic decay method of age dating.

4. *The equation developed for predicting past intensities of the earth's magnetic field is entirely arbitrary.* Basically there are two types of equations that can be used—exponential and linear. An exponential equation would describe a curved line when plotted on a graph with uniform scales, while a linear equation would give a straight line. The choice of an exponential equation is purely arbitrary and is based upon theoretical assumptions about how the earth's magnetic field ought to behave in the inner core of the earth, as stated in the following words: "One would expect the magnetic moment of the earth to decay exponentially because it is produced by real currents that dissipate energy through joule heating."¹³ The existence of real currents dissipating energy within the earth's core is an assumption, and very little is known at present about the processes occurring within the core. Observational data of the earth's magnetic dipole from 1829 to the present would suggest a linear decay process to be just as valid. Figure 1 has three data points marked "E." These points do not represent observational measurements,

but rather they are estimates derived from the exponential equation developed by Barnes to calculate the earth's magnetic intensity. When one has only 150 years of observatory measurements, one finds it impossible to tell whether the decay should be linear or exponential. (The dashed line in Figure 1 is linear.) However, there's a vast difference in results, depending upon which equation is adopted. Extrapolated backwards in time, an exponential equation would yield vastly higher paleointensity values ten thousand years ago than a linear equation would. For example, the paleointensity derived from the *exponential* equation at ten thousand years ago would be equal to the paleointensity derived from a *linear* equation extending back 120,000 years! Of course, we have already referred to the fact that such extrapolations are more intensely uniformitarian than the type of uniformitarianism practiced by scientists today. Any type of extrapolation needs check points. A recently published study gives the scant magnetic intensity data from the 16th century. According to Figure 3, such data provides greater support to a linear extrapolation of 19th- and 20th-century data, than it does to an exponential one.¹⁴

In summary, even though the magnetic decay method of providing upper limits on the age of the earth looks intriguing on the surface, it is riddled with problems and major inconsistencies. It is based upon uniformitarian logic, even though ostensibly it would reject uniformitarianism as a valid method of scientific research. It ignores paleomagnetic and archeomagnetic data covering the past several thousand years, even though such data over the past few hundred years is conformable with mag-

netic decay theory and observations. It is championed as a convenient way out of the problems to a short chronology that are caused by radiocarbon dating, although it fails to realize that the radiocarbon evidence over the past five thousand years would negate magnetic decay theory. And finally it arbitrarily uses an exponential decay relationship when a linear relationship is just as compatible with observatory data. The cause of creationism is not served very well by a speculative theory that is fraught with so many internal inconsistencies, and it is time for the theory to be taken back to the drawing board before it is launched again.

¹ Thomas G. Barnes, "Decay of the Earth's Magnetic Moment and the Geochronological Implications," *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 8:24-29 (1971). Reprinted in George F. Howe, ed., *Speak to the Earth*, (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975), pp. 300-313.

² G. Brent Dalrymple, "Can the Earth Be Dated From Decay of Its Magnetic Field?" *Journal of Geological Education* 31:124-133 (1983).

³ Thomas G. Barnes, Institute of Creation Research Impact No. 122 (1983).

⁴ Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 117-124.

⁵ Henry M. Morris, *Science, Scripture, and the Young Earth: An Answer to Current Arguments Against the Biblical Doctrine of Recent Creation* (El Cajon, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1983), pp. 26-28.

⁶ Barnes, in Howe, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

⁷ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁸ Henry M. Morris and Gary E. Parker, *What Is Creation Science?* (San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers, 1982), pp. 254-257.

⁹ R. Thompson, in *Philosophical Transactions, Royal Society of London*, Ser. A, 306:103-112 (1982).

¹⁰ Thomas G. Barnes, Institute for Creation Research Impact No. 100 (1981).

¹¹ S. Burlatskaya, T. Nechaeva, and G. Petrova, in *Archaeometry* 12:115 (1969).

¹² Barnes, in Howe, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

¹⁴ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

Figure 2

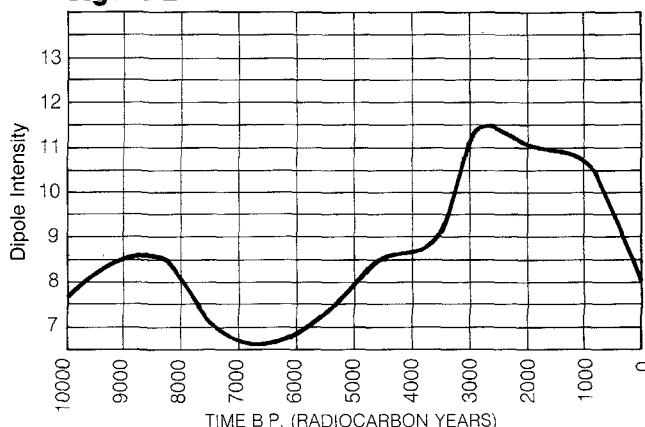
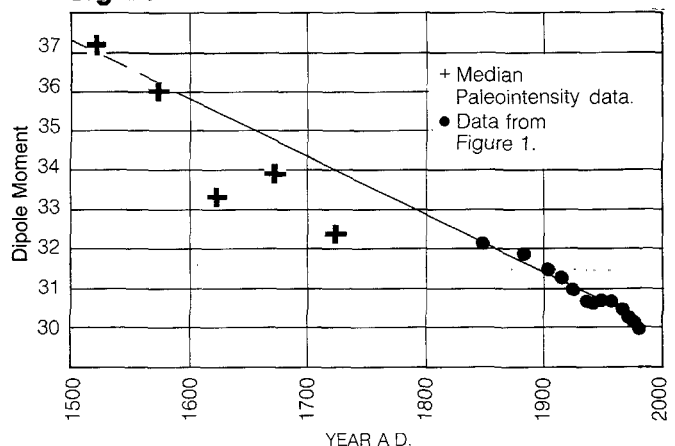


Figure 3



Communication, not confrontation

Disagreements occur in ministerial marriages too. And disagreements offer the possibility of growth or stultification—for each person and for the relationship. How the dispute is handled determines the outcome.

At the close of our honeymoon, my new husband and I stopped to visit his elderly uncle and aunt. It was my first time to meet these delightful relatives. The words the uncle spoke as we were leaving I'll remember always. "Your opinions won't always be the same," he said. "You'll have different ways of doing things, and life may get a little rough at times. But please don't both of you get angry at the same time!"

What words of wisdom! Problems will arise, yes. As long as human beings live together in a sinful world there will be disagreements, but everything depends on the spirit in which these problems are handled.

In today's complex world, father, mother, and children are working or caught up in so many programs and overloaded schedules that they have little time to interact, much less to understand one another and learn how to work together as a family team. The minister's family is no exception; the pastor and his wife are not immune to misunderstandings. However, the problem is not in disagreeing, but in how we handle these disagreements.

Our writer this month, Anne Elver, outlines helpful tips for maintaining and/or restoring peaceful marital relationships. As we approach this new year with new resolutions let's not fear disagreements. Let's determine how to handle them!—Marie Spangler.



"Any prayer requests today?" I asked the women in the prayer group that I led.

Betty's hand went up promptly. "Bill and I had an argument before he left for work today. I made some cutting, angry remarks as he left the house. Please pray that I can control my temper better. I want to be a good witness for the Lord

before Bill, and my ugly temper isn't a bit of help."

Donna made a similar request. She asked us to pray that she would control her words better when she and Joe disagreed. I was pleased to see our church ladies so open and honest. They trusted one another enough to reveal their faults.

"Donna and Betty, we will pray for you now, and we'll pray for you all this week," I encouraged. "I remember how bad I felt the last time my husband and I got into a spat," I added. (My husband pastors the church that the ladies in my prayer group attended.)

Teressa, the only unmarried member of the group, turned toward me with a startled look on her face. She sat there looking more fidgety by the minute.

"Teressa, is everything OK?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know." She hesitated. "I would be horrified if I thought Jeff and I would ever argue when we get married. We don't argue now, and I hope we don't start. I'm surprised that you have arguments with your husband."

"Don't worry, dear," an elderly woman interrupted. "You will have marital spats and you will survive them. Anne is human, and two humans living together are bound to disagree. A pastor's wife is not immune to marital disagreements."

I thought over Teressa's comments while driving home. I wished I could easily dismiss them as immature and idealistic, but I couldn't. Mrs. Lowry, the neighbor who lived in the brick house behind my home, once told me, "We've been married thirty-three years and never had a cross word." Mrs. Lowry's statement had always made me wonder whether she was telling the truth.

A marriage without cross words may be possible if one partner completely stifles any difference of opinion with the other. A union of two people who both possess an extraordinary measure of

self-control might be free of cross words also. And spats are nonexistent if there is no communication. My grandparents were a good example of this. I never saw them quarrel, but they did not have many pleasant words, either. Their marriage wasn't an open, ongoing relationship.

Occasional spats, it seems to me, are a small price to pay for a growing relationship between husband and wife. Consider what took place between Harry and me some years ago. Our conversation went something like this:

"Don't forget, we are taking the kids to the park this afternoon," I said as I washed the lunch dishes one weekend.

"I can't go today. I promised Joe that I would help him mix cement and patch his driveway. I'm leaving in a few minutes," he answered.

I bristled. "Well"—putting as much sarcasm as I could into my voice—"it's a good thing I didn't tell the kids we were going to the park. All you want to do on your day off is putter around with our church members. Go on over to Joe's and don't worry about your family one little bit."

"What's eating you? I didn't know of any plans to go to the park today. We said that sometime in the next few weeks we would go. Joe needs help today, and we can take the kids to the park anytime. I wish you would tell me what you want for once. You never do," he snapped.

"That's just like a man," I retorted, getting angrier yet. I left the kitchen, went to the living room, and sat down on the sofa, pouting.

Harry followed. "I'm sorry I answered you harshly," he said, taking my hand as he sat down beside me. "Will you forgive me?"

We made up, then calmly worked out a compromise on our conflict. Harry helped Joe that afternoon, and we took the kids to the park Monday afternoon.

Does our quarrel sound familiar? Minor misunderstandings—the kind

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that happen every day—can lead to squabbles like the one just described. And pastors' marriages seem especially vulnerable. But take heart, pastor's mate. Minor arguments are not a disaster when you handle them well. My pastor-husband and I have learned some tips that keep the peace or restore it quickly.

1. *Communicate as completely as possible to prevent misunderstandings that may lead to quarrels.* The spat I just described occurred because of a lack of communication. Several days earlier we had talked about visiting the park. I had suggested that we go Saturday afternoon, and Harry's answer was "Maybe we can."

I assumed that Harry meant yes, while he assumed that we were both trying to think of a convenient time for us to go. Neither of us knew the other's assumption.

Arguments are spawned when we don't communicate thoroughly. Now we often say, "Please explain what you mean." It prevents many communication breakdowns that may lead to unnecessary quarrels.

2. *Restrict your comments to the subject at hand.* Notice that I brought up Harry's helping others in our heated exchange. This led quickly to our arguing. My bringing up something unrelated to visiting the park added fuel to the anger already smoldering.

My friend Sally knows how important it is to keep one's comments on the subject. She says, "When I first came to the Lord, I resented my husband's being an unbeliever. I lost no opportunity to remind him that I was different. I interjected my relationship to the Lord into arguments on totally unrelated matters. We quarreled a lot in those days.

"Then the Lord led me to see that I had to make a deliberate effort to stop what I was doing. My husband still isn't a believer, but I don't throw it in his face anymore. I mention my life as a Christian only if he asks about it or if it is relevant to what we are discussing. This prevents a lot of arguments. I wish I had learned this principle a lot sooner."

Bringing up a subject other than the one at hand is useless. When we focus our discussion on our disagreements, we get them settled more quickly.

3. *Beware lest your disagreements degenerate into sessions in which you vent your emotions in destructive ways.* After Harry and I argued about going to the park we had to ask the Lord's forgiveness.

The Lord then showed me that part of my problem was that I liked to maintain control over our activities on Saturdays, since Sundays are so busy for our family. Harry's plans that day didn't allow me to do this, and I got angry. Before I spoke I should have taken a few moments to analyze why I felt angry.

Emotionally charged words seldom edify, and they do have the power to hurt. If we can, Harry and I now let a discussion wait until our emotions have cooled.

4. *Speak only the truth.* Notice that Harry and I used words that are absolutes. I said that *all* he wanted to do on his day off was to putter around with someone else; he accused me of *never* telling him what I wanted. Neither statement was true. Words like *never* and *absolutely* arouse defensiveness in others.

5. *Don't attack your partner's character.* Donna backed her car into a fence one day, and the bent fender upset her husband, Bill. He lashed out, "You are a careless person. Why can't you be careful?" Donna defended herself, and they quarreled.

Bill would have been less likely to provoke an argument if he had concentrated on what happened rather than on his wife's character. Bill isn't unusual, for we often make statements in anger that tear at a person's primary qualities. Harry and I try to deal *only* with the issue when one of us is upset—not with each other's character.

6. *Remember, marital spats can polish your character.* The day we had the quarrel I described, I asked the Lord to show me why I had acted so petulantly. He showed me that I had a tendency to try to maintain control over our Saturday activities and that I tried to manipulate the family into conforming to my wishes. I thanked the Lord for showing me my manipulative nature. Then I asked Him to cleanse me of that tendency, and He has given me victory over it.

My marriage to an imperfect man opened new areas of my personality for the Lord's refining fire to purge. This is part of my heavenly Father's design. Even Jesus lived in a human family with the little areas of friction that such a situation involves. This knowledge prevents me from taking marital spats too seriously and helps me accept whatever is necessary for the development of my character.

The couple who learn to handle disagreements wisely need not fear them or avoid them. Carefully managed disagreements offer a possibility for spiritual growth in both partners. And the more growth a couple share, the stronger their marital union is.

A pastor's healthy marriage is a testimony to his congregation that the gospel he preaches works. A pastor and spouse who learn to handle differences of opinion wisely are blessed. An occasional spat is a small price to pay for an honest, open marriage.

Prayers from the Parsonage

Jesus, I feel far away from You.

I've never seen You except through artists' eyes. Never have I heard Your footsteps or Your voice. I reach out but cannot touch You. I write but receive no message in return.

Old Testament believers met You on the road or on a mountaintop, saw You eat a meal or present two tables of stone, talked with You at a burning bush or under a starry heaven.

New Testament believers met You at the Temple or by the sea, saw You cook

breakfast or write in the dust, talked with You around a campfire or under olive trees.

That was almost 2,000 years ago. Now we travel by jet, cook by microwave, and talk by satellite. Lots of people question whether You really understand what it's like to live in 1984.

Do you?

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." (John 14:8, K.J.V.)

I pray, instead, that You will reveal Yourself. For only then can I test the accuracy of my concepts and the relevance of my beliefs.

Cherry B. Habenicht _____

HOMOSEXUALITY: CHRISTIAN BASICS FOR RECOVERY

Homosexuality. How do you relate to it—to those involved in it? Is it a psychologically fixed condition or is it potentially subject to change? How you view homosexuality will determine how you relate to homosexuals—both the focus and effectiveness of your ministry to them.

The seminar **Homosexuality: Christian Basics for Recovery** offers you Biblically oriented perspectives consistent with the best modern research. Here you can discover the Christian dynamics necessary for the recovery of those entangled in homosexuality.

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- The impact of the Biblical concept of sexuality on the interpretation of the Biblical texts dealing with homosexuality.
- Findings of various official church commissions on sexuality and homosexuality.

Speakers:

- Colin Cook, founder and director of Quest Learning Center and cofounder of Homosexuals Anonymous.
- David Kimberly, pastor and member of the task force on homosexuality commissioned by the United Church of Christ.
- Dr. Richard F. Lovelace, author of *Homosexuality and the Church* and leader of the

conservative group in the United Presbyterian Church's task force on homosexuality.

- Dr. Paul M. Miller, professor of pastoral psychology at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, author of *Peer Counseling in the Church*.

- Dr. William P. Wilson, professor in the division of biological psychiatry and director of the Program for the Study of Christianity in Medicine at Duke University Medical Center.

**Saturday, March 17,
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- Bethesda Holiday Inn, Bethesda, Maryland
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Recommended reading

Keep These Things, Ponder Them in Your Heart: Reflections of a Mother

Miriam Huffman Rockness, *Doubleday and Co., Inc., Garden City, New York, 1979, \$7.95.* Reviewed by Cherry B. Habenicht, *Downers Grove, Illinois.*

This book begins with "An Open Letter to My Mother," in which Miriam reflects on her own deeply satisfying childhood. The subsequent sections use aspects of homelife as titles: "Home—'A Safe Place,'" "Memory Building," "True Creativity," "The Shaping of Character," "The Family: A Greenhouse for Relationships," "Growth of a Soul," "A Room of My Own." Under each division are brief essays on a variety of subjects.

Miriam, 33, is a wife to Dave—a minister—and mother to three, but she also considers her own needs. Her everyday experiences are probably no different from most mothers, but her sensitive analysis and careful description bring wisdom to situations such as getting children to keep their rooms clean, dealing with pent-up kids on a rainy day, and finding time for daily Bible study.

There is humor, as in this description of 1½-year-old Jonathan's repeated efforts to get her to leave the house for a walk. "Mommeee," he says patiently, as if to one slow of understanding. 'Mommy,' he continues in a tone that suggests 'you may not understand now but you'll appreciate this someday.' 'C'mon. Outside. Walk.'"

There is honesty in her lament over David, 7, the "out-of-bounds boy." "Your voice is too loud. Your reactions too quick. You run when you should walk. This home is not big enough to absorb your rough play. You have more energy than hours to expend it. High-spirited, you passionately live out each minute of your day. What do I do with you?"

And there is poignancy in her telling of 4-year-old Kimberly's fear before a preschool physical examination

when she realizes the doctor will see her with her clothes off. "Her little face looks white and drawn. . . . She doesn't make a single movement. Her eyes are brimming with tears. Her lips are trembling. 'Mommy, if you were me, would you do it?'"

The essay "Life Stages" is worth the price of the book for any mother who feels that the world is passing her by. I especially enjoyed selections that describe family traditions and ideas for making each child feel special.

This is a book to be read in bits and pieces—an excellent choice for a nightstand or for the few moments in a mother's day when she can sit down and think about treasures to store in her heart.

Pastoral Care of the Handicapped

Roy E. Hartbauer, ed., *Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104, 1983, \$9.95, paper.* Reviewed by Halvard B. Thomsen, pastor, *Deer Park, California.*

At a time when our nation recognizes the need for increased sensitivity to the handicapped, this book should help pastors become aware of the personhood, feelings, and needs of the handicapped people and their families. It should also enable pastors to increase their parishioners' sensitivity to the special needs of the handicapped.

Editor Hartbauer, though never ordained, has a pastor's heart of love, and his interest in the handicapped has been longstanding. In order to share that interest with practicing pastors, he has selected several authors who, out of the depth of their own experience, can help pastors develop counseling skills for this specialized ministry. For instance, the chapter "Toward an Understanding of Parents With an Impaired Child" is written by the mother of an impaired child. This mother describes her own anguish, how she came to accept her child's impairment, and her growth in providing for his care. She then draws prin-

ciples to assist in understanding and counseling parents with similar heartaches.

Pastors will gain valuable insights for dealing with the handicapped and their families who are a part of their congregation as well as those who are not. Each chapter includes a helpful bibliography.

In providing this anthology on pastoral care, Hartbauer has made a special contribution to the caring pastor who is willing to extend his ministry beyond the "normal" parishioner to include persons who are often excluded because unfortunately they are labeled as not being normal.

Where Have All the Mothers Gone?

Brenda Hunter, *Zondervan, 1982, 178 pages, \$8.95.*

The author, who was reared as a "latchkey child," dispels many popular myths about mothers. Written for mothers who must work outside of the home, as well as for those whose career is their home.

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