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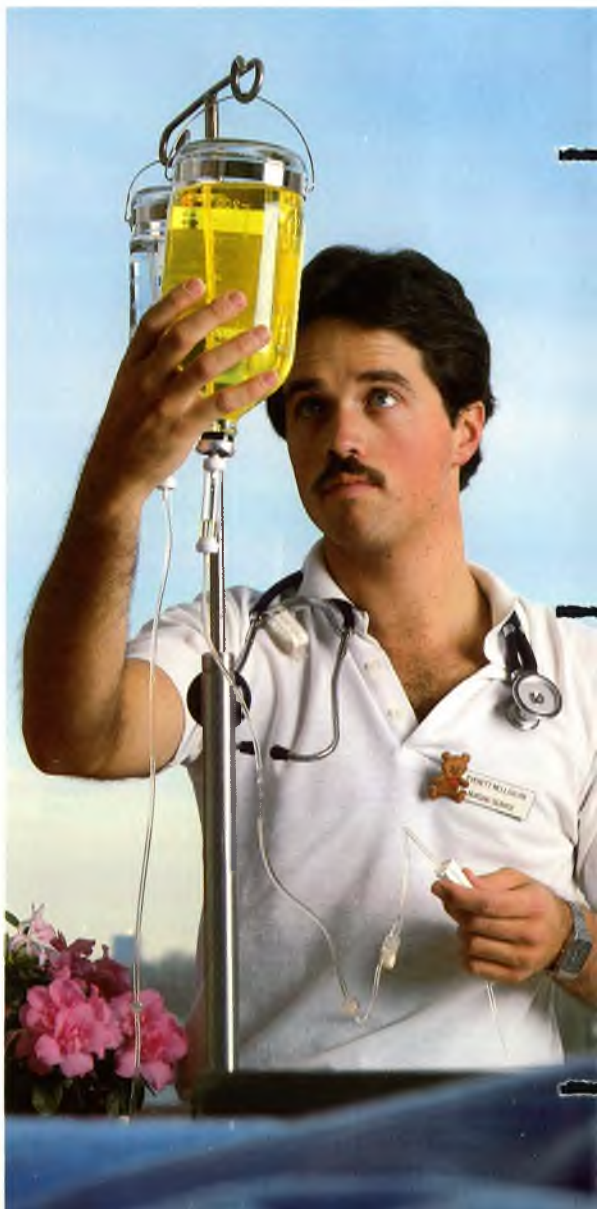
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January-March 1986
Vol. 9, No. 1

Editorial Office:
Union College
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Place orders with Pacific Press
Publishing Assoc., P.O. Box 7000,
Boise, Idaho 83707

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The *Collegiate Quarterly* is written by faculty, students, and friends of the Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in North America. Organized under the Union College Board of Trustees, it is coordinated by Campus Ministry and published with the approval of the North American Division Church Ministries Committee.

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Scripture quotations used in this quarterly, other than the King James Version, are as follows:

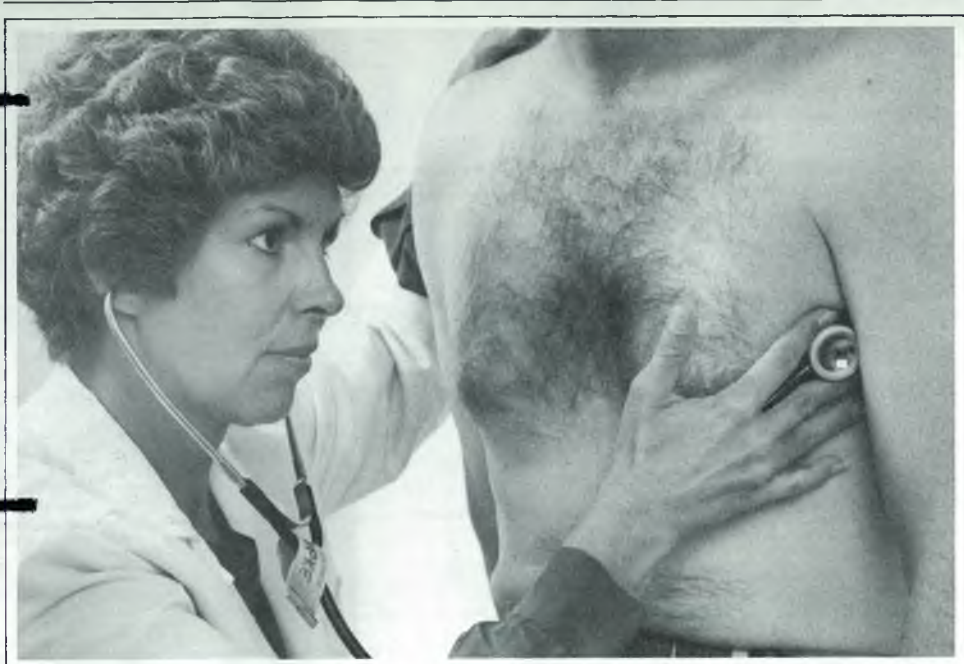
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Collegiate Quarterly (ISSN 0744-2939). Published quarterly by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 North Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687, U.S.A. One year subscription in U.S.A., \$6.50; single copy, \$1.65. One year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$7.90; single copy, \$2.00. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Second-class postage paid at Nampa, ID. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Collegiate Quarterly, P.O. Box 7000, Boise, Idaho, 83707.

Send editorial inquiries to Union College, 3800 South 48th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506, U.S.A.

Send circulation inquiries to Pacific Press Publishing Association, P.O. Box 7000, Boise, Idaho, 83707, U.S.A.



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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

Facts You Should Know

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is based on the conviction that there is transforming power in the Word of God and that one important way of tapping into that power is through group study. It is prepared with Adventist college students and young adults particularly in mind. Its purpose is to provide this group with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed together each week in Sabbath School.

Additionally, many who use the adult quarterly find that the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY, since it deals with the same topics as the adult, enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist colleges and universities, along with young adult church groups, work together in producing the quarterly. The writing at each school is coordinated by the campus chaplain's office. Approximately 200 individuals contribute to the quarterly each year, on a volunteer basis.

Circulation of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is about 25,000.

Pointers for Study

1. The Bible passage to be studied for each week is indicated in bold on the Introduction page (Sunday's lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly Introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

2. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the Logos pages (Monday's lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in the bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

3. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained by your own study of the biblical passage.

4. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

Introduction (Sunday) is designed to get your attention and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

Logos (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

Testimony (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

Evidence (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from an historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective. It is likely to be the most "scholarly" article of the week.

How To (Thursday) discusses what the "theory" in the lesson means for day-to-day living.

Opinion (Friday) is a personal viewpoint on the lesson, meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

5. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

The CQ and the Church

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is the North American Division-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.* Particularly in the Evidence and Opinion sections, views are expressed which are only individual opinion, not official denominational positions.

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THE NEW COMMUNITY

"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:4, 5, NIV).



God's Answer to Homelessness

After he was involved in a drag racing incident in which his best friend was killed, 16-year-old Bruce Corwin didn't have much to say, other than that he would see his friend Bill "some sunny day"—a quote from a Pink Floyd song about a vanished girl. So it was a shock to everyone when, the day after the funeral, Bruce was found dead in the back seat of his car. The motor was running, the garage door was shut and a Pink Floyd tape was in the cassette deck, playing "Goodbye Cruel World." More tragedy was to come in Plano, Texas, the upper-middle-class Dallas suburb where Bruce had lived—fourteen more teen suicide attempts, two of them successful, in a matter of months.

Why did Bruce—and Plano's other suicidal teens—do it? Part of the answer might be found in a condition that some sociologists call "homelessness." People don't stay long in Plano—60 percent of its citizens had lived there less than four years, according to a 1979 survey. It has been called "the nesting ground for the migratory American executive."

Bruce's family had moved five times in his short life. In explaining why they had Bruce's body cremated, his mother asked, "Where should we bury him? Where's home?"¹ Physically and emotionally, Bruce apparently lacked a "home" in the fullest sense—a community where he could

count on identity, acceptance, security and care.

Of course homelessness may be only one factor in a suicide, and certainly not everyone afflicted by it commits suicide. But to me the Plano suicides dramatize the reality and the effects of homelessness in modern society. Homes decimated by divorce and abuse, nations divided by greed and mistrust, denominations fragmented by controversy, moral norms shattered by an "anything goes" philosophy, beliefs eroded by skepticism, psyches coming unglued by the confusion of it all—each are factors which contribute to homelessness, a sense of being cut off from community, wholeness and harmony. At some time, to some degree, we all taste this homelessness, with its loneliness, despair and anxiety. Suicide is just one drastic method of coping with it. Other methods range from snorting to swinging to Marxian revolution.

The inadequacy of such human solutions points to the relevance of our study this quarter. For the epistle to the Ephesians is God's answer to homelessness. It's about people who were alienated becoming connected again—brought into oneness with God and with each other. It's about how God through Jesus Christ accepts unacceptable people into his fellowship. It's about how God through Jesus Christ brings home the homeless by

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians 1:1, 2

creating a new community in which there is acceptance, care, wholeness, and harmony, in a word—*shalom*.

Borrowing from John R. W. Stott, we may outline our study of God's answer to homelessness in Ephesians this way:²

A. The new life which God has given Christ

- 1) Introduction (1:1, 2, *Lesson 1*)
- 2) God's eternal purpose (1:13-14, *Lesson 2*)
- 3) The triumph and supremacy of Christ (1:15-23, *Lesson 3*)

B. The new community which God has created through Christ

- 1) Salvation in Christ a free gift (2:1-10, *Lesson 4*)
- 2) Jew and Gentile reconciled with God and each other (2:11-22, *Lesson 5*)
- 3) The mystery revealed (3:1-13, *Lesson 6*)
- 4) Paul's intercessory prayer (3:14-21, *Lesson 7*)

C. The new expectations God has for his new community

- 1) A call to unity (4:1-16, *Lesson 8*)
- 2) The new life in Christ (4:17-5:21, *Lessons 9-10*)

D. The new relationships into which God has brought us

- 1) Between husband and wife (5:22-33, *Lesson 11*)
- 2) Between parent/child and slave/master (6:1-9, *Lesson 12*)
- 3) Between the Christians and Romans (6:10-20, *Lesson 13*)

Ephesians was probably written while Paul was under house arrest in Rome around 61-63 A.D. In an even more profound way than Bunyan, Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn and King would in later centuries, Paul took advantage of the time freed up by his incarceration (see Acts 28:16, 30) to produce literature that has moved the world. Most of Paul's letters were written in the heat and haste of "putting out fires" in the churches he had established. But in writing Ephesians Paul has more time for reflection and systematic development of the great theme of God's eternal purpose accomplished through the gospel.

As we attempt to understand this quarter what the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge called "the divinest composition of man," perhaps we will begin to share Paul's euphoria, along with a bit of his frustration, as he strains against the limits of human vocabulary to express the unfathomably magnificent thing God has done in bringing us home through Jesus Christ.

D.F.M.

1. *Newsweek*, August 15, 1983, pp. 70-74
2. See John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1979), p. 25.

A Circular to the Churches

Theme: Ephesians has been called “the quintessence of Paul,” for it sums up the leading themes of Paul’s letters, presenting God’s eternal purpose to reconcile human beings to himself and to each other through Christ and to empower them for spiritual maturity.

LOGOS

1. On the Sending and Receiving End

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

“To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 1:1, NIV).

The Letter. Like Paul’s other epistles, Ephesians follows the typical structure of a letter in the first-century Hellenistic world. It opens with a salutation that includes identification of the sender and recipients (v. 1) and a greeting (v. 2).

However, Ephesians is also unlike Paul’s other letters in some striking ways. First, one doesn’t find the usual personal references or greetings to members of the church. In fact, Paul does not appear to be directly acquainted with his readers (see 1:15 and 3:2). Second, Paul does not address any specific issues or problems in the Ephesian church, but develops a theological theme in systematic, sermon-like fashion. All of this is particularly surprising in view of the fact that Paul did know the Ephesians well. He had spent three years there, longer than anywhere else in his missionary travels, and had developed close relationships there (see Acts 20:17-35).

These anomalies, added to the fact that the words “in Ephesus” in v. 1 do not appear in our three oldest and best manuscripts of the New Testament, lead most scholars to conclude that the epistle we know as Ephesians was probably intended to be circulated throughout the churches of Asia Minor, and not just sent to Ephesus. The letter may bear the name “Ephesians” today because when all the letters of Paul were collected for general circulation in the second century, the letter was in the possession of the Ephesian church.

Today when a Christian leader wishes to communicate with the church at large, a variety of mass media are available. Though the theory cannot be proven, it appears that Paul used the best medium available to him to communicate with a large segment of the church, rather than with just one congregation.

The Sender. By identifying himself as an “apostle,” Paul was claiming special authority to proclaim God’s message. Like a special envoy sent out to negotiate on behalf of the President of the United States, an apostle is one who is commissioned and sent out to complete a particular mission, and to whom authority and power is delegated to do the job.¹ For Paul, the mission was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and his commission and authority came “by the will of God.”

The Recipients. The letter is addressed to the “saints”—a category in which few of us would dare or even care to place ourselves. To modern readers the “saints” are a super-pious spiritual elite. In the Bible, however, the term “saints” (literally translated “holy ones”)

means those set apart by God for a special purpose. In the Old Testament, all Israel was a special, "holy" nation. Likewise, *all* who trust in Christ become a part of his special, set-apart people, or "saints." Sainthood in the biblical sense is not achieved by personal merit but by the call of God and a response of faith.

Paul declares that the recipients are "in Christ"—one of the most frequently used and crucial phrases in all of Paul's writings. What Paul meant by "in Christ" will unfold more fully as we proceed through Ephesians (The phrase occurs 11 times in the first 14 verses alone!). Lewis Smedes orients our thinking on this all-important phrase by summarizing its meaning this way: To be "in Christ" is to be in a "new historical situation [which] was created for men by Christ; . . . which began at Calvary and climaxes in the 'new earth' to come. . . . Being 'in Christ' is not primarily a subjective moral experience, nor a mystical one, but existence within a radically new situation in the continuing turmoil of human history."² That "new situation" is characterized by the great spiritual blessings that Paul expounds on with such enthusiasm throughout Ephesians.

What specifically does it mean to be "set apart" by God, in other words, to be a "saint?"

2. Grace and Peace

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:2, NIV).

The pronouncement of grace and peace is a standard part of the salutation of Paul's letters, and we may be tempted to pass over the words quickly as another way of saying "best wishes." But their significance is far deeper than that. According to Markus Barth, the New Testament word for grace (*charis*) is a translation of the Hebrew term *hen*—a covenant word that means "the favor shown by a superior to an inferior." Grace is completely about what God does, not what we do or even what may happen inside us. It is "God's unilateral, specific, personal favor to man."³

"Peace" comes from the Hebrew word *shalom*, and means much more than the absence of conflict. It means wholeness, well-being in every dimension of life—psychic, physical, social, economic, political, and so on. The Old Testament prophets had forseen an era of peace brought about by the Messiah, and the claim of the New Testament is that "now, in Jesus Christ's coming, death and resurrection, and through the preaching of the gospel in all places, the Messianic peace has finally come." It is this Messianic peace that Paul pronounces to and over his readers.⁴

Does Paul's pronouncement of the "Messianic peace" have significance for us, his modern readers?

1. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and the Ephesians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 74, 75.
2. Lewis B. Smedes, *Union With Christ* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), p. 91.
3. Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), p. 74.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Prisoner for the Lord

Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem and charged by the Jewish leaders with inciting riots. After inconclusive trials in Caesarea, Paul appealed to Caesar and was thus sent to Rome. It was probably in this setting, described by Ellen White in today's section, that Paul wrote Ephesians and several other epistles.

Many months passed by after Paul's arrival in Rome, before the Jews of Jerusalem appeared in person to present their accusations against the prisoner. . . .

In the providence of God this delay resulted in the furtherance of the gospel. Through the favor of those who had Paul in charge, he was permitted to dwell in a commodious house, where he could meet freely with his friends and also present the truth daily to those who came to hear. Thus for two years he continued his labors, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

During this time the churches that he had established in many lands were not forgotten. Realizing the dangers that threatened the converts to the new faith, the apostle sought so far as possible to meet their needs by letters of warning and practical instruction. And from Rome he sent out consecrated workers to labor not only for these churches, but in fields that he himself had not visited. These workers, as wise shepherds, strengthened the work so well begun by Paul; and the apostle, kept informed of the condition and dangers of the churches by constant communication with them, was enabled to exercise a wise supervision over all.

Thus, while apparently cut off from active labor, Paul exerted a wider and more lasting influence than if he had been free to travel among the churches as in former years. As a prisoner of the Lord, he had a firmer hold upon the affections of his brethren; and his words, written by one under bonds for the sake of Christ, commanded greater attention and respect than they did when he was personally with them. Not until Paul was removed from them, did the believers realize how heavy were the burdens he had borne in their behalf. Heretofore they had largely excused themselves from responsibility and burden bearing because they lacked his wisdom, tact, and indomitable energy; but now, left in their inexperience to learn the lessons they had shunned, they prized his warnings, counsels, and instructions as they had not prized his personal work. And as they learned of his courage and faith during his long imprisonment they were stimulated to greater fidelity and zeal in the cause of Christ.

REACT

Works written in prison, such as those by Paul, John Bunyan, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Alexander Solzhenytsin, often carry extraordinary power. Why do you think this is so? What does it tell us about how God works?

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Ephesians 1:1, 2

"As a prisoner of the Lord, he had a firmer hold upon the affections of his brethren."

Excerpted from *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 453, 454.

God's New Society

by John R. W. Stott

EVIDENCE

Key Passage:
Ephesians 1:1, 2

[Ephesians] is . . . a magnificent combination of Christian doctrine and Christian duty, Christian faith and Christian life, what God has done through Christ and what we must be and do in consequence. And its central theme is 'God's new society'—what it is, how it came into being through Christ, how its origins and nature were revealed to Paul, how it grows through proclamation, how we are to live lives worthy of it, and how one day it will be consummated when Christ presents his bride the church to himself in splendour, 'without spot or wrinkle or any such thing . . . holy and without blemish' (5:27).

The contemporary relevance of this message is obvious. Karl Marx also wrote of 'the new man' and 'the new society'. And millions of people have caught his vision and are dedicating themselves to its realization. But Marx saw the human problem and its solution in almost exclusively economic terms. The 'new society' was the classless society which would follow the revolution, and the 'new man' would emerge as a result of his economic liberation.

Paul presents a greater vision still. For he sees the human predicament as something even deeper than the injustice of the economic structure and so propounds a yet more radical solution. He writes of nothing less than a 'new creation'. Three times he uses creation language. Through Jesus Christ God is recreating men and women 'for good works', creating a single new humanity in place of the disastrous Jewish-Gentile division, and recreating us in his own image 'in true righteousness and holiness' (2:10, 15; 4:24). Thus according to Paul's teaching the new man and the new society are God's creative work. Economic restructuring has great importance, but it cannot produce these things. They are beyond the capacity of human power and ingenuity. They depend on the fiat of the divine Creator.

"Today more than ever we need to catch the biblical vision of the church."

This message of the church as God's new creation and new community is of particular importance for those of us who call ourselves or are called 'evangelical' Christians. For by temperament and tradition we tend to be rugged individualists, and are thought to care little about the church. Indeed, the expressions 'evangelical' and 'low church' are generally supposed to be synonymous. Yet they should not be. The true evangelical, who derives his theology from the Bible, will be bound to have the very 'high' view of the church which the Bible has. Today more than ever we need to catch the biblical vision of the church. In the West the church is in decline, and urgently needs to be renewed. But what form of renewal do we desire? In the communist world the church is always stripped of privilege, often persecuted and sometimes driven underground. Such situations prompt the basic question: what is the church's essential being, without which it would cease to be the church? Then in several regions of the third world the church is growing rapidly, and in some places its growth rate is faster even than the population growth rate. But what kind of churches are coming into being and

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growing? Thus in all three worlds—the free world, the communist world and the third world—we need to be asking radical questions about the church. And Ephesians will supply us with answers. For here is Christ's own specification of his church, the church for which once he 'gave himself up' (5:25), the church 'which is his body', and even his 'fullness' (1:23).

Much of the message of Ephesians is adumbrated in the apostle's opening salutation: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (verse 2). True, this was the customary greeting with which he began all his letters, a Christianized form of the contemporary Hebrew and Greek greetings. Yet we may safely say that nothing from Paul's pen was ever purely conventional. On the contrary, both these nouns are particularly appropriate at the beginning of Ephesians—'grace' indicating God's free, saving initiative, and 'peace' what he has taken the initiative to do, namely to reconcile sinners to himself and to each other in his new community.

'Grace' and 'peace', then, are key words of Ephesians. In 6:15 the good news is termed 'the gospel of peace.' In 2:14 it is written that Jesus Christ himself 'is our peace,' for first he 'made peace' by his cross (verse 15) and then he 'came and preached peace' to Jews and Gentiles alike (verse 17). Hence his people are to be 'eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (4:3). 'Grace', on the other hand, indicates both why and how God has taken his reconciling initiative. For 'grace' is his free and undeserved mercy. It is 'by grace' that we are saved, indeed by 'the immeasurable riches of his grace' (2:5, 7, 8), and it is by the same grace that we are gifted for service (4:7; cf. 3:2, 7). So if we want a concise summary of the good news which the whole letter announces, we could not find a better one than the three monosyllables 'peace through grace'.

"Here is Christ's own specification of his church."

REACT

In your opinion, what are the three most important things the church needs to do in order to fulfill better its calling to be "God's new society?" At the end of the quarter, refer back to your list and see if Ephesians has altered your thinking.

Taken from *The Message of Ephesians* by John R. W. Stott, pp. 25-28. Copyright © 1979 by John R. W. Stott and used by permission of InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515.

Creating a New Environment

by Jim Wallis

HOW TO

Key Passage:

Ephesians 1:1, 2

God has given his people the gift of community. A community of faith and struggle becomes imperative as a center of resistance to the old order and celebration of the new, an environment in which we find the healing of our own brokenness and a sign to the world of the new possibilities of life in Jesus Christ. This is the faith community that the New Testament calls the church. It can take different forms in different times and places, but to be the church, community must exist among the believers. The gospel calls us, not only to a new style of life, but to a *new environment* created by Christ to bring about our healing and the healing of the nations.

Christian community must be active, first of all, in creating new awareness of the meaning of our faith. The task of discernment requires that we be mindful of the world's structures, social values, and historical forces. Most critically, we need new understanding of the nature and demands of the Christian calling and how it relates to responsible participation in the world. . . .

Second, Christian community must be a place for the creating of styles of life based upon this new awareness. These new possibilities begin to free people from the intense pressures and demands of the world's forms and patterns. People can see their lives fundamentally changed and participate in a corporate witness to the presence of Christ. The community of believers becomes the first fruits of the kingdom, a sort of pilot project for a whole new order of things.

Third, Christian community can evoke creative responses to the world arising from the new awareness and life-style. These responses bear witness to the faith and life of the community and become signs of social change, confronting the idolatries of the world system. That confrontation can open up new possibilities for change and the construction of alternatives.

To create new awareness, to generate new styles of life, to evoke creative responses, it is absolutely essential that a community be characterized by a serious study of the Bible, a careful examination of the social, economic, political, and historical forces of our times, and a radical dependence upon prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The making of community is essentially a revolutionary act. It proposes to detach men and women from their dependence upon the dominant institutions of the world system and creates an alternative corporate reality based upon different social values. Repentance and redirection are possible for people only when they are presented with an alternative, so it is crucial that we not merely speak of alternatives but, rather begin to live and be them. Most important, the church is to be a sign of Christ's presence in the world rather than an ecclesiastical reproduction of the twisted values of a technocratic society. The church's life must show practical and demonstrative manifestations of the meaning of Christ that a broken world cannot fail to recognize.

Jim Wallis is founder and pastor of the Sojourners Fellowship in Washington, D.C. and editor of *Sojourners* magazine.

Corporate Power

by Jim Wallis

The gospel of salvation in Christ must be addressed to people's need to be freed from the idolatrous power and domination of the world's institutions. The action of God in changing people's lives and enabling them to live in a different way is at the heart of the gospel message. Throughout the Bible, the path of obedience to God is a communal pilgrimage, not merely an individual trek. Corporate strength and power cannot be encountered through individual effort alone but must be resisted with *another form* of corporate power with a different set of values and assumptions. That alternative source of power comes from a body of believers empowered by the Holy Spirit, who share their lives together, support one another, take liability and responsibility for one another, hold one another accountable to a common commitment, and reinforce a set of values that is radically different from the larger society.

People are most influenced by the institutions on which they depend for survival and support. As long as most Christians are more dependent upon the powers and principalities of the world for their survival and security than they are upon the Christian community, the church cannot do anything other than conform to the world. We must see through biblical eyes that our lives and our very spiritual survival must be centered in the Christian community. The community of the local church must become the most important and central corporate reality of our lives, the daily environment out of which we live our lives. The church must represent a body of people who have committed their lives to one another in Christ, a communion of faith and trust in which everything is shared, a place where our lives and society are seen through the eyes of biblical faith, a corporate sign of the transforming power of the gospel of the kingdom in the world.

The church is called to relate to the world as a new community of people who are being transformed by Christ. This means that, first of all and at the basis of everything we do, we must seek to become a kingdom-conscious body of people who, by their very existence and presence, call into question the values of their world and free people to live in alternative ways. The churches must be reevangelized to this biblical vision.

REACT

Is the local church the most central and important corporate reality in your life and in the lives of people you know? If so, why? If not, what would need to happen in order for it to be such?

OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians 1:1, 2

"The path of obedience to God is a communal pilgrimage."

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Jim Wallis is founder and pastor of the Sojourners Fellowship in Washington, D.C. and editor of *Sojourners* magazine.

Friday, January 3 15

A CHOSEN COMMUNITY

“He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:5, 6, RSV).



We Were Selected

by Winona Howe

Even when I was very young, one of my chief pleasures was looking at the Baby Book. I would hoist the book into Mommie's lap and climb up myself, all ready to turn the pages and ask the questions to which the responses were already loved and familiar.

"Mommie, who's in that picture with Buddy-Bear?" I would say, knowing just how she would answer.

"That's you, of course; look at the dimple in your chin."

I would giggle because how could it be me (even with the dimple), all fat cheeks and no hair as yet? But I loved looking at the pictures of Buddy-Bear and me, hearing what my first words were, and fingering the thin silky strand rescued from my first haircut.

I didn't pay much attention to the birth announcement then, but it was there too. A few years later, I read it over and over.

I wasn't expected;

I was selected.

When I couldn't sleep, I would lie in bed and think about being selected, being chosen, being special, until I drifted off to sleep, feeling happy and secure. In a childish quarrel one day, a neighbor girl jeered, "What's so special about you? Even your own parents didn't want you!" Even though tears of hurt and realized rejection stood in my eyes as she shouted out the hateful

words, I hugged to myself the phrase, "You were selected."

Adoption was then and is now a wonderful concept to me. The belief that I could be taken into a family, loved and cherished and nurtured, not because of what I could do for the family members, not because of what I would become, but because they loved me for myself, was strongly implanted in me by my parents even before I understood all the ramifications of their act. From the earliest time I could remember, I *knew* that they loved me and wanted me for their own. They did not love me because they knew I would have straight hair like my father's family or be musically talented like my mother's family. They loved me as an individual and for myself.

The parallel between the adoption of a child and our adoption by God is hardly a new concept; I have often heard it preached from the pulpit (although it may not have had the same meaning for the preacher that it did for me). Both adoptions begin with a decision, a choice, an act of love.

In my parents' love, lavished on me long before I was able rationally to return it, there is an echo of the love of God, the love that chooses us for his own. We are covered with his love. He has chosen us. *We were selected.*

INTRODUCTION

Key Passage:
Ephesians
1:3-14

Winona Howe is a graduate student in English at Loma Linda University.

Cornucopia of Blessings

LOGOS **Theme:** In Christ, God has lavished on us the highest spiritual blessings in keeping with his eternal purpose of bringing all things together under Christ.

1. Tidal Wave of Blessing

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph. 1:3, NIV).

The opening section of Ephesians compounds superlative upon superlative in an ecstatic exclamation of praise for the spiritual blessings God has given us in Christ. In the Greek vv. 3-14 all comprise a single complex sentence. Commentators have compared this spectacular passage to a torrent, a tidal wave, a snowball hurtling down a hill, a kaleidoscope, a race horse, an operatic overture, and so on.

The focus of our blessings, says Paul, is the "heavenly realms" or the "heavenlies." This is the unseen world of spiritual reality. "The five uses of the expression in Ephesians indicate that 'the heavenlies' are the sphere in which the 'principalities and powers' continue to operate (Eph. 3:10; 6:12), in which Christ reigns supreme and his people reign with him (Eph. 1:20; 2:6), and in which therefore God blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).¹

2. Adopted People (read Eph. 1:4-8)

"In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (1:4, 5, NIV).

The Greek word *proorisus*, which is translated as "predestined" literally means "marked out beforehand." There is nothing in Paul's writings to suggest that predestination means that God has arbitrarily predetermined a select few to be saved and all others to be lost. In Christ, God "marked out beforehand" the entire human race for salvation, though we are free to turn away from it. Paul's concept of predestination is "rooted in the conviction that we do not just happen to exist, that our lives have their roots in eternity, that our salvation begins in the mind of the eternal God, and that it is brought to realization in Christ. . . ."²

We are "adopted as his sons." Adoption was a Roman practice. The person adopted was given the same standing and position as one who was a child of birth.

"Redemption" (v. 7) is another way of picturing what God has done for us in Christ. This word refers to the Old Testament law that property and persons that had passed from one individual to another would be "redeemed" at a certain time and returned to the original owner or his family (see Lev. 25:25-27; 47-49). The central idea of redemption is the setting free of that which belongs to another.

There is a price, however, for that redemption. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (see Heb. 9:22). Christ was the sacrifice that paid for our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

*Is it arrogant to believe oneself to be one of God's chosen people?
Can the doctrine of election be applied to a church or community in
the same way as to an individual?*

To whom did Christ "pay" the redemption price of his blood?

3. Homeward Bound (read Eph. 1:9, 10)

"And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure . . . to bring all things in heaven and on earth under one head, even Christ" (1:9, 10, NIV).

God has not only chosen us in Christ from eternity and adopted us as his sons, but he has also revealed "the mystery of his will." For Paul the essential mystery was the method in which God through Christ brings man into fellowship with himself. And its meaning or connotations are even broader or deeper; for it involves restoring the unity of the whole universe—"all things in heaven and earth."

Does Ephesians 1:10 support the idea of universalism—the view that everybody is going to be saved in the end?

4. The Scope of These Blessings (read Eph. 1:11-14)

"Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession" (1:13, 14, NIV).

We become God's "possession," because of the "purpose of his will." However, this does not diminish our role of faith since, "having heard the word of truth," we "believed" and then were marked in him with a "seal." In verses 13 and 14 the Holy Spirit is given three different designations. The Holy Spirit is that which has been promised throughout the ages. It is also God's seal. The seal represents ownership. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit, indicating our belonging to God. The Holy Spirit is also a "guarantee." In ancient commercial transactions, it meant the "first installment, deposit, downpayment which was part of the purchase price."³ The Holy Spirit then is not only a promise and seal but also the first installment and a foretaste of "our inheritance." God chose us to be his people, "for the praise of the glory of his grace." As God's people we are his possession who live by his will and for his glory.

How can we know that we have the Holy Spirit, and thus the seal and guarantee he represents?

P.H.H.

1. John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society*, p. 35.
2. Archibald M. Hunter, *The Layman's Bible Commentary*, vol. 22 (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1959), p. 50.

Selected and Sealed

selected by Barry Graham

TESTIMONY Provision for the Elect

Key Passage:
Ephesians
1:3-14

The Father sets His love upon his elect people who live in the midst of men. These are people whom Christ has redeemed by the price of His own blood; and because they respond to the drawing of Christ, through the sovereign mercy of God, they are elected to be saved as His obedient children. Upon them is manifested the free grace of God, the love wherewith He hath loved them. Everyone who will humble himself as a little child, who will receive and obey the Word of God with a child's simplicity, will be among the elect of God. . . .

In the council of heaven, provision was made that men, though transgressors, should not perish in their disobedience but, through faith in Christ as their substitute and surety, might become the elect of God, predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. God wills that all men should be saved; for ample provision has been made, in giving His only-begotten Son to pay man's ransom. Those who perish will perish because they refuse to be adopted as children of God through Christ Jesus.¹

Sealing of the Elect

What is the seal of the living God, which is placed in the foreheads of His people? It is a mark which angels, but not human eyes, can read; for the destroying angel must see this mark of redemption. The intelligent mind has seen the sign of the cross of Calvary in the Lord's adopted sons and daughters. . . .

The Israelites placed over their doors a signature of blood, to show that they were God's property. So the children of God in this age will bear the signature God has appointed. They will place themselves in harmony with God's holy law. . . . God declares, "I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them."

All who cherish the Lord as their portion in this life will be under His control, and will receive the sign, the mark of God, which shows them to be God's special possession. Christ's righteousness will go before them, and the glory of the Lord will be their rereward. . . .

Only those who receive the seal of the living God will have the passport through the gates of the Holy City. But there are many who take upon themselves responsibilities in connection with the work of God who are not wholehearted believers, and while they remain thus cannot receive the seal of the living God. They trust in their own righteousness, which the Lord accounts as foolishness.²

REACT

What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit as a "seal" (Eph. 1:13, 14) and the "seal of the living God" in Revelation 7:1-3? How does the historic Adventist understanding of the Sabbath as the seal of God fit into the picture?

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1114.
2. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 968-970.

Barry Graham is an associate professor of mathematics at Loma Linda University.

Hymn of Electing Love

by Lewis B. Smedes

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (Ephesians 1:3, 4.)

No other sentence that Paul wrote carries more mystery into our union with Christ than this doxology. And the doxology can easily be spoiled by trading the mystery for a crisp formula. The Christian faith is better off when it bows before the mystery of antecedent love than when it carries off the prize of a precise formula. Still, the words are in front of us. And words are meant to help our understanding as well as to kindle our devotion. . . .

First we must observe that Paul sings his song to electing love from within the reality of life in Christ. He begins from where we are—in Christ. We are, he says, blessed in Christ and are present with Christ “in heavenly places” (1:3). “Heavenly places” points to the new creation that is really, but not comprehensively present. So it is the language of hope: the “heavenly places” point ahead to a future reality—the reality of “all things” united in Christ. The surprising fact is that we are already included in the new reality.

Only a sense of wonder and the experience of surprise inspire songs. A person is not moved to sing by commonplaces. The inevitability of a syllogism does not inspire a doxology. We sing when we wonder; our songs are born of mystery. And the wonder here is that people *like us* are “in the heavenly places with Christ.” How does one account for this reality, this “being in Christ”? There is no accounting for it. There is no *reason* in heaven or earth why we should be so blessed.

It is a gift. Paul ran from Christ; Christ pursued and overtook him. Paul resisted Christ; Christ disarmed him. Paul persecuted Christ; Christ converted him. Paul was an alien; Christ made him a member of the family. Paul was an enemy; Christ made him a friend. Paul was “in the flesh”; Christ set him “in the Spirit.” Paul was under the law; Christ set him in grace. Paul was dead; Christ made him alive to God. How does one give reasons for this? He does not give reasons; he sings: “Blessed be God who blessed us . . . even as he chose us in him.”

The reason for saying this is to remind us that Paul is not philosophizing about the eternal plan of an absolute diety. He is stricken by grace, overwhelmed by love. And he sings. What he says of election in Christ is a song, a confession, a hymn of wonder. Love is not a *reason*; it is mystery to sing about.

We must now turn to the fact that our election was in Christ from before the worlds were made. This means that Christ, *too*, was elect. And to say this is only to repeat what the New Testament says again and again. Jesus’ death was predestined (Acts 2:23; 4:28). “This is my Son, my chosen,” Luke reports the Father as saying (Luke 9:35). God loved Him before the world was founded (John 17:24). He is the Lamb of God, elect to be slain for man’s atonement

EVIDENCE
Key Passage:
Ephesians
1:3-14

“What he says of election in Christ is a song, a confession, a hymn of wonder.”

Lewis Smedes is professor of theology and ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.

(1 Pet. 1:20). And like Melchizedek He was a priest with no earthly antecedents to account for him (Heb. 7:16). Moreover, he was *appointed* "the heir of all things, through whom he [God] also created the world" (Heb. 1:2).

He was elect as the *concrete* individual doing the specific task that He was chosen to do. But we must also note that His election was not only as the *concrete* individual Jesus Christ; He was also elect as the *comprehensive* Christ. Paul is always concerned with Jesus in His total significance, in His grand context.

The context, is, first of all, the election of Israel. Israel is God's chosen; out of all the nations of earth, she was God's unique concern. "You only have I chosen out of all the families of the earth," says Jehovah (Amos 3:2). Israel may have distorted and twisted the meaning of its own election, but it could not undo the fact of it.

The essential meaning of Israel's election is: God and His people in vital community. Community is the purpose or end of election. But it crystallizes the meaning as well as the goal: "I will be their God, and they shall be my *people*" (Jer. 31:33). Jeremiah's conviction is echoed by prophet after prophet. And it is echoed in new forms in the New Testament until, in the vision of the Apocalypse, John hears the great voice from the throne crying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his *people*, and God himself will be with them" (Rev. 21:3).

**"We must think
of ourselves
as elect
in the
comprehensive
Christ."**

Israel was elect as Jehovah's servant for the blessing of the nations; Jesus is the culmination of Israel's election, for He is the "suffering servant of Jehovah" for the salvation of the world. His cross and resurrection are what Israel's election was all about. He established a covenant "in His blood" that cannot fail. And the core of His covenant is the same as the core of Israel's covenant—God and humanity in reconciled partnership (Isa. 42:1).

This thought must be brought back to our election in Christ, God's election is His "plan for the fulness of time, *to unite all things in him*" (Eph. 1:10). Christ was elect as the Christ "to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross" (Col. 1:20). He is elect as the one in whom a new creation is brought into being through the reconciliation of men with God at the cross. He is elect as head of His Body, the Church, which is the harbinger of the coming new creation. This is the comprehensive sense in which we must think of the election of Jesus Christ. Christ the concrete individual, the Man for others, is elect. *But His election, like Israel's, and with Israel's, is the decision of God to create a new world of people in partnership with Him. When we think of election, we must think of God's comprehensive decision to have a "new creation."*

Thus, when we think of ourselves as elect in Christ, we must think of ourselves as elect in the *comprehensive* Christ. When Paul says "Christ" he includes His universal goal and its universal achievement. We are in God's decision to unite "all things" in

Christ. The Christ of the cross is God's elect Christ. So is the Christ within whom all things are recreated. And we are elect within that concrete and comprehensive Christ.

If we reflect on our "election in Christ" in this way, we will be spared from the frightening abstractions that have so often plagued the doctrine of election. We will never think of election as a graceless, love-less decree to select some individuals for heaven and to reject other individuals for hell. The election in Christ is not a matter of numbers. Paul is talking, as we said, as a man dumbfounded that he and we were included in God's election. He is singing of the mercy of God that included us; he is not speculating on why certain others are not included.

We are elect *in* Christ. How hard it is to say what this means! Christ and Christians, the Lord and His subjects, the King and His kingdom, the Reconciler and the reconciled, the Leader of His followers, the Head and His body are elect together. Bavinck says: "The community and Christ are together in the one decision; they are, as one community, the elect." Perhaps this is what we should be content to say. God wanted a new creation with people in it who were His people, and *this* was His election. He elected a kingdom *with* a King, a body *with* a Head, a people *with* a Leader, a universe *with* a Lord, and sinners *with* a Savior. He elected us in the comprehensive Christ, the Christ . . . first defined as "Lord of All."

Being chosen in Christ means that we can no more be the object of God's agapic desire apart from Christ than a fraction can exist without an integer, a part without a whole. He is the circle in which we are included. He unites the whole of which we are individually parts. He is the elect Head of whom we are the body. To confess that we are chosen is, then, to confess that our new being is in Christ fundamentally and eternally; and that is to say that we are included in the new creation in Christ only through God's agapic, free decision of love. To make the discovery that one is in Christ is, at the same time and with the same wonder, to confess that one is in Christ because God in love freely desired a new creation in Christ.

What, then, does election by God's free agapic decision tell us of union with Christ? It tells us that the new order begun at the cross and resurrection, which sweeps into the here and now under His lordship and in the power of His Spirit, and which will culminate in a new earth where all things are reconciled, is rooted, not in time present, but in God's own eternal desire in love to give Himself in partnership with men and to restore a situation where we will be "his people" and He will be "our God" and Christ shall be all and in all.

REACT

Does the fact that we were chosen before the creation of the world suggest that we are born in a "saved" condition and remain that way unless and until we explicitly reject Christ?

"He is the circle in which we are included."

Excerpted from Lewis B. Smedes, *Union With Christ*, pp. 85-91. Copyright © 1983 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and used by permission.

Language for Our Limited Perception

by George Hilton

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
1:3-14

When facing a passage such as Eph. 1:3-14, it is sometimes best to do what we fear doing most. That is, face up to the fact that one interpretation, the doctrine of predestination (which is perhaps the one closest to face value), runs contrary to almost everything we believe and many other passages of Scripture which teach freedom of choice (see for example Josh. 24:15; John 6:37). How do we resolve such a situation? There are basically two possibilities.

1. Conclude that the Bible is contradicting itself and is thus not credible as the Word of God.

2. View the statements as only seemingly contradictory and attempt to resolve one point of view into harmony with the other.

Based on experience with a personal God, I reject the first option and choose the second. And, based on my belief in God as fair, I choose to try to harmonize this passage with the many others which seem to disagree with it.

Our language, and indeed our understanding of science, are pitifully inadequate to describe God's ability to know and to do (see Isa. 55:8, 9). The visit to Daniel by the angel Gabriel (Dan. 9:21) is an example showing that even angels operate in a realm inexplicable by current scientific knowledge. Scripture certainly teaches that God's perspective on events as they transpire is nothing like ours (see Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8). Perhaps God views the continuum of time and the whole of human experience in one scene. With God it would seem that past, present and future lose all meaning. The word *predestined*, on the other hand, is a very human word. It implies to us a sequence which to God is irrelevant.

"We must not confuse observation with intervention."

In trying to understand this difference between God's perspective and our own, we must not confuse observation with intervention. God's ability to observe does not necessarily imply his intervention. But, of course, sending Jesus to die was an intervention in human affairs. Thus, we begin to see the difficulty in finding the correct word. With the simultaneous view of history available to God, he was aware at once of both the death of Christ on the cross and your choice to accept this. Hence the decision of your destiny. Here we have observation, intervention, *and* free choice. Since to human perception the death of Christ preceded your choice, the use of the word *predestined* does seem appropriate.

Consider the cases of Enoch, Moses, and Elijah. They entered heaven prior (in our view of time) to the sacrifice of Christ. We might say they were "postdestined." In the same way, could we say those who live on this side of the cross are "predestined"?

REACT

If distinctions of past, present, and future are irrelevant to God, is it possible to picture him relating to each individual dynamically as their lives unfold in time? Does God experience disappointment when I sin, grief when I am grieving, and joy when things go well, as the Bible seems to suggest (see Gen. 6:6; Isa. 54:5-8; Luke 15:7)?

George Hilton is an assistant professor of mathematics at Loma Linda University.

I Believe in Predestination

by John Elder

What sort of theological deviant would believe in predestination? Why, just the very word conjures up images of an angry god playing eeny-meeny-miny-moe with human souls: some destined by their maker to find grace and thereby receive life eternal; others doomed by their creator to merit damnation.

I believe in predestination. I do *not* believe in a God of caprice who randomly assigns souls to either paradise or torment. Such a view of God contradicts the picture Jesus painted of his Father.

Paul believed in predestination. He opened his letter to the Ephesians with a psalm praising God, a doxology of thankfulness for predestination. Too many analyze this passage in pieces for any theological conclusions they can wring out of it. To do so, however, defeats Paul's purpose in writing—this is not a passage to be analyzed. Sing it, pray it; Ephesians 1:3-14 is litany, not dogma.

Indeed, Paul praises God for predestination. God has blessed us (v. 3) with every spiritual blessing, chosen us (v. 4) to be set apart as his children before we were created, predestined us (v. 5) for adoption, favored us (v. 6) in our Redeemer, caused us to abound in wisdom (v. 8) as we learn of his will that we be his adopted children (v. 5), chosen us (v. 11) as Christ's inheritance, predestined us (v. 11) to be part of his plan, and sealed us with the Holy Spirit (v. 13) as a promise of final redemption. Certainly, this is to the praise of God's glory.

Ah, but what of those who miss out? Don't God's blessings upon his chosen become a curse upon those passed over?

Nowhere does Scripture indicate that God has chosen anyone for damnation. Instead, in his love he has chosen all who will for salvation:

"The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son."¹

REACT

If God's decree of predestination can be frustrated by human choice, can we properly call God sovereign and all-powerful?

OPINION

Key Passage:
Ephesians
1:3-14

**"Paul praises
God for
predestination."**

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 27.

John Elder is a senior in computer science at Loma Linda University.

THE HOPE AND THE POWER

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe" (Ephesians 1:18, 19, NIV).



From a Tear to a Smile

by Richard Trates

Wanting to give Bible studies anywhere I could, I accepted an invitation to witness in a local mental health institution. Though not the usual place to give Bible studies, it was in this strange setting that I saw the power and hope given by the gospel.

Scott was a tall young man, about six-foot-three, with light brown hair and sad brown eyes. He seemed depressed and, in spite of his size, afraid, like a little boy. When I started the study and began to unfold the good news of the free salvation offered by Jesus Christ, Scott started to cry, not a soft sob, but a loud and disruptive bellow. Not knowing what to do, I finally asked the guard to unlock the door, and I took Scott out into the hallway. "Scott," I asked, "why are you crying?"

Looking at me with tear-filled eyes he said, "I love Jesus, but I've been too bad. He can never forgive me for all my sins."

"Scott," I asked "do you really want Jesus to forgive your sins?"

With tears falling freely, he shook his head yes, and I prayed a simple prayer with him.

"Jesus I'm sorry for all the sins in my life. I want to be yours; please forgive me."

With the assurance of his sins forgiven, Scott could start again as a new man. He didn't say anything, but he had stopped crying and was smiling.

When I returned the next week a nurse approached me and asked me what had happened with Scott. Somewhat worried, I asked why. She then told me Scott had made a complete turn around in his behavior and seemed well on the road to recovery.

I saw Scott two more times before he left the facility, and each time he expressed joy in the knowledge and power of the gospel of Jesus.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
1:15-23

Richard Trates is a senior ministerial studies major at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

Power for the Christian

LOGOS **Theme:** Paul desires that every Christian grasp the magnitude of the hope and power available to them in the church of which Christ is the head.

1. Paul Gives Thanks

"For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers" (Eph. 1:15, 16, NIV).

After the doxology in the first 14 verses of this chapter, Paul begins an intercessory prayer. At its beginning he reiterates a theme that is found throughout his other epistles: it is a great and wonderful thing to be a child of God, being a Christian is something that calls for much thanksgiving. Paul, coming out of an oppressive and stringently legalistic system, found in Christianity an assurance, peace and relief that his previous piety could not give. The Gentiles whom he converted found meaning and fulfillment that a pagan and hedonistic life-style could not hold. Thus both Jew and Gentile had previously been in great darkness, and Christianity provided a great, refreshing and beautiful light.

However, we in western civilization have been living in the benefits of Christianity in all its gracious forms for many generations. We have no great darkness by which to compare and appreciate the glory of the gospel with which we are endowed. As Christians in this context it is easy to take our Christianity for granted and for its thrill, by comparison to be diminished.

Has Christianity become too commonplace for us? How can this be avoided?

2. Paul's Prayer for the Church (read Eph. 1:16-18)

"I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better" (1:16, 17, NIV).

Prayer is a delicate matter. All too easily it can be used to express selfish desires. When some pray they continually pray for new spiritual blessings while failing to recognize the blessings already received. The opposite is also true where complacency prevails and there is no perceived need for a deep experience. The best defense against both extremes is to follow Paul's example given in these verses. "What Paul does in Ephesians 1, and therefore encourages us to copy, is both to keep praising God that in Christ all spiritual blessings are ours and to keep praying that we may know the fullness of what he has given us."

The New Testament picture of the church is one of a united society of prayer—the individual praying for the group and the group praying for the individual. Thus Paul prays for the members of the

Christian family, not that they might have further blessings, but that they may fully appreciate the blessings they have already received, that is to "know him [Christ] better" (v. 17) and to "know the hope to which he has called" (v. 18). But such knowledge is impossible without revelation, so included in the prayer is the request for the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" (v. 17).

What is "the hope" to which we are called? Is Paul's request here a prayer for a mystical religious experience?

3. The Power of Christ (read Eph. 1:19-23)

"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church" (1:22, NIV).

Paul's prayer covers three areas: the call Christ has given, the glorious inheritance, and Christ's power. The call comes at the beginning of a Christian's experience; the inheritance at the end, and God's power is available throughout. Paul is convinced that this power is sufficient and cites evidence for this. First he mentions the resurrection. Death, so contrary and diametrically opposed to the structure of God's universe, yet so imbued in our existence that life without it seems impossible, has been defeated. What hope this power inspires. In what stark contrast this stands to the pessimism of *The Wasteland*, the fatalism of Thomas Hardy, and the despairing, warped morality of modern politics. In a society so overshadowed by the fact of nuclear proliferation and the real possibility of total annihilation, there is hope, there is power, for Christ has conquered death, and is now, Paul's second point, seated at God's right hand, where he has been given all authority and power. Now not only death has been negated but all things are subject to Christ. Sin too has lost its power.

But there is more cause for elation than the fact that Christ has conquered both death and sin. This same conqueror, with the same power, Paul points out, is also the head of the church. He imparts that same power to us, for in being our head he fills us in every way (v. 23). The power that raised Jesus from the dead will raise us as well. And the power that put all things under his feet will put evil under ours.

Because Christ has conquered death, should we be concerned about nuclear arms proliferation? What responsibility does the power of Christ bring?

E.R.M.

Our Inheritance and Christ's

TESTIMONY
Key Passage:
Ephesians
1:15-23

A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured his disciples that he went to prepare mansions for them in the Father's house. Those who accept the teachings of God's Word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. And yet "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the paradise of God. . . .

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." What love, what matchless love, that, sinners and aliens as we are, we may be brought back to God, and adopted into his family! . . .

All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean, when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue can not utter it; pen can not portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving his Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it. Yet as we study the Bible, and meditate upon the life of Christ and the plan of redemption, these great themes will open to our understanding more and more. And it will be ours to realize the blessing which Paul desired for the Ephesian church, when he prayed "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what *the riches of the glory* of his inheritance in the saints, and what is *the exceeding greatness of his power* to usward who believe."

Christ's redeemed ones are his jewels, his precious and peculiar treasure. "They shall be as the stones of a crown,"—"the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." In them, "he shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Christ looks upon his people in their purity and perfection as the reward of all his sufferings, his humiliation, and his love, and the supplement of his glory,—Christ the great center, from whom radiates all glory.

Excerpted from
"The Inestimable Gift,"
Review and Herald,
Oct. 22, 1908, p. 7.

Paul's Prayer for the Church

by William Barclay

In this passage we see what Paul asks for a Church which he loves and which is doing well.

(i) He prays for the Spirit of Wisdom. The word he uses for *wisdom* is *sophia*, and we have already seen that *sophia* is the wisdom of the deep things of God. He prays that the Church may be led deeper and deeper into the knowledge of the eternal truths. If ever that is to happen, certain things are necessary.

(a) It is necessary that we should have thinking people. Boswell tells us that Goldsmith once said: "As I take my shoes from the shoemaker, and my coat from the tailor, so I take my religion from the priest." There are many who are like that; and yet religion is nothing unless it is a personal discovery. As Plato had it long ago: "The unexamined life is the life not worth living," and the unexamined religion is the religion not worth having. It is an obligation for a thinking man to think his way to God.

(b) It is necessary that we should have a teaching ministry. William Chillingworth said: "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." That is true; but so often we would not think so. The exposition of scripture from the pulpit is a first necessity of religious wakening. . . .

(ii) Paul prays for a fuller revelation and a fuller knowledge of God. . . . The Christian life could be described as getting to know God better every day. A friendship which does not grow closer with the years tends to vanish with the years. And it is so with us and God.

(iii) He prays for a new realization of the Christian hope. It is almost a characteristic of the age in which we live that it is an age of despair. Thomas Hardy wrote in *Tess*: "Sometimes I think that the worlds are like apples on our stubborn tree. Some of them splendid and some of them blighted." Then comes the question: "On which kind do we live—a splendid one or a blighted one?" And *Tess's* answer is: "A blighted one." Between the wars Sir Philip Gibbs wrote: "If I smell poison gas in Edgware Road, I am not going to put on a mask or go to a gas-proof room. I am going out to take a good sniff of it, for I shall know that the *game is up*." H. G. Wells once wrote grimly: "Man, who began in a cave behind a windbreak, will end in the disease soaked ruins of a slum." On every side the voice of the pessimist sounds; it was never more necessary to sound the trumpet-call of Christian hope. If the Christian message is true, the world is on the way not to dissolution but to consummation.

(iv) He prays for a new realization of the power of God. For Paul the supreme proof of that power was the resurrection. It proved that God's purpose cannot be stopped by any action of men. In a world which looks chaotic, it is well to realize that God is still in control.

REACT

Does increased wisdom and knowledge tend to decrease spiritual fervor?

EVIDENCE

Key Passage:
Ephesians
1:15-23

"The unexamined religion is the religion not worth having."

Excerpted from *The Letters to the Galatians and the Ephesians* (Revised Edition), translated and interpreted by William Barclay, pp. 90-92. Copyright © 1975 by William Barclay Published in the U.S.A. by The Westminster Press. Used by permission.

William Barclay was one of this century's most beloved interpreters of the New Testament.

What Is Your Church Type?

by Mark Holm

HOW TO

Key Passage:

Ephesians 1:15-23

We each tend to carry a mental clipboard with us when we go to church and especially when we visit "other" churches. Some of the traits we look for in a church are friendliness, spiritual attitude, membership participation, the aura of the pastor, the music, the warmth of the congregation, how welcome we are made to feel, and the overall tone of the service.

Having analyzed these factors, consciously and/or subconsciously, we often then give the church a label.

There is the "unfriendly" church where you feel totally unnoticed. You know what I mean. You walk into the church and nobody seems to pay any attention to you. You wander about the church trying to find a friendly face and feel like you are staring into a box of prunes.

On the other hand there is the "friendly" church. When you walk through the door on Sabbath you are hit with a barrage of people asking you questions ranging from your favorite food to your theory on the atonement. During the service the pastor makes you stand so that "everybody can get a good look at you." For the rest of the service you feel like an icon and far from welcome. The aura of friendliness turns out to be superficial.

Obviously, neither type of church is ideal. And even though no church completely fits the labels "unfriendly" or "friendly," the element of truth in these stereotypes points up a need: How can we make our churches places where people feel welcome and relaxed, where they are able to worship God and come away from church prepared to face a new week.

In Ephesians 1:15 Paul commends his readers for practicing two fundamental principles. These same principles can make our own churches more in tune with what God wants them to be.

1. "I have heard of your faith in Jesus." A church that has faith is a real breath of fresh air. There are all kinds of implications to this faith. A true faith in Jesus by the church members sets the stage and attitude of the whole church. Worship becomes a celebration, the friendly attitude of the church is genuine and from the heart. A church with faith in Jesus moves, breathes and is truly alive.

2. "Your love toward all the saints." This is a result of the faith mentioned above. People want to be loved. A church that can show genuine care and concern for its members and community is a church that is healthy and growing. Jesus and Paul knew what they were saying when they talked about love as the greatest thing. We all need it, we all love to give it, and it covers the whole spectrum of what church is all about.

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Enlightened Unto Power

by Alfred R. Brown

The soft notes of the piano sprinkle in the background to alert the T.V. show host of the impending commercial break. With a chuckle, Johnny assures all that the "Tonight Show" will soon return.

A mild bleep ensues and the unsuspecting viewer is given a panoramic tour of futuristic splendor. During the brief commercial slot, the Marriott company vaunts a conception of its first intergalactic hotel.

A true architectural marvel, it interfaces impeccable engineering, state-of-the-art design, and convenience unimaginable. Brightly countenanced celebrity guests lounge amidst lush verdure and roam gayly about the marble lobby floor. Each, young and old, takes turns gawking at the marvels of the galaxy. Pearled stars speckle the deep abyss seen through vast windowpane apertures. Majestic worlds, dangling multicolored, appear at stone's throw. The distant earth's azure crescent casts an approving smile upon the cheerful crew. Every conceivable comfort and entertainment has been packed into this floating fantasia. The push of a button produces food, pleasure, and service with a smile.

In the ad's 60 seconds, the pulses and imagination of 20 million Americans experience extreme tachycardia. The fruits of human knowledge and power continue to flourish and confound. It seems at times limitless, yet decadence grows parallel to progress. Turmoil alloys technology.

The interesting point is that all people ultimately channel their acumen toward their conception of a better way—a higher convenience. Something intrinsic leads them to a greater ideal for which to strive. Throughout history, this thrust has often been perverted. Nazi Germany is a quick case in point.

Until we realize the power of spiritual maturity that Paul presents to the Ephesians, our greatest efforts at universal excellence will fall back to earth like exhausted booster rockets. Paul desires that every Christian grasp the magnitude of the hope and power available through Christ. In order to demonstrate this, the apostle employs superlative diction at every opportunity, "and what is the *immeasurable* greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of His *great* might" (Eph. 1:19, RSV).

We would do well to leave behind our puny conceptions of God's kingdom and realize that the power and riches of the Lord encompass the ultimate mental and physical benefits.

And unlike human monuments, waddling through space guided by the oars of temporal opulence, the kingdom of God will endure for eternity, assuring infinite satisfaction and splendor. Measure for measure, the kingdom of heaven is still earth's finest investment.

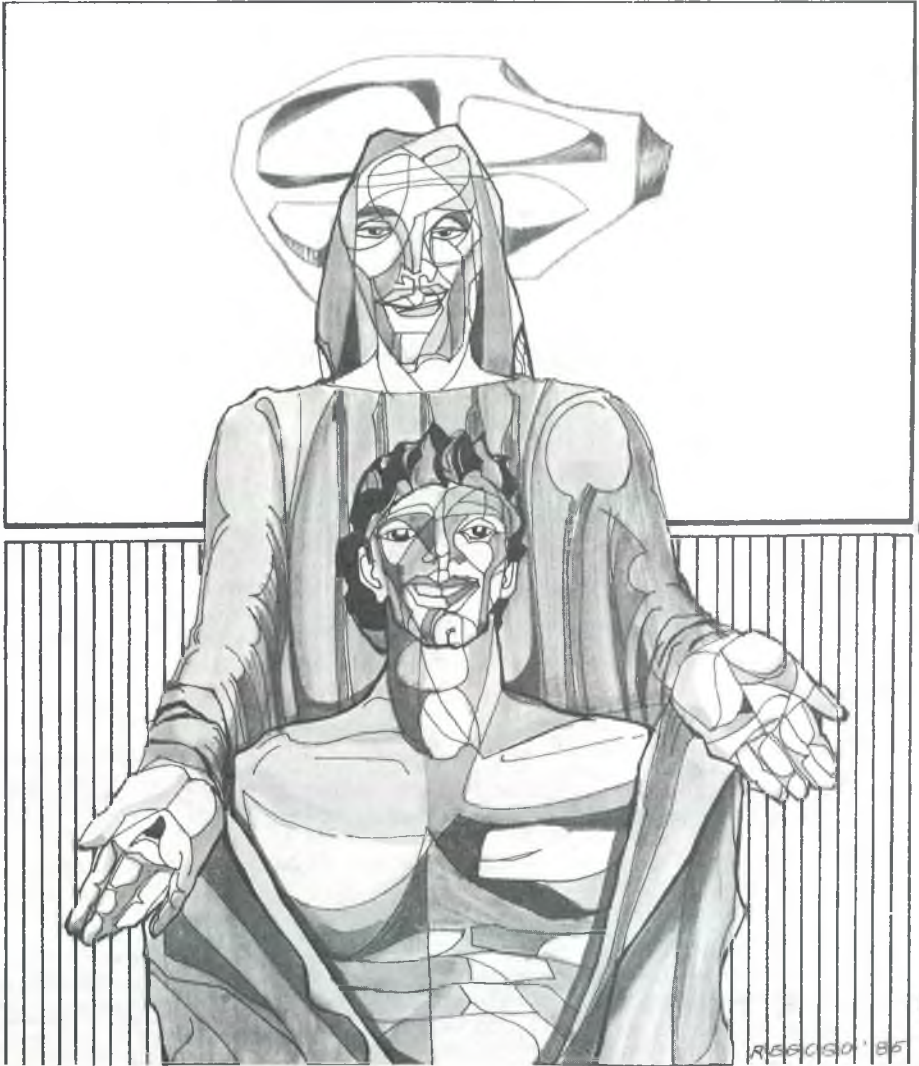
OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians
1:15-23

"Turmoil
alloys
technology."

Alfred R. Brown is a graduate student and teaching assistant in the English department at Loma Linda University.

INCOMPARABLE GRACE

“God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6, 7, NIV).



A Bit of Grace

by Lori L. Tripp

I've never gotten a traffic ticket. This does not mean I don't sometimes go 40 in school zones, coast past stop signs, and drive through some very yellow lights.

One of the first things I learned when I got my driving permit at 16, though, was how to evade police cars. Even before I learned where the car brake was (and after learning where the radio was), I knew speed traps, the distance between police car headlights (for night detection) and other useful information. Few of my friends made it through high school cruising and college dating without a traffic record. But I did.

Then a few weeks ago I got caught. I was driving home from the DMV, of all places. I had been renewing my license.

It was a sunny day, and the road home is a wonderfully curvy and seldom-traveled one. Perfect. So I opened the sunroof, turned on the radio unhealthfully loud and drove unhealthfully fast.

I was having a marvelous time until a slow pickup pulled in front of me. To let him know how seriously he had destroyed my momentum, I periodically drove alongside him on the other side of the road and broke my record of close tailgating.

Just as I was pulling out again, I happened to look in my rearview mirror. The car

behind me had something too red and too circular on its roof. I cringed. Then the red and circular thing started flashing.

I pulled over obediently. I had had it. I knew it. This had probably been my worst driving, and he had been watching.

The policeman approached me cautiously and asked for my license. "I pulled you over for several reasons," he began. "You were going 35 through town and you were tailgating and driving on the wrong side of the road."

"I know. I'm sorry. I wasn't watching my speedometer." I had heard it's best to be agreeable. Crying was next.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm on my way home from the DMV. You won't believe this, but I just took my driving test and didn't miss any questions!" I handed him my copy as proof.

"Did the test say anything about speeding?" he asked less gruffly.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, and I got that question right."

"Okay, I'll let you go."

He added rather paternally, "You better slow down in the future."

As I pulled away (very carefully) I realized that I still have a clean driving record. Still. But I really don't deserve it. It isn't because I'm a good driver. Just a bit of grace.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:1-10

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Grace for the Dead

LOGOS

Theme: In his incomparable grace, God conferred on us the same exalted status as the risen Christ, even when we were dead in trespasses.

1. The Natural Man (read Eph. 2:1-3)

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins" (2:1, NIV).

The "your" in Paul's forthright accusation does not point just to the people of Asia Minor specifically, but as we see from v. 3, refers to everyone, including Paul himself. The death referred to is not a physical death but a spiritual death. Paul uses the two words—"trespass" (or transgression) and "sin"—to cover the extent of human evil. The word "trespass" (*paraptoma*) means a false step—when one knowingly crosses a clear boundary or leaves the right path. "Sin" (*hamartia*) means missing of the mark, not reaching the standard. These two words cover the active and passive aspects of human wrong. They represent sins of commission and those of omission.¹

Because of these conditions we are counted as dead, since we are separated spiritually from God. "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2, NIV). It is the soul that matters the most, not the physical and intellectual aspects of personality. Thus a life without Christ is, paradoxically, a living death (see 1 Tim. 5:6).

The three influences that control and manipulate one's pre-Christian experience are described as the "ways of this world," the "ruler of the kingdom of air," and the "cravings of our sinful nature." The "ways of the world" are set in contrast to God's kingdom and new society. They consist of a value system alien to God. We only need to pause for a moment and look around us to see the demoralizing, dehumanizing activities and ideals expressed in society today. We see poverty, discrimination, unemployment, and exploitation present in all forms. We are held captive by an outlook that is destructive and self-centered. The devil is referred to as the "ruler of the kingdom of air." As such he exerts intimidating power over mere mortals. The third influence that holds us captive is the cravings of our "sinful" nature or "flesh." Flesh here does not indicate our skeletal covering but our self-centered human nature. It refers to healthy, physical desires that have become perverted into lust and excess, as well as perversions of the spirit such as pride and greed.

Whose fault is our pitiful condition? Many blame the world, the devil and the flesh. Yet Paul specified, it is "you" and "we" who have made the decision to set ourselves in the control of the enemy and in opposition to God.

How would you distinguish between healthy, proper desires and the "cravings of the sinful nature"?

2. Divine Compassion (read Eph. 2:4-10)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8, NIV).

Paul does not leave us in despair due to our pitiful, cadaverous condition but reveals that because of God's "great love for us" he "made us alive with Christ." We could in no way merit this treatment. It was nothing in ourselves that prompted this action from God. It is something God has already done *for* us out of his sheer generosity in the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. In v. 9 Paul re-emphasizes that it is "not by works" but is a gift of God.

Paul uses four words to express the origins of God's saving initiative. It was God's "mercy," God's "love," God's "grace," and God's "kindness" that prompted his action toward us. God saved us in order that we could become living evidence of his love, and in this way direct people toward the source of our salvation (v.7).

In v. 10 Paul continues the present theme by adding another positive affirmation. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works . . ." (Eph. 2:10, NIV). Paul had previously discussed salvation as a resurrection from the dead, and now he adds that it is a creation, a recreation. In this new creation, good works become imperative. We do not do good works as a means for salvation, but they become an evidence and result of our new status.

Is salvation a kind of transaction between God and us in which he contributes grace and we contribute faith?

P.H.H.

1. John R. W. Stott,
God's New Society,
p. 76.

A Way of Escape

selected by Julie Edna Singh

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:1-10

Identified With Christ

Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.¹

In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just. He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds.²

Cooperation With Christ

Through union with Christ, through acceptance of His righteousness by faith, we may be qualified to work the works of God, to be collaborators with Christ. If you are willing to drift along with the current of evil, and do not cooperate with the heavenly agencies in restraining transgression in your family, and in the church, in order that everlasting righteousness may be brought in, you do not have faith. Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Through faith the Holy Spirit works in the heart to create holiness therein; but this cannot be done unless the human agent will work with Christ. We can be fitted for heaven only through the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart; for we must have Christ's righteousness as our credentials if we would find access to the Father. In order that we may have the righteousness of Christ, we need daily to be transformed by the influence of the Spirit, to be a partaker of the divine nature. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to elevate the taste, to sanctify the heart, to ennoble the whole man.³

“Christ's character stands in place of your character.”

Daily Assurance Through Christ

They that are abiding in Jesus have the assurance that God will hear them, because they love to do His will. They offer no formal, wordy prayer but come to God in earnest, humble confidence. . . . They depart from His presence rejoicing in the assurance of pardoning love and sustaining grace.⁴

REACT

What specifically is our role in “cooperating with heavenly agencies” to bring in righteousness?

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 62.
2. *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 394.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
4. *Our High Calling*, p. 147.

Julie Edna Singh is an English and physical therapy major at Loma Linda University.

The Indicative and the Imperative of the Gospel

by Edward E. Henry

Like a recurring theme in a Beethoven symphony, the controversial issue of justification by faith alone has plagued the Christian church from its earliest years to the present day. It certainly was one of the key issues that occasioned the Reformation's dramatic break with the church of Rome, and it almost fractured a fragile, fledgling Advent movement at Minneapolis in 1888. Some scholars have attributed this controversy to the paradoxical nature of the apostle Paul's theology. In Romans 3:28 he states, "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." This passage, along with others such as Ephesians 2:8, 9, appears to give sanction to a lawless religion—"antinomianism."

On closer study of Paul's writings, however, we discover that such texts represent only one side of Paul's theological coin. They represent the *indicative* provision of the "incomparable gospel." In a language, the indicative mood is a verb form that states an objective fact. Paul's indicative describes the redemptive work God has already wrought for us. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4, 5).

But on the reverse side of the coin exists the *imperative*—a command or call to action: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). We should therefore always view Paul's theology holistically in order to avoid falling into the extremes of cheap grace, on the one hand, and legalism on the other.

The gospel of Christ is a two-edged sword. First, it has the power to resurrect us from a life of sin and death. Second, it empowers us to perform deeds of righteousness.

We have been saved by the unmerited grace of God. And because of this, we have received a new and ever renewing life from the source of life—God. But we were given this free gift of life to use; not to abuse or hem and haw with. We either use it in service for the Master or we lose it. We should always try to remember that "while believers are saved through faith alone, saving faith is always attested by good works—because it is alive, it always finds expression through those works of righteousness which are its proper fruit."¹

The dual nature of the Christian's salvation is perfectly summed up in the great commission we received from the Master himself: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me"—indicative. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations"—imperative (Matt. 28:18b, 19a, RSV, emphasis supplied).

REACT

How does our need to respond to the "imperative" of the gospel affect our assurance of salvation? Is it possible to determine whether we are performing the imperative adequately, or whether we have failed to do so, and have thus forfeited the provisions of the "indicative"?

EVIDENCE
Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:1-10

"We should view Paul's theology holistically in order to avoid extremes."

1. *Harper's Study Bible*, Eph. 2:8, margin.

Edward E. Henry is a graduate student and teaching assistant in the English department at Loma Linda University.

How Shall We Continue?

by Ivor Cooper

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:1-10

Now that we have been saved by the sacrifice of Christ, how shall we continue to live Christlike lives? Many of us find it easy to contemplate our conversion and praise God for bringing us to a knowledge and acceptance of his free gift of salvation. Continuing to build, day by day, upon our relationship with God may for some prove more difficult. Often the pressures and demands of life will infiltrate our Christian experience and, largely unnoticed, begin to erode our relationship with Christ. If we are to maintain our status with the risen Christ and continue to accept God's control of our lives, we must develop appropriate strategies to ward off the attacks of the devil.

Ephesians 2:10 aptly conveys to us the nature of our salvation and advises us of our responsibility in accepting it. The old saying that "the best form of defense is attack" is appropriate in our efforts to hold fast to the salvation that has been given us. God does not want merely a passive acceptance of salvation; he wishes for us to be forceful and dynamic.

"The best form of defense is attack."

The best way for us to avoid temptation and loss of faith is to be actively promoting the message of salvation. By spending our lives helping others discover and experience "the incomparable gospel," we will become truly at one with God's purpose.

Our constant objective should be to orientate our lives toward God's call to service. In our prayers, Bible study and devotional reading we must prepare ourselves for the task of witnessing to others. Our sense of urgency will maintain within us a cognizance of and confidence in God's love for us.

Realization that God, by his grace, chose us and gave us spiritual life while we were still dead in our sins will lead us to desire ongoing fellowship with him. By demonstrating to others the power of the gospel message, we will ourselves continually draw closer to God.

REACT

Suggest some practical strategies for proclaiming the message of God's free gift of salvation in the 1980s.

Ivor Cooper is a graduate student in the English Department at Loma Linda University.

The Power of Sitting

by Watchman Nee

"God . . . made him to sit . . . and made us to sit with him [see Eph. 1:17; 2:6]." Let us first consider the implications of this word "sit." It reveals the secret of a heavenly life. Christianity does not begin with walking; it begins with sitting. The Christian era began with Christ, of whom we are told that, when he had made purification of sins, he "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). With equal truth we can say that the individual Christian life begins with a man "in Christ"—that is to say, when by faith we see ourselves seated together with him in the heavens.

Most Christians make the mistake of trying to walk in order to be able to sit, but that is a reversal of the true order. Our natural reason says, if we do not walk, how can we ever reach the goal? What can we attain without effort? How can we ever get anywhere if we do not move? But Christianity is a queer business! If at the outset we try to do anything, we get nothing; if we seek to attain something, we miss everything. For Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE. Thus Ephesians opens with the statement that God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (1:3) and we are invited at the very outset to sit down and enjoy what God has done for us; not to set out to try and attain it for ourselves.

Walking implies effort, whereas God says that we are saved, not by works, but "by grace . . . through faith" (2:8). We constantly speak of being "saved through faith," but what do we mean by it? We mean this, that we are saved by reposing in the Lord Jesus. We did nothing whatever to save ourselves; we simply laid upon him the burden of our sin-sick souls. We began our Christian life by depending not upon our own doing but upon what he had done. Until a man does this he is no Christian; for to say: "I can do nothing to save myself; but by his grace God has done everything for me in Christ," is to take the first step in the life of faith. The Christian life from start to finish is based upon this principle of utter dependence upon the Lord Jesus. There is no limit to the grace God is willing to bestow upon us. He will give us everything, but we can receive none of it except as we rest in him. "Sitting" is an attitude of rest. Something has been finished, work stops, and we sit. It is paradoxical, but true, that we only advance in the Christian life as we learn first of all to sit down.

What does it really mean to sit down? When we walk or stand we bear on our legs all the weight of our own body, but when we sit down our entire weight rests upon the chair or couch on which we sit. We grow weary when we walk or stand, but we feel rested when we have sat down for awhile. In walking or standing we expend a great deal of energy, but when we are seated we relax at once, because the strain no longer falls upon our muscles and nerves but upon something outside of ourselves. So also in the spiritual realm, to sit down is simply to rest our whole weight—our load, ourselves, our future, everything—upon the Lord. We let him bear the respon-

OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:1-10

"Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE."

Watchman Nee was a great Chinese writer and preacher.

sibility and cease to carry it ourselves.

This was God's principle from the beginning. In the creation God worked from the first to the sixth day and rested on the seventh. We may truthfully say that for those first six days he was very busy. Then, the task he had set himself completed, he ceased to work. The seventh day became the sabbath of God; it was God's rest.

But what of Adam? Where did he stand in relation to that rest of God? Adam, we are told, was created on the sixth day. Clearly, then, he had no part in those first six days of work, for he came into being only at their end. God's seventh day was, in fact, Adam's first. Whereas God worked six days and then enjoyed his sabbath rest, Adam began his life with the sabbath; for God works before he rests, while man must first enter into God's rest, and then alone can he work. Moreover it was because God's work of creation was truly complete that Adam's life could begin with rest. And here is the Gospel: that God has gone one stage further and has completed also the work of redemption, and that we need do nothing whatever to merit it, but can enter by faith directly into the values of his finished work.

"The Christian life from start to finish is based upon this principle of utter dependence."

Of course we know that between these two historic facts, between God's rest in creation and God's rest in redemption, there lies the whole tragic story of Adam's sin and judgment, of man's unceasing, unprofitable labor, and of the coming of the Son of God to toil and to give himself until the lost position was recovered. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work," he explained as he pursued his way. Only with the atoning price paid could he cry: "It is finished!"

But because of that triumphant cry, the analogy we have drawn is a true one. Christianity indeed means that God has done everything in Christ, and that we simply step by faith into the enjoyment of that fact. Our key word here is not of course, in its context, a command to "sit down" but to see ourselves as "seated" in Christ. Paul prays that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened (1:18) to understand all that is contained for us in this double fact, that God has first by mighty power "made him to sit," and then by grace "made us to sit with him." And the first lesson we must learn is this, that the work is not initially ours at all, but his. It is not that we work for God, but that he works for us. God gives us our position of rest. He brings his Son's finished work and presents it to us, and then he says to us, "Please sit" (*ch'eng tso*). His offer to us cannot, I think, be better expressed than in the words of the invitation to the great banquet: "Come; for all things are now ready" (Luke 14:17). Our Christian life begins with the discovery of what God has provided . . .

But if all these things become ours by faith alone, what then of the now very urgent and practical matter of our sanctification? How can we know present deliverance from sin's reign? How is our "old man," who has followed us and troubled us for years, to be "crucified" and put away? Once again the secret is not in walking but in sitting; not in doing but in resting in something done. "We *died* to

sin." We "*were baptized . . . unto his death.*" "*We were buried with him.*" "*God . . . quickened us together with Christ*" (Rom. 6:2, 3, 4; Eph. 2:5). All these statements are in the past (aorist) tense. Why is this? Because the Lord Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago, and I *was crucified* with him. This is the great historic fact. By it his experience has now become my spiritual history, and God can speak of me as already having everything "with him." All that I now have I have "with Christ."

If I put a dollar bill between the pages of a magazine, and then burn the magazine, where is the dollar bill? It has gone the same way as the magazine—to ashes. Where the one goes the other goes too. Their history has become one. But, just as effectively, God has put us in Christ. What happened to him happened also to us. All the experiences he met, we too have met in him. "Our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin" (Rom. 6:6). That is not an exhortation to struggle. That is history: our history, written in Christ before we were born. Do you believe that? It is true! Our crucifixion with Christ is a glorious historic fact. Our deliverance from sin is based, not on what we can do, nor even on what God is going to do for us, but on what he has already done for us in Christ. When that fact dawns upon us and we rest back upon it (Rom. 6:11), then we have found the secret of a holy life.

**"His experience
has now become
my spiritual
history."**

REACT

1. Is it possible for one truly to grasp and accept the saving work of Christ, and still be unable to overcome sin?

2. Does sanctification come through "sitting" alone, as Nee seems to imply? Might his view of sanctification lead to a "quietistic" sort of Christianity that is unconcerned with service and witness?

Excerpted from
Sit, Walk, Stand
by Watchman Nee,
pp. 14-21. Copyright ©
Angus I. Kinnear.
American edition
published in 1972
by Tyndale House
Publishers, Inc.

ALIENATION'S ANTIDOTE

"You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19, 20, NIV).



A Living Peace

by Linda Hoey

"But, Aunt Wretha, do you really think it matters to God whether or not we wear jewelry?"

Aunt Wretha breathed deeply and then replied, "It seems to me that there is pretty strong biblical support for the stand the church takes against wearing jewelry. Remember the text that talks about not adorning ourselves outwardly? That seems to be a pretty strong statement about God's opinion of jewelry."

"Yes," Jan interrupted, "but is the church consistent on this point? No one says anything against me if I buy a beautiful, new dress for \$100 and wear it to school. If anything, they ooh and aah over how nice I look in it. But if I take that same \$100 and buy a gold necklace to wear to school, suddenly I'm no longer a Christian. The thing that I really wonder about is that in ten years the dress will be worthless while the gold necklace will be worth more than I paid for it. And aren't we supposed to spend our money wisely?"

"I see your point, Jan," Aunt Wretha replied, "but dresses are necessary and necklaces aren't. Not wearing jewelry is an important part of living simply and modestly, as Adventists have always tried to do. It's a way of

showing our love for Jesus and that we are not conformed to this world. I fear this very issue may be a part of the shaking time when the true Christians are separated from those who are not."

"Well," her niece persisted, "I consider myself to be a Christian, but I don't believe my salvation depends on whether or not I wear jewelry. I hate to think that this choice of mine will ruin our relationship with each other."

Patiently Aunt Wretha responded, "I don't see it that way. But I ask that you really be honest with God about this and allow him to lead you. And I want you to remember that the church has standards that set us apart from the world. You are important to me, so let's go on to church and agree to love each other in spite of our disagreements."

* * * *

As we study this week how Christ brings together alienated people, let's keep in mind how we relate to others:

Do we love each other in spite of our differences of opinion?

How do we demonstrate acceptance of people outside the Adventist community who hold philosophies different from ours?

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:11-22

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United, With Hope and With God

LOGOS

Theme: The cross of Christ breaks down the barriers that alienate human groups and enables all to share together in access to one Father.

1. One in Christ (read Eph. 2:11-13)

"Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope. . . . But now in Christ you . . . have been brought near" (2:12, 13, NIV).

Separate, without God, without hope. It is a dismal picture that Paul describes, a picture of a Gentile world without God and therefore without hope. Today it has changed very little. The optimism of the 19th century, founded on the expectation of a scientifically-induced utopia, has been replaced with such pessimistic outlooks as "heat death"—where someday all energy will be evenly dispersed throughout the universe, leaving the cosmos just a little warmer than absolute zero. Or, "the big crunch," the antithesis of the big bang, where the universe will one day stop expanding and fall in on itself, leaving nothing. Or, for a more temporal example, nuclear winter, where again all life will end.

Fortunately, as Paul points out, we are no longer excluded from hope, and, believing in a loving God, we do not have to look forward to the above expectations. Nevertheless, though we may disagree about the method of extinction, we all, through alienation from God because of sin, face the same inevitable outcome—death. However, through Christ we "have been brought near." The alienation is negated and so is the death, as we are no longer excluded from God's promises; indeed, we have become heirs to his kingdom.

But all too often religiosity breeds exclusivism. The Jews' attitude toward other nations is familiar to all.¹ Paul speaks to this in these verses. But in the contemporary setting his point obviously goes beyond Gentile-Jew prejudices, for in Christ *all* barriers of separation are breached, those who are "far" are brought close, foreigners are made friends.

How much room is there for differences (such as in Sabbath-keeping, worship, beliefs, etc.) while being united in Christ? Does having the "truth" create or destroy barriers of separation? How do we relate to those who have shades of beliefs different from our own?

2. Peace in Christ (read Eph. 2:14-18)

"He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" (2:17, 18, NIV).

So as not to create barriers of our own, and to break down the ones we already have it is important to understand how Christ transcends walls of separation. Paul explains first, that "he is our peace." This is not an abstraction as would be "he *brings* peace." It is

concrete—"he is peace." Through a common love for Christ, people come to love each other. This is made possible through Jesus and his ultimate demonstration of love. "This sight of that Cross awakens in the hearts of men of all nations love for Christ, and only when they love Christ will they love each other."²

Second, Paul says, Christ unites "by abolishing, in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations." Legalism creates barriers. Each has his own standard of what must be done so as to be right in God's eyes. But Christ ended legalism as a principle of religion. Through his life and death he showed God's favor is not earned but given. Salvation is based on love not legalism.

Third, Christ unites by making new out of the old. The Greek in this text (v. 15) is significant as it indicates that this newness is not new as in the sense of a new car—there are already millions of cars in the world—but it is new in the sense of a quality that did not exist before. This new being, it must be noted, is created out of the old. Individuality and racial characteristics are not diffused into a non-descript union. Unity is inherent in Christianity, but not sameness.

The final act of unity comes from above—through the cross of Christ we are all reconciled to God. No distinction here is made. The Roman Catholic sinner confessing before his or her priests in earnest repentance, the Protestant sinner, singing with all sincerity "wash me whiter than snow"—both have an advocate before the Father, who speaks in their defense.

What are the implications of point number three for Christian missions? If all those who are sincerely living up to the light they have been given have an advocate before the Father, why be an SDA?

3. A Part of the Family (read Eph. 2:19-22)

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (2:19, NIV).

"In a household [p]arents and children and servants are not equal in status or function. Rule is not by majority vote. Nor is justice maintained by way of bargaining rights. Mother does not strike for an eight-hour day, nor does father monopolize the income he earns. Yet a household could be a model for any society. Justice and law are there, but they are transformed into grace by family oneness. Love fulfills the law. . . . Inequalities are facts of nature and of society. Is there, indeed, a solution for the problem of inequality except in the household of God?"³

E.R.M.

1. William Barclay gives an interesting picture of this in his commentary on these verses.

2. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and the Ephesians*, p. 114.

3. *The Interpreter's Bible*, Ephesians, p. 662.

Cultivating Reconciliation

selected by Linda Hoey

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:11-22

Cultivate the habit of speaking well of others. Dwell upon the good qualities of those with whom you associate, and see as little as possible of their errors and failings. When tempted to complain of what someone has said or done, praise something in that person's life or character. Cultivate thankfulness. Praise God for His wonderful love in giving Christ to die for us. It never pays to think of our grievances. God calls upon us to think of His mercy and His matchless love, that we may be inspired with praise.

Earnest workers have no time for dwelling upon the faults of others. We cannot afford to live on the husks of others' faults or failings. Evil speaking is a twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits. The very act of looking for evil in others develops evil in those who look. By dwelling upon the faults of others, we are changed into the same image. But by beholding Jesus, talking of His love and perfection of character, we become changed into His image. By contemplating the lofty ideal He has placed before us, we shall be uplifted into a pure and holy atmosphere, even the presence of God. When we abide here, there goes forth from us a light that irradiates all who are connected with us.

"He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits."

Instead of criticizing and condemning others, say, "I must work out my own salvation. If I co-operate with Him who desires to save my soul, I must watch myself diligently. I must put away every evil from my life. I must overcome every fault. I must become a new creature in Christ. Then, instead of weakening those who are striving against evil, I can strengthen them by encouraging words." We are too indifferent in regard to one another. Too often we forget that our fellow laborers are in need of strength and cheer. Take care to assure them of your interest and sympathy. Help them by your prayers, and let them know that you do it.

REACT

Should we be at all concerned that others in the church uphold standards of doctrine and behavior that we think are important?

Excerpted from
The Ministry of Healing,
pp. 492, 493.

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Levelling the Middle Wall

selections by Linda Hoey

The Antagonism

"The circumcised Jew regarded himself as a special favorite of Heaven, and superior to all other men. He hardly felt himself a member of the human family. He was accustomed to speak of himself as chosen of God, and as holy and clean; whilst the Gentiles were treated as sinners, dogs, polluted, unclean, outcast, and God-abandoned. Between Jew and Gentile there was constant hatred and antagonism, as there is now between the Church and the world. On the one hand, the old religion, with its time-honoured teachings, its ancient traditions, the Church of the Fathers, the guardian of revelation, the depository of the faith, the staunchness that tends to degenerate into bigotry—here is the Jew. On the other hand, the intellectual searchings, the sociology, the liberty which threatens to luxuriate into license—here is the Gentile. Ever and again the feud breaks out."¹

The Wall of Partition

"Christ made peace between the Jew and the Gentile by levelling in the dust the middle wall of partition that separated them widely for ages, in a word by abolishing the narrow particularism of Judaism. The wall in question was the ceremonial law—"the law of commandments contained in ordinances"—given to Israel as a separate people and of positive appointment. The moral law was no part of the partition wall, and contains in itself nothing either to excite enmity or to establish separation between man and man. The death of Christ did not abolish it; it was the law of ceremonies only that was abolished in the cross, for when he died, it disappeared like a shadow when the substance was come. The moral law, as embodied in the Decalogue, was older than the Mosaic institute, and therefore survived its fall. The partition wall that kept Jew and Gentile apart . . . engendered a deep hostility on both sides. It was this 'enmity' that made the barrier so serious an element of separation."²

The Instrument of Reconciliation

"Our Lord is regarded as having in his flesh taken upon him the sins of his people, as the great cause of enmity and disunion, and having exhausted at once the sin of man and the wrath of God on the cross, he thus at once abolished the law of ceremonies and annihilated the enmity which found its occasion in it. The cross is still the instrument of reconciling man to man. The world has made many efforts to unite men on a basis of liberty, equality, fraternity—often trying to bring about a union even by the most terrible bloodshed; but no principle has yet been discovered to unite man to man save the gospel of Christ, with its doctrine of atonement through the blood of the cross."³

EVIDENCE
Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:11-22

"No principle has yet been discovered to unite man to man save the gospel of Christ."

1. *The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*, p. 159.
2. *The Pulpit Commentary*, p. 80.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

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Giving Up Being Right

by David Dudley

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:11-22;
John 3:17

There is a story told of a simple woman in a backwoods region who sat in church every Sunday enthusiastically responding to every word of the sermon. One Sunday as the preacher talked about the evil of drinking, gambling, swearing and carousing, the woman was right with him, giving responses of "Amen!" "Praise the Lord!" and "That's the truth, brother!" Then the minister launched into a tirade against smoking. This caught the pipe-smoking grandma by surprise. She said in a voice audible through the entire church, "Thar' now, he's stopped preachin' and gone meddlin'!"

Probably nothing does greater damage to our Christian testimony than the feeling of having to be right. The problem is that, more often than not, we are so preoccupied with being right that we, like the woman in the above illustration, become more committed to self-righteousness than to self-analysis. This was the position of many Jews in the first century. But if Christ did not come to condemn (John 3:17), then why should we?

If I am fully committed to living out Christ's mission of reconciliation and peace in my life, then I must constantly evaluate my manner of relating to others in light of the following principles:

1. Acceptance. Og Mandino, in his best seller, *The Greatest Secret in the World*, states that one way to practice accepting others is to say silently to each person that we confront, I Love You. In so doing we salute the Christ in everyone and remind ourselves of our oneness and sameness as human beings. Thus, our commitment to people should always supersede our personal judgments about them.

2. Inclusion. When we are inflexible and rigid in our position of rightness and wrongness we will invariably surround ourselves with those who believe, dress, speak and act like we do. This only becomes a problem when we *exclude* from our circles and awareness the rest of humanity. The body of Christ is *inclusive* with no one left out. We need consciously to remind ourselves that our relationship with those we meet is neither one of superiority or inferiority but rather one of equality.

3. Forgiveness. Holding a grudge, no matter how right we may be, inevitably fosters separation and distance in our relationships. In the highest sense, to forgive is to be willing to go beyond our own "rights" to revenge or "getting even." This is the ultimate test of our willingness to practice reconciliation and peace in our own lives.

REACT

1. Look again at the example given in this week's Introduction. Do you think this is a valid, modern illustration of what was happening between Jew and Gentile in the early church? Is the church's standard on jewelry comparable to the rule of circumcision? What do the following texts suggest to you? 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3, 4; Rom. 12: 1, 2; 14:10, 13, 17; 15:6.

David Dudley is the director of the counseling center on the La Sierra Campus of Loma Linda University.

When Props Become Barriers

by Ruben A. Ferreira

One of the largest barriers between Jew and Gentile in the first century A.D. was the Jewish practice of circumcision. The following comments on Colossians 2:11, 12 provide some background for the passage from Ephesians that we are studying this week as well.

"One of the errors that was being disseminated by the Jewish Christians was the insistence upon ritual and ascetic observances as the foundation of moral teaching. The basic error flowed from the false conception that evil resides in matter. Some of the Jewish Christians contended that the Colossians could not be complete in Christ without submitting to the Jewish rite of circumcision, but the Apostle showed that they were the subjects of a superior circumcision."¹

Circumcision identified the Jew as one of the chosen. It was the passport that granted religious, cultural, and national citizenship. The uncircumcised were looked upon as almost subhuman. In Christ, however, there was complete reconciliation of circumcised and uncircumcised. With Christ there was no need for additional props like circumcision to bolster religious identity.

When children are learning to ride a bicycle, they often depend on training wheels to prevent them from falling. Even when the child has mastered the intricate skill of balancing a bicycle, he or she often looks to the training wheels as an external source of support. The same holds true for those Christians who cling to rituals and customs. They look to these rituals as the cornerstones of their faith.

Was circumcision itself wrong? No, in fact it had been a symbol of the covenant made between God and man. It was only when it lost its symbolic significance and yet continued to be regarded as a criterion for salvation that its enforcement became wrong. When rituals and customs become ends in themselves then it is time to move away from them. There comes a time when the need for "training wheels" is outgrown. And when the child realizes that the training wheels are a hindrance to experiencing the total potential of the bicycle, then he or she is able to jettison them.

When we realize that the cross of Christ breaks down barriers that alienate human groups and enables all to share together in access to one Father, we will be able to move beyond that which hinders reconciliation and unity.

REACT

Do Christians today unnecessarily make barriers out of rituals or customs? How can this be avoided without individual Christians or groups compromising what they feel is important?

OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians
2:11-22

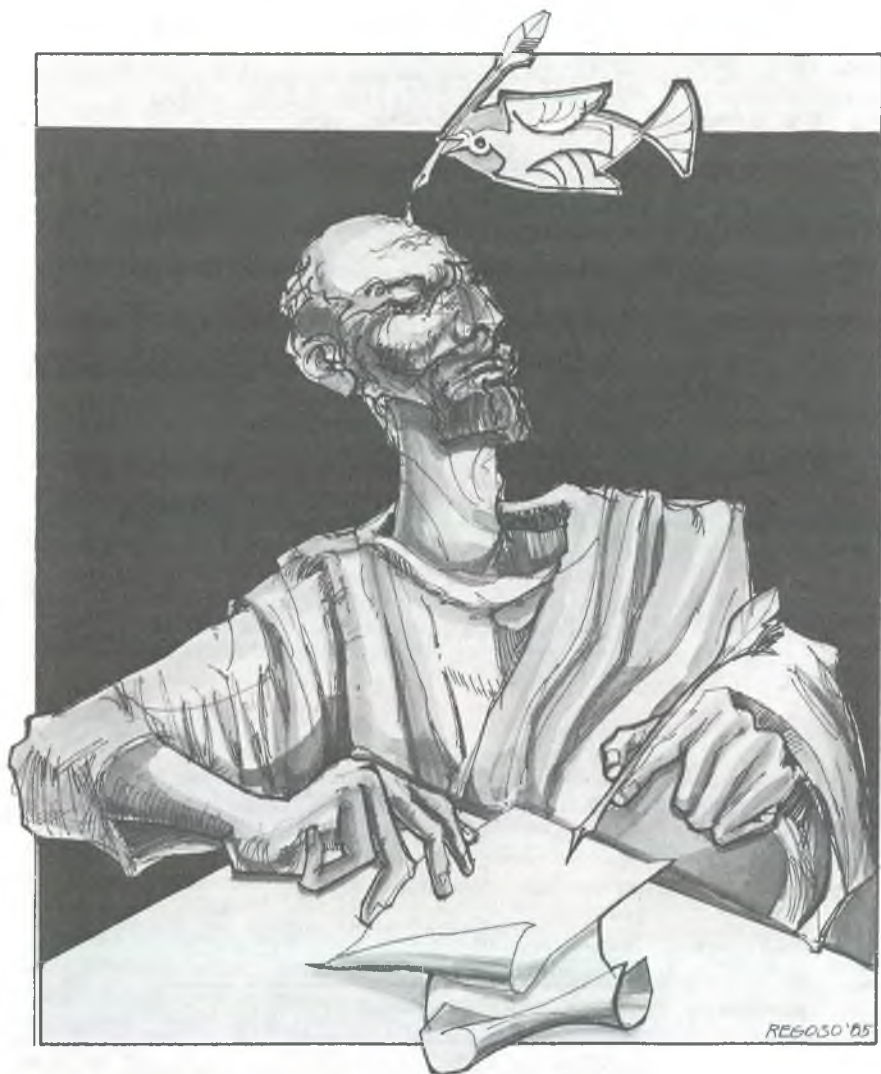
"When rituals and customs become ends in themselves it is time to move away from them."

1. *The Preachers Homiletic Commentary*, p. 424.

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THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

“Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery . . .” (Ephesians 3:8, 9, NIV).



Responding to Mystery

by Howard Gustrowsky

There are at least three possible human responses to any mystery: awe, indifference, or fear. Some mysteries evoke more than one reaction simultaneously. The attraction of any mystery proceeds from its ability to create tension and its own mechanism of release. A mystery that appears to supply enough clues, that "plays fair," will gain our interest—perhaps even our admiration—although we may not be able to unwind all of its complexities. But if a mystery does not draw us in, does not engage us—either because of its oversimplicity or excessive difficulty—we are likely to dismiss it with indifference or fear, depending on how important the mystery is to our interests.

As Christians, we are not likely to treat the mystery of Christ with indifference. Christ's centrality in Christian doctrine demands our interest. What do we find in the Bible's mystery of Christ and the gospel that elicits our awe or fear? Do we know the Bible well enough to trust our initial reactions? Are we ambivalent about our feelings and understandings? Most important of all, are we satisfied with our present knowledge? These questions should lead us in and through the study of Ephesians 3.

Paul claims to be one of a few individuals who exercise a special gift of revelation. But his message, by his own

admission, is a mystery and has its balance of revelations and obscurities. Of the twenty-seven places in which the Authorized Version uses the word "mystery" in the New Testament, seventeen of them are found in writings commonly attributed to Paul. A scanning of each of the texts does not provide any absolute limits for the word's application. Some of the texts assert in rather clear language Paul's understanding of God's provision of salvation for the Gentiles. Other texts supply very few details and rely on the reader to supply the delimitations for such phrases as "the fellowship of the mystery" (Eph. 3:9) and "this is a great mystery" (Eph. 5:32).

As we are drawn into the mysteries of the gospel, each of us will find in Paul our own mixture of obscurities and disclosures which will determine the boundaries of our faith. The continuous tension between what we do and do not know is no less than the distance between the finite and the infinite, an awareness portrayed in the speaker's address to a star in Robert Frost's poem "Take Something Like a Star":¹

Some mystery becomes
the proud.
But to be wholly taciturn
In your reserve is
not allowed.
Say something to us
we can learn
By heart and when
alone repeat.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
3:1-13

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1. Edward Connery Latham, ed., *The Poetry of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972), p. 403.

The Administration of the Mystery

LOGOS

Theme: Paul was entrusted with special insight and responsibility regarding the mystery of the gospel—the outworking of which demonstrates the wisdom of God.

1. The Mystery (read Eph. 3:1-6)

"This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (3:6, NIV).

Paul begins chapter three by explaining his unique role in life. He calls himself "a prisoner for Jesus Christ." At this time Paul was in Rome awaiting his trial. He was actually a prisoner of Nero, the Roman emperor at the time. Yet Paul expressed himself in this fashion since he believed in the sovereignty of God in human affairs. His whole life, as well as his present predicament, were under the control of God. It could be surmised that Paul was also thinking of himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ, therefore expressing an internal type of captivity. Paul was prisoner at the time for the "sake of you Gentiles" because his mission to the Gentiles, and his teaching about a new single humanity found in Ephesians had aroused strong Jewish opposition.¹

In this paragraph, Paul uses the word "mystery" three times (vv. 3, 4, 9). The word "mystery" in the English language means something "that is not fully understood, or that baffles or eludes the understanding."² It is a puzzle, a secret, something obscure. The Greek word, *mysterion*, however has a different meaning. It is still considered a "secret" but one that is knowable and not hidden anymore. In the heathen mystery cults which flourished in the first-century Hellenistic world, the "mysteries" were made known only to initiates who participated in elaborate, secret rituals.³ But in Christianity the "mysteries" are not restricted to a spiritual elite. The Christian "mysteries" are those truths which are beyond human discovery but are revealed by God and therefore proclaimed to all who will hear.⁴ God has revealed the "mystery," the truth which is now open and not secret. The "mystery" that Paul is making known is that the Gentile believers and Jewish believers are together; "they are fellow heirs of the same blessing, fellow-members of the same body and fellow-partakers of the same promise."⁵

God's purpose to bring salvation to the Gentiles is revealed in the Old Testament (see Gen. 12:1-3; Ps. 2:8; Isa. 2:2-4; 42:6; 49:6). Why then did Paul call the inclusion of the Gentiles in the promise of God a "mystery"?

2. Divine Commission (read Eph. 3:7-13)

"In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence" (3:12, NIV).

Paul begins by declaring what a great privilege his commission from God is to him. In v. 8 Paul calls himself "less than the least of

all God's people." However, God still gave him this commission, undeserved for one who had been an avowed enemy of Jesus Christ (see 1 Tim. 1:13).

Paul then discusses the three areas of the commission, given to him by the grace of God:

1. *Making known Christ's riches to the Gentiles (v. 8)*. These riches can be found in Eph. 1 and 2. They are riches made available because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. "They include resurrection from the death of sin, victorious enthronement with Christ in the heavenlies, reconciliation with God, incorporation with Jewish believers in his new society, the end of hostility and the beginning of peace, access to the Father through Christ and by the Spirit, membership of his kingdom and household, being an integral part of his dwelling place among men, and all this only a foretaste of yet more riches to come, namely the riches of the glory of the inheritance which God will give to all his people on the last day."⁶

2. *Making known the mystery to all men (v. 9)*. Paul's purpose is to "make plain" (NIV) the mystery of the gospel to all people. The Greek word for "make plain" is *photizo*, "to enlighten." The preaching of the gospel is the process of helping those who have been in darkness to see clearly. In v. 8 Paul's emphasis was on the unsearchable riches of *Christ*. In v. 9 his emphasis is on the *church* as the setting where the "administration" of the mystery occurs through the creation of a new community of reconciliation into which Jew and Gentile are incorporated on equal terms.

3. *Making known God's wisdom to the cosmic powers (v. 10)*. Paul broadens the perspective of the gospel—it's not just a message exclusively for humans but also a message for "the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms." As this community of Christ develops, there is an audience in heaven observing and gaining deepened understanding of the "manifold wisdom of God."

This first section of Ephesians 3 teaches the lesson of the biblical centrality of the church. The purpose of the plan of God is that of reconciling humanity in union with Jesus Christ. The church is where this reconciliation is realized. Thus, the church is central to history, and the church is central to the gospel. The gospel is the good news of a new society and new life. It includes the unsearchable riches of Christ that Paul expounds upon. The church is also central to Christian living. Paul in v. 13 says he is suffering and willing to die to bring his readers, his fellow church members, "glory." To make the biblical vision of the church a reality, we as individuals must make the church central to our lives.

Does strong emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ tend to make the gospel too individualistic, and cause us to lose sight of the importance and role of the church?

P.H.H.

1. John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society*, p. 115.

2. *American Heritage Dictionary*.

3. The initiation rituals usually consisted of a recital or reenactment of the deeds of a hero or heroine, an act of initiation, and the eating of a sacred meal, by which the initiate came to share in the divine power and immortality of the deity. See Norman Perrin,

The New Testament: An Introduction (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), pp. 51, 315.

4. Stott, p. 116.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

The Mystery Ever Unfolds

selected by Rennie B. Schoepflin

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Ephesians
3:1-13

Ever since the first promise of redemption was spoken in Eden, the life, the character, and the mediatorial work of Christ have been the study of human minds. Yet every mind through whom the Holy Spirit has worked has presented these themes in a light that is fresh and new. The truths of redemption are capable of constant development and expansion. Though old, they are ever new, constantly revealing to the seeker for truth a greater glory and mightier power.

In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new. When Christ desired to open to His disciples the truth of His resurrection, He began "at Moses and all the prophets" and "expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). But it is the light which shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old. He who rejects or neglects the new does not really possess the old. For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form. . . .

Truth in Christ and through Christ is measureless. The student of Scripture looks, as it were, into a fountain that deepens and broadens as he gazes into its depths. Not in this life shall we comprehend the mystery of God's love in giving His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The work of our Redeemer on this earth is and ever will be a subject that will put to the stretch our highest imagination. Man may tax every mental power in the endeavor to fathom this mystery, but his mind will become faint and weary. The most diligent searcher will see before him a boundless, shoreless sea.

"The truth as it is in Jesus can be experienced, but never explained."

The truth as it is in Jesus can be experienced, but never explained. Its height and breadth and depth pass our knowledge. We may task our imagination to the utmost, and then we shall only see dimly the outlines of a love that is unexplainable, that is as high as heaven, but that stooped to the earth to stamp the image of God on all mankind.

Yet it is possible for us to see all that we can bear of the divine compassion. This is unfolded to the humble, contrite soul. We shall understand God's compassion just in proportion as we appreciate His sacrifice for us. As we search the word of God in humility of heart, the grand theme of redemption will open to our research. It will increase in brightness as we behold it, and as we aspire to grasp it, its height and depth will ever increase.

REACT

1. How does "experienced truth" differ from "explained truth"?
2. If truth is always beyond our grasp, is it worthwhile to try to express it in a creed, statement of beliefs, or theological system?

Excerpted from
Christ's Object Lessons,
pp. 127-129.

Rennie B. Schoepflin is an assistant professor of history at Loma Linda University.

Less Than the Least

by Cindy Parkhurst

One of the definitions of a mystery found in *Webster's New World Dictionary* is, "any religious truth known to man only through divine revelation and to be accepted on faith." The "divine revelation" that Paul unfolds in describing the mystery of the gospel is that the Gentiles, formerly regarded as unclean and unworthy, became heirs together with the Jews in the plan of salvation through Christ's death.

After revealing the mystery, Paul goes on to tell of his part in spreading the good news to the Gentiles. It is interesting to note the way in which Paul describes himself in relation to his mission. In verse 8 he says he was chosen to preach the gospel of Christ even though he was "less than the least of all God's people" (NIV). Why does Paul characterize himself in this manner? Is he being fashionably unpretentious, or is there a reason for his humility? To understand Paul's statement it is necessary to look at his past.

Acts 8 records the persecution of the Christian church after the stoning of Stephen, and Saul (Paul) immediately stood out as a major adversary of the church. A door-to-door search-and-destroy mission was Saul's way of getting rid of the heretical Christians, but mysteriously Saul's fanatically anti-Christian stance led to the great surprise of his conversion to Christianity, recorded in Acts 9. The greatest enemy of the Christian church was destined to become the foremost Christian evangelist to the Gentiles.

After reading Paul's story it becomes easier to see why he referred to himself as "less than the least of all God's people." Even though Paul felt unworthy to preach the gospel, he was willing to let Christ work through him. Paul was entrusted with spreading the gospel to the Gentiles because he had encountered the mystery of Christ's saving and transforming power in such a dramatic way. Paul's experience identifies two truths crucial to the mystery of the gospel: God's willingness to save repentant sinners, regardless of the sin, whether Jew or Gentile; and the transformation that can take place in a life when God is allowed to do his will.

REACT

What does Paul's personal experience suggest about why he found the gospel a "mystery"? What implications does his experience have for us?

EVIDENCE

Key Passage:
Ephesians
3:1-13

"He was chosen to preach the gospel even though he was 'less than the least.'"

Cindy Parkhurst is a senior history and political science major at Loma Linda University.

Living With Mystery

by Rennie B. Schoepflin

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
3:1-13

A well-written mystery will catch you every time. I don't mean the game you might play with the author as you try to anticipate a twist of plot, or the time you spend trying to solve the puzzle. I mean the simple pleasure of encountering the mystery by allowing yourself to be carried along by the skill of the author. Mysteries are not always meant to be solved; sometimes they are best when simply enjoyed.

Take, for example, the mystery of human existence. Where did we come from? Who are we? Where are we going? Well-worn questions, these three, each with its set of pedigreed answers formulated by our ancestors, packaged by our contemporaries, and hawked by preachers, pedagogues, and pundits. We find it hard to live with the mystery of our own being, and like greedy shoppers we queue up to purchase the goods.

Humans chafe under life's ambiguities and strive through understanding to analyze, subdue, and destroy its elusive nature—to master the mystery. This desire to control and define pervades human nature, stimulating praiseworthy achievements that undoubtedly enhance both the physical and spiritual dimensions of human existence; but such success can also bewitch us into believing that all mysteries are best when solved. What are we left with after we have squeezed the sinew and bone and found no spirit, or painted human nature onto an old landmark and discovered deadends? Some mysteries are not simply puzzles to be solved, questions to be answered, or doubts to be resolved. Sometimes they are paths of discovery.

Consider the mysterious Christ who declared, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6, RSV). At times, church fathers and mothers have tried to package the truth and restrict the way, but Christ always bursts forth impervious to human controls. The mystery of his nature and his message refuses to submit to human domination. T. S. Eliot's definition still holds today, "The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation."¹ But it isn't easy to live with mystery. How do you learn? I suggest that you begin by listening.

1. Listen to your heartbeat and discover the humbling mystery of human nature.
2. Listen to the wind in the trees and discover the majestic mystery of nature.
3. Listen to the Word whisper your name and discover the redeeming mystery of God's love.

Some of the best mysteries never disappear; they just keep carrying you along.

REACT

1. How do you keep the mysteries in your life from merely becoming confusing?
2. What are the implications of building a community of faith upon the mystery of Incarnation?

1. T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1971), p. 44.

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Eternity for an Enemy

by Timothy R. Erich

OPINION

In Ephesians 3, two "secrets" are revealed: First, you and I, whether Jew or Gentile, are totally equal. In Christ we are part of God's family and heirs to the family fortune. Second, through the interaction of family (or church) members with each other and with their neighbors, the whole universe will come to know just how wise and kind God really is.

So, not only are you an important individual, but along with other believers, you are a vital part of the process through which God will ultimately be vindicated before his universe.

But, once we are convinced that God has set forth principles for serving humankind, why do we follow these principles? Because we want to go to heaven? Because we hope to be given eternal life? Because we are saved? All these reasons are helpful and reassuring, but are they the only or complete reasons for which we are to love and care for our fellow humans? Could it be that we are to worship and obey God simply because he is God, and not for any reason of personal concern? And, that we are to love and care for others simply because they need it?

Parable: While left in charge of the house a youth does not feed his little sister just because his father told him to; not just because he wants to someday inherit the house and property; but because his sister needs to be fed (and is probably letting him know).

Just how far can we take this idea of putting the needs of others over and above our own contentment and security? The Bible gives some hints. How far does Moses take it? Exodus 32:32 introduces Moses as someone who was *willing* to put his eternal life on the line in trying to save his fellow Israelites. But it is Christ who supremely demonstrated this selfless love while experiencing total separation from God on the cross. Temporarily oblivious to whether or not his own salvation was secure, he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). Yet, he still pleaded, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Now for the big question: If there was only one spot left in heaven and God offered it to you, would you be able to thank the Lord, turn, and give it to a friend? To your greatest enemy? Greater loving-kindness has no human than this, that he lay down his eternal life for an enemy.

REACT

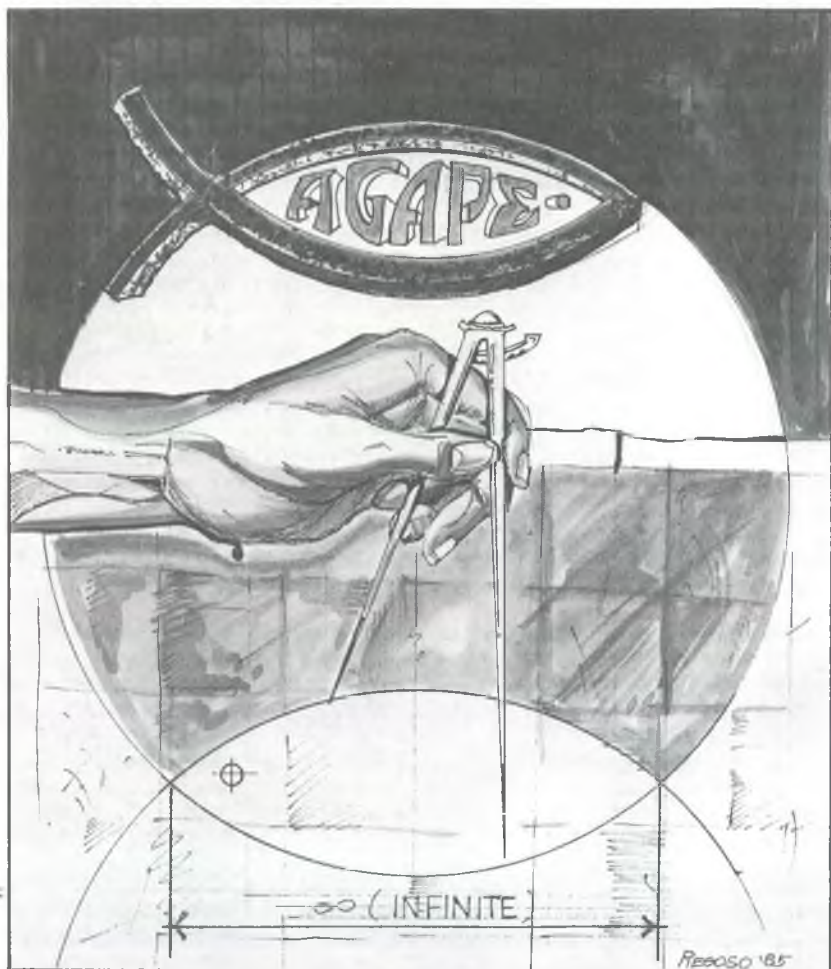
1. Is it meaningful to be *willing* to surrender one's life for another, even though it will never be required of us?
2. Is eternal life an improper motivation for loving God and serving others?

"How far can we take this idea of putting the needs of others over and above our own?"

Timothy R. Erich is a senior history and political science major at Loma Linda University.

THE LOVE THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE

"I pray that you . . . may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge . . ." (Eph. 3:17-19, NIV).



Neither One of Us Knew Better

by Jose Muinos

When I was a little boy, I used to spend long, hot summer days asking *abuelo* (grandfather) to tell me his stories of when he was young and lived on an island—the stories of how he would go hunting in the mountains for rabbit and have to settle for a tough old hill cat. I knew these stories, and he knew I knew; but what he did not seem to realize was that the elder family patriarch was not supposed to spend so much attention on little, runny-nosed kids. But all the time I was growing up, he was the only one who treated me like an equal.

As I grew older we still spent as much time as we could together. *Abuelo* took me hunting and it felt as though we'd been doing it forever, as if we had grown up together. We even visited the island of his youth a few times. And all the time with him I was at ease, I was an equal. Although he often got cranky the last years of his life, it didn't seem that he was any different to me from when I was a kid.

One week before he died, when I was 25 and he was 82, in one of those cold still moments when it looks like nothing moves anywhere in the world but the bellows of the breathing machine, he motioned me over to his side. I thought for a moment he was going to tell me another story. But instead he asked me a question.

"Do you know why you are my favorite?"

I smiled and shook my head. I wasn't sure what he was asking, or why.

"Because," he said, "you are the only one that treats this old man like an equal."

What my grandfather and I experienced when we were together seemed to surpass the available knowledge we had of how our relationship should be. As a child, I expected and received condescending attention from everyone older than me. And as an aged grandfather, he also expected and received the same kind of attention from everyone younger. But somehow, the love we shared transcended all that.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
3:14-21

Jose Muinos is teaching in Loma Linda University's math department while working on a Ph.D. in psychology.

More Than We Can Imagine

LOGOS **Theme:** Through faith Christ dwells in and empowers our inner beings, which enables us to appreciate something of his incomprehensible love.

1. The Father

"For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name" (3:14, 15, NIV).

"For this reason . . ." Paul now refers back to his original train of thought that he had started at the beginning of this chapter. For what reason does Paul pray? The answer is found in vv. 10 and 11—God's intent for the church and the work he accomplishes through Jesus Christ. This prayer of Paul's, points out Stott in his commentary on Ephesians, brings out an important principle of prayer. "The basis of Paul's prayer was his knowledge of God's purpose. It was because of what God had done in Christ and revealed to Paul that he had the necessary warrant to pray. For the indispensable prelude to all petition is the revelation of God's will. We have no authority to pray for anything which God has not revealed to be his will. That is why Bible reading and prayer should always go together. For it is in Scripture that God has disclosed his will, and it is in prayer that we ask him to do it."¹

Paul addresses his prayer to God the Father—the recipient of all prayer. Previously in this epistle Paul has called God the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:3), the Father "who has blessed us" (1:3), and he has also showed that the Jews and Gentiles are fellow members in the Father's family, both having equal access to him (2:18, 19). Now Paul goes on to say that through this same Father, his family, both in heaven and earth, receives its name. Though the RSV and NEB translation, "every family in heaven and earth is named," may be literally correct, it doesn't seem to fit with the "one household" of the previous chapter. Thus the NIV rendering seems to be more in accord with the theme of unity. What Paul is possibly bringing out is that as Father of his entire family, God is the pattern for all fatherhood.

What is God's pattern of fatherhood?

2. A Prayer for Strength (read Eph. 3:16-19)

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (3:16, 17, NIV).

Christians often pray for the power to do God's will. What they probably mean by this is for power to act, to go out and do something—whether it be witnessing, helping the poor, or just everyday living. But it is interesting to note that what Paul is praying for here is something which is traditionally seen as being passive on our part. His prayer is totally Christ-centered. It is on everything Christ does and nothing on what we do.

Paul prays first for strength so that Christ may dwell in our hearts, and second, strangely enough, for power to understand the magnitude of Christ's love. To first appearances it seems peculiar to request power for Christ to come into our lives, since Christ *is* all powerful, and also to ask for power to understand. Power, as we see it, is usually used for action, our own action. So what is Paul praying for? His prayer is for two things. First, for justification. Salvation comes not in what we do but rather through who lives inside us. So the crucial battle in the controversy between God and Satan is fought over who controls a person's life. In this we play the deciding role. Thus we need power to allow Christ's total dwelling in our hearts and lives. The Greek here has a particular meaning that the English does not convey. The word used for "dwell" denotes residence, the setting up of a permanent home as opposed to temporary lodging for the night. We need to pray for the power to allow Christ a permanent stay in our lives and not just have a come-and-go relationship.

The second part of Paul's prayer is for sanctification. All that is needed for sanctification comes through allowing God's presence in our lives and in understanding his great love, since an understanding of this love initiates and completes action. Praying then for strength to act is praying for the wrong thing. Understanding God's love is the essential prerequisite, and it is for this that we need to pray. Without this understanding, acts gain nothing for the individual and they take on the meaningless tone of a resounding gong (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3). In understanding "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" we are "filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (3:18, 19). And being filled with God's fullness, what flows out from us cannot help but be love expressing itself in works.

What role do we play in sanctification? Are good works merely a natural result of Christ's indwelling, or is there continuous effort involved?

3. Forever Amen

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (3:20, 21, NIV).

Here is the hope of the Christian. We have a God who has power to do more than we can begin to imagine, and this he will do in our own lives, now and in the future.

To him be glory for ever and ever!

Do you see concrete evidence of God doing "more than all we ask or imagine," or was Paul, in his enthusiasm, using hyperbole?

E.R.M.

1. John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society*, p. 132.

The Bottom Line

by Steve Daily

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Ephesians
3:14-21

My favorite story in the Bible is the story of the Good Samaritan. I guess I like it so much for basically the same reasons that Ellen White gives in the following quote: "In the story of the Good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness."¹

The title of our lesson this week, "Love that Surpasses Knowledge," comes to us from Paul's theological prose in Ephesians 3, but theology is often boring and hard to understand. That is why Jesus told stories. And his story of the Good Samaritan is a masterpiece. As Ellen White points out, the priest and Levite who walked by their Jewish brother, lying in his own blood, were experts in their understanding of the Old Testament. These were men who had actually memorized the Scriptures and could answer just about any doctrinal or theological question that came their way. And not only were they diligent Bible students, but they were the most conscientious individuals you could find in regard to piety and personal morality. Yet, they managed to miss the boat when it came to living out the true principles of God's kingdom.

The Samaritan, on the other hand, belonged to a religious tradition which was notorious for its doctrinal confusion and laxness in personal piety. The Samaritans had an eclectic approach to theology which combined various heathen beliefs with certain Jewish doctrines and certainly did not compare to the systematized views of Judaism. Their indifference to dietary restrictions and many Jewish laws governing personal morality meant they were unclean and hopelessly condemned by God in the eyes of the priest and Levite. And yet, Jesus singles out the Samaritan as the man who is in touch with God's Spirit and sensitive to the meaning of true religion. "The Samaritan had obeyed the dictates of a kind and loving heart, and in this had proved himself a doer of the law."²

What does this story mean for the Adventist Church today? Does it mean that doctrine and personal morality are unimportant or irrelevant to genuine Christianity? No, certainly not, but it does demonstrate that they can be, and that is scary for those of us who were raised on a religion that was fixated in these two areas. This story teaches the very point that Paul is stressing in our lesson this week, that *love* is more important than knowledge. This is the same point that Ellen White makes in her commentary on this story when she says that the Samaritan illustrated "the nature of true religion."

Is my religion a service of love, or is it some form of false religion?

"The very point that Paul is stressing in our lesson this week is that love is more important than knowledge."

1. *The Desire of Ages*,

p. 497.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 504.

Steve Daily is the chaplain at Loma Linda University, La Sierra campus.

Love Takes Precedence

by Steve Daily

The first three and one half chapters of Paul's letter to the Ephesians focus on the theme of unity in the church. This is surely a timely theme for Adventists to consider today. Unity, according to Paul, is not to be based primarily on uniformity of doctrine, or even uniformity of practice in terms of personal behavior. The essence of true religion, and the key to spiritual unity in Paul's thinking is stated in the passage which we are studying this week. It is found in Christ's unconditional love for us, and our unconditional love for each other.

This kind of love, according to Paul, "surpasses knowledge" and is therefore more important than creeds or absolute doctrinal unity. Doctrine is valuable as it helps to reinforce the foundation laid by Christ, which consists of love, justice, service, and unity. But where doctrine fails to produce these qualities it is counterproductive and even dangerous. The early church was a pluralistic community which was built on the work of Christ, but which also contained great diversity of both thought and practice. Palestinian Jewish Christians, Hellenistic Jewish Christians, and Gentile Christians managed to find unity only when they became fixated on Christ and him crucified, and the message of his kingdom (love, justice, service, unity).

Paul was the champion of both pluralism and tolerance in the apostolic church. His message was the same whether he wrote to Ephesus or Corinth. To those who would divide the body of Christ by following after Peter, Paul, or Apollos, or by forcing their own views of morality and doctrine on others, he stated plainly that "spiritual things are spiritually discerned" and that love takes precedence over all as the essence of genuine Christianity (1 Cor. 13).

If love truly does surpass knowledge in terms of importance in the Christian's life, why do so many professed Christians seem to spend so much time discussing and arguing the fine points of theology, leaving little or no time to serve the people in the communities where they live? Certainly it is vital that we study God's Word diligently and seek clear understanding of doctrinal truth. A clear understanding of truth will lead to an active demonstration of our love for each other, our love for those in our various communities who are not Adventists, and our love for the global family that is so tragically fragmented by injustice. As Paul says, God is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of (Eph. 3:20), but he can only do such great wonders through a people who have their priorities straight.

REACT

1. What do you perceive to be emphasized most in Adventism today: correct doctrine, personal piety, or loving service? Do we need to reorder our priorities?
2. What are some specific ways in which we can more fully serve our communities—local, national, and global?

EVIDENCE

Key Passage:
Ephesians
3:14-21

"Paul was the champion of both pluralism and tolerance in the apostolic church."

Steve Daily is the chaplain at Loma Linda University, La Sierra campus.

Carisimo

by Joseph and Jose Muinos

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
3:14-21

The word *love*, needless to say, is overworked. But some translations of the Bible, the older ones, sometimes use the word *charity* where others use *love*. In Spanish this word is *caridad*. Its Latin origin is *carisimo*, which means costly or expensive.

Thus, when Paul speaks of love that surpasses understanding, he may have in mind a costliness that surpasses any rational estimate. What is this love or costliness that is spoken of? John 3:16 tells us. It seems that God placed such value on the world (loved it) that he gave his only begotten Son. Love then is the act of charity, or giving of something costly, for an object that may or may not be deserving.

What Paul is saying is that by any human standards of accounting, God's love is so costly that it is hard to believe we should receive it. And surely the apostle's wish for us all to have this love that surpasses understanding implies we should experience it *with others*. And therein lies the practical part of the lesson. How does this love translate to our dealing with others?

The first thing one learns in a course on counseling techniques is empathy—to be fully aware of what the other person is feeling and trying to tell you. The next is genuineness—being there in a real sense, not putting on any airs or false fronts. But it is the third of these points, unconditional positive regard, which directly bears on our study.

Unconditional positive regard is, in essence, accepting people along with their shortcomings and giving them the respect they deserve as human beings. It means valuing people regardless of their faults or behavior. As Christians we know that their worth, just like ours, comes from a very costly source. And if God should be willing to see all humans as worthy of such a great price, can we do any less in our dealings with those who are our brothers and sisters?

REACT

Does unconditional positive regard, either God's for us or ours for others, approve or ignore wrong behavior in others? How do we relate to wrong in others if we hold them in unconditional positive regard?

Joseph and Jose Muinos are a father-son team who write from southern California.

The Weightier Matter

by Ted Mills

When Christians discuss the proper relationship between "love" and "doctrine," they must begin with Jesus Christ. By "doctrine," I refer to the beliefs of our church, derived from the Bible. By "love," I mean compassion, patience, faith, and lots of understanding.

The New Testament contains many examples given by Christ which we may use as a guide in forming relationships, especially with those who believe differently from us. Christ was constantly with people who did not keep the laws he believed in. If his purpose was only the spreading of doctrine, and not the love of God, then the majority of his actions would only serve to confuse us.

Of course, we should not make the mistake of thinking that law was not important to Christ. He considered the law of God as one of his highest priorities and made this very clear to his disciples when he said that "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void" (Luke 16:17, RSV). This shows without a doubt that God's laws and doctrines should not be changed and are very important.

But, all too often, modern-day Christians repeat the mistakes of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus's time and neglect "the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith" (Matt. 23:23). These weightier matters of the law concern love for God and for others. Thus all law and doctrine should help us develop this love, and not hinder us from serving others and bringing them closer to God.

The scribes and Pharisees had allowed this to happen in regard to the Sabbath, for example. They had reduced it to the level of do's and don'ts. Thus they were greatly disturbed when Jesus and his disciples performed loving, life-giving acts on that day, acts which broke Jewish law, such as healing people and picking grain.

I am reminded of an incident in C. S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* where the main character joins a long line of people waiting for a bus. This bus is to take the people to a special place (heaven), but because of the intolerance, impatience, and lack of understanding of certain people, the line dwindles to a few. This smaller group of riders is so preoccupied with their own self-restrictions and ideas that they end up disliking the special place anyway. How many times in our lives do our self-restrictions serve to make others as well as ourselves totally miserable?

I think Paul was expressing Jesus' overall relationship to the law and doctrines when he wrote: "He who *loves* his neighbor has fulfilled the law. . . . Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:8, 10, RSV, emphasis supplied).

OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians
3:14-21

Ted Mills is a student missionary in Tokyo from Loma Linda University, La Sierra campus.

ONE SPIRIT, ONE BODY

"To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. . . . So that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7, 12, 13, NIV).



The Sanctimonious Shipbuilder

by Shelley Curtis Weaver

There was once a shipbuilder commissioned by the Prince to build a rescue ship. This ship was to survive a turbulent trip across the sea to retrieve subjects of the Prince, who were captives in a distant land. The shipbuilder was an old man, and he was very discouraged when he received the Prince's orders. His sons, who had been his assistants, were grown and lived far away. He had no one to help him fill the huge commission. In desperation, he sent a message to the Prince.

"Don't worry," was the Prince's reply, "I'll send you members of my own staff, all very talented people, who will build your ship."

The next day, the shipbuilder arose to find nine people standing around outside his shop. There were the Royal Public Relations Director, the Royal Economist, the Royal Tutor, the Royal Tailor/Weaver, and the Royal Cabinetmaker with his four apprentices. The shipbuilder sighed, closed the shutters, and went to meet the group. None of the group was an experienced shipbuilder, and he would be farther behind than ever.

The shipbuilder had good reason to worry. The Royal Economist refused to saw any of the lumber or to make any of the fittings because he was afraid of wasting expensive materials. The Royal P. R. Director gave inspiring lectures on how glorious the royal rescue ship would be, but every

time he started talking, he stopped working, so very little got done. The cabinetmaker and his apprentices had the woodworking skills for shipbuilding, but they did not know specific shipbuilding techniques and were slow to understand the shipbuilder's instructions. The Royal Tutor, on the other hand, quickly comprehended the shipbuilder's instructions, but he was all thumbs and could not handle the tools or the materials. The Royal Tailor/Weaver was the least help of all. He would only stare at the plans and mutter under his breath, criticizing the dimensions of the ship. This made the shipbuilder so angry that he decided he couldn't work with the tailor, or any of the other nine workers, for that matter, and he went before the Prince to complain.

"More problems?" asked the Prince. "I sent you my most capable staff members!"

"Those incompetents?" raged the shipbuilder. "They know nothing about shipbuilding. I refuse to work with them any more."

"Don't worry," said the Prince. "Tomorrow morning, I will come down to your shop and try to work out this problem myself."

The Prince kept his promise. He was shocked at the disastrous mess he found in the shop. Materials, blueprints, and tools were scattered from one end of the workshop to the other.

"Line up," the Prince

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:1-16

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instructed the shipbuilder and the workers. "One by one you will come to me and tell me what you think is wrong with the way we are going about this project." And so one by one they did tell him what they felt was wrong, and the Prince took careful note of what each one said.

"See, isn't it impossible?" asked the shipbuilder when his turn came.

"No, I think I have a plan," said the Prince. "We will just have every workman do the thing that he does best."

"No!" shouted the shipbuilder. "We won't have anyone building the ship except me if that's the plan!"

"Let me explain," said the Prince. "The Royal Cabinetmakers have all the skills needed to construct the ship—they just can't understand the directions. So let the Royal Tutor, who understands the directions and is very good at explaining them, teach the cabinetmakers as they work. The Royal Tailor/Weaver can weave and sew the sails. This will save

us money, since we won't have to buy the sails from another workman. The sails will work better because the tailor can study our ship personally and make the sails especially for it. Because so much time has been wasted in this first attempt, the Royal Economist can survey the plans and find ways to save time and materials, and to foresee any future complications. The Royal P. R. Director's speeches did speed productivity, so I think he may continue. Only this time we'll be building a ship rather than cabinets. And I will supervise the whole thing, leaving you free to do the actual building that you'd prefer to do."

So they followed the Prince's plan. Soon, with everyone doing his job and the Prince scurrying around giving directions, the group began making great progress, and the Royal Rescue Ship was quickly finished.

"You're right, although I didn't notice it at first," the shipbuilder told the Prince. "These are talented people."

Unity in Diversity

Theme: Christians are united into one body by one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There is a diversity of gifts in the body, all for the single purpose of building up the entire, unified body into the "fullness of Christ." **LOGOS**

1. Christian Unity Depends on the Charity of Our Conduct (read Eph. 4:1-2)

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (4:2, NIV).

God intends that there be unity in the church, his new society. Paul begins the call for Christian unity by urging for five moral qualities that make for oneness in a community: humbleness, gentleness, patience, mutual forbearance and love.

In the ancient world the word *humble* was thought of as the attitude of a slave, something despicable. The word Paul used for humbleness was a type of "lowliness of mind." The opposite of humility is pride, which does not give respect to others but demands only its own satisfaction and recognition.

The next quality of gentleness was highly regarded by Aristotle who saw it as "the golden norm" between the extremes of harshness and softness. "Gentleness" or "meekness" should not be confused with "weakness"—they are not synonyms. Meekness is the gentleness of those that are strong and who can control their strength.

The third and fourth qualities of patience and mutual forbearance complement each other nicely. "Patience" is longsuffering toward others that are being aggressive or nonresponsive, and "bearing" with one another is the mutual tolerance needed in any group situation.

The last quality, love, is the foundation of all the other qualities and binds them together so that they are effective.¹

2. Christian Unity Arises From the Unity of Our God (read Eph. 4:3-6)

"There is one body and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all" (4:4-6, NIV).

The church is one body, comprised of Gentile and Jewish believers whose unity is a product of the one Holy Spirit. The body's oneness is centered in Jesus Christ who is our hope, the one in whom we believe and in whom we are baptized. The unity of the church is further established by the fact that there is one God and Father over all.

Paul urges us to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit." What does this mean in practical terms today when there are hundreds of separate, competing churches?

3. Christian Unity Is Enriched by the Diversity of Our Gifts (read Eph. 4:7-16)

"When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men" (4:8, NIV).

Our unity in Christ is alive and vibrant with diversity. Christ gives different gifts to each individual so that they can contribute to the Christian community in general.

These spiritual gifts are given by the "ascended Christ." It is important to note that *charismata* or "gifts" are not necessarily exclusively those of the Holy Spirit but are also gifts of Christ and gifts from God the Father (see Rom. 12). The trinity is involved together in all aspects concerning the church. Paul gives a list of five different gifts in v. 11. This list is in no way a composite collection of gifts available. We find in the New Testament many similar lists, some mentioning similar gifts. It can be surmised that there are many diverse gifts available, many which are probably not recorded in the Bible, yet exist and are genuine gifts.

In v. 12 we are given the reason for these gifts, they are for "works of service." Thus are all called as Christians to be ministers.

All are to discover their gifts and then use them, and in this way multiply the ministries of the church. The outcome of this service is the upbuilding of the body of Christ. In view of this important New Testament truth, the traditional model of the pyramid with the pastor at the top and laity below is unbiblical. The model of the pastor doing all the work while the members are spectators is also wrong. There is no room for a hierarchy or one-man clergy which does not allow the people to exercise their gifts.

Paul mentions as one of the gifts that of being a prophet. In the Bible a prophet was one who was a mouthpiece or spokesperson for God, a vehicle of his direct revelation. In this sense, can there be prophets today or after the time of the New Testament? If so, should their words be treated as having the authority of Scripture?

What is the relationship between the prophetic gift and the other gifts?

Does speaking the truth "in love" mean that we should never speak words that will cause hurt or controversy?

P.H.H.

The Church Symbiotic

selected by Shelley Curtis Weaver

In every effort in every place where the truth is introduced there is need of different minds, different gifts, different plans and methods of labor being united. All should make it a point to counsel together, to pray together. Christ says that "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:19). No one worker has all the wisdom that is needed. There should be a comparing of plans, a counseling together. No one man should think himself sufficient to manage an interest in any place without helpers.

One man may have tact in one direction, but may be a decided failure upon some essential points. This makes his work imperfect. He needs the tact of another man's mind and gift to blend with his efforts. All should be perfectly harmonious in the work. If they can only work with those who see just as they do and follow just their plans, then they will make a failure. The work will be defective because none of these laborers have learned the lessons in the school of Christ that makes them able to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. All would be constantly improving. They should lay hold of every opportunity and make the most of every privilege, until they become better fitted for their great and solemn work.

But God has set in the church different gifts. These are all precious in their place and are to act a part in the perfecting of the saints.

This is God's order, and men must labor according to His rules and arrangements if they would meet with success. God will accept only those efforts that are made willingly and with humble hearts, without the trait of personal feelings or selfishness.

REACT

How good is our church at utilizing the various gifts of its members? How might we do better?

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:1-16;
1 Corinthians
12:22-26

"All should make it a point to counsel together, to pray together."

Excerpted from
Selected Messages,
vol. 3, pp. 24, 25.

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Creed for Humanity's Best

by Kelli Wilson

EVIDENCE

Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:1-16

In 1841, Ludwig Feuerbach, one of the 19th century's most profound atheists, presented an interesting philosophical argument against belief in God.

He contended that belief in God impoverishes humanity. To support this claim, he began by examining how man perceives God, in contrast to how he perceives objects outside of himself.

We experience the world around us through our five senses. However, we perceive God only through our emotions, opinions, thoughts, etc. We cannot actually see, hear, feel, taste, or touch God. Thus, while the existence of the world around us can be tested by our senses, the existence of God is a matter of belief alone.

From this point, Feuerbach goes on to state that since God's existence cannot be proven outside of man's mind, it's actually the fact that God did not create man; rather, man created the idea of a god.

This is the central point of Feuerbach's argument—in creating a god and making that god a separate entity from itself, humanity robbed itself of its own potential. According to Feuerbach, belief in God results in the attitude that because God is the highest and best of everything, we are only worse by comparison. Feuerbach presents a powerful argument up to a point. But his ultimate conclusion is a mistake. In Feuerbach's era there may have been a greater tendency on the part of Christians to harbor strong negative undertones regarding the worth of humanity. More recently, Christians have come to emphasize the idea that we are of immense value to our heavenly Father because of the price paid for our salvation.

For the sake of the God who has loved us enough to pay so dear a price, we are encouraged to attain the highest good, the greatest nobility of spirit that we possibly can. And in doing so, we are, in fact, striving to be one with God.

Thus, belief in God does not make us poor. Rather, it gives us the hope that the greatest and best that is possible in humanity can be attained. After all, "With God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26, RSV).

Paul envisions this type of oneness with God when he speaks of "one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6, RSV).

In the poetic cadence of these lines we find a Christian creed to place within our hearts. Paul speaks of a people, a church, united in Christ, whose diversities create a whole—one body that with God's help can and will attain the greatest and best that humanity can attain.

"Belief in God gives us the hope that the greatest and best that is possible in humanity can be attained."

Kelli Wilson is a senior journalism major at Walla Walla College.

Servants Apply Here

by Kevin Ringering

**HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:1-16**

I want you to forget about the list of gifts found in Ephesians 4:11. That list includes apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. I want you to forget about it because sometimes it's too easy to focus on those particular gifts and miss their central purpose. The reason for these gifts is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up . . ." (Eph. 4:12, NIV).

In this passage of Ephesians and throughout the gospels, the call to service is given to everyone who accepts Christ as his Saviour. Perhaps we are tempted to believe that our service ends after we pay our tithes and offerings. Not so. We cannot pay professionals to do our work for us. Ephesians 4:14 graphically portrays the results of such a course. The truth is that if we claim to have answered the call of Christ, we cannot deny the call to service. But where do we begin?

1. Begin by throwing out the door all those ideas of leaving the work to denominational employees. Christ asks you for *your* life, and that includes your time and your talents expended in service.

2. Open your eyes to a world exploding with needs all around you. One study guide that I've found extremely helpful is *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy*, by Tom Sine. Sine points out areas of need in tomorrow's troubled world and explores dozens of exciting, innovative ways through which dedicated Christians are already meeting some of those needs. Another learning guide you may already have in your library is *The Ministry of Healing*, by Ellen White. Studying these two books will make you aware of the pressing needs all around.

3. As you become more aware, pray that God will make you willing to serve, and that he will open your eyes to a specific way in which you can utilize your talents and special concerns in service for the strengthening of the body of Christ.

4. Having enlisted in the service of the Lord, you have already received your marching orders: serve. Now obey them. Sine summarizes how: "Begin by finding one or two other followers who share your seriousness for the kingdom initiative of God. Bond your lives together in desperate prayers and loving relationships. Discover how God wants you to be a part of his conspiracy in discipleship, lifestyle, vocation, and community. . . . Learn to wait and hear his voice calling you into the world. Then, as he leads you, seek to influence your church and your world for the kingdom."¹

REACT

What do you see as the most crucial needs in the church and in society that young people can help meet?

1. Tom Sine, *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1981), p. 237.

Kevin Ringering graduated from Walla Walla College in 1984 with a major in communication media.

On Adventist Unity

by Jon Dybdahl

OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:1-16

The time is here for honest talk about Seventh-day Adventist unity. We Adventists talk some about other kinds of unity. The ecumenical movement for large scale unity can be openly discussed. We can also plead for small scale unity on the local church level. Be there disagreement over choice of offices or the color of replacement carpet, we can plead for cooperation and oneness. The hardest talk about unity is that which concerns what I call unity on the middle level—our oneness as a denomination.

I must admit that I think more creeping cracks probably exist in our unity as a people than have been there for a long time. I've personally experienced some of them: The church members who refuse to pay tithe through usual channels because they distrust organizational money handling. The church pastor who worries about and fights more lay representation on all church levels because he isn't sure what these people will do if they get power. The church administrator who refuses to hire graduates of a denominational college because he distrusts their orthodoxy and their teachers. The left-wing Adventist who thinks all church administrators and conservative Adventists are dishonest or narrow-minded or both. The right-wing activist who sees everyone who doesn't agree with his theology as Babylon. We could all gain by pondering the words of Paul in our lesson text for this week. Here are some things I hear the passage saying about unity.

1. Unity is important. Paul begs his hearers to be eager to maintain unity (4:1, 2). His favorite words in the passage are "one" and "all" (used seven and eight times respectively in the RSV), both words which stress unity. This passage is the first section in the ethical part of the apostle's letter. When Paul moves from theological issues to practical ethical issues, unity is the first thing he talks about. Do we as contemporary Adventists value unity as much as Paul did?

2. The path to unity begins with right attitudes. Paul does not begin by defining doctrine or planning organizational structure. He talks about lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearing one another ("bearing with one another"—NIV), and being eager to maintain unity (4:1, 2). Unity is first of all an attitude or mind-set—the attitude of the servant. Pride of opinion and hasty judgments are exactly the attitudes that Paul fears, for they lead to division. Three times Paul urges things to be done "in love" (4:2, 15, 16).

Paul does go on to talk of things like one Lord, one faith, one baptism, etc. (4:4-6). These are such general beliefs of Christians that they were not questioned. Paul, in fact, appeals to them not so much as doctrinal beliefs but as the common experience of believers which should bind them together. Recounting what we as a people have experienced together helps build the attitudes of unity!

3. We all need each other. This is the reason Paul talks about spiritual gifts (4:7-13). The point is that to be complete the church needs *all* parts of the body. None can be safely excised. If we all—pastors, lay people, teachers, leaders, right, left and middle—would

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spend time remembering how we need each other, some of those hasty words and divisive acts would disappear.

4. Preservation from false doctrine comes as a result of unity. Often we have believed or at least acted like we espoused the opposite view—that doctrinal definitions lead to unity. Such a concept is dangerous. For Paul the working together and unity of the body *lead* to avoidance of “every wind of doctrine”—not vice versa (4:14 in context). If differing views are quickly branded as heresy and their proponents isolated, dialogue ceases and wrong positions become more and more rigid. If we “bear with” (4:2) those having different views they remain brothers and sisters, and real conversation can take place. More than once I have been helped to modify my views by accepting friends who tolerated me and instructed me until my “heresy” moderated.

In a time when the forces of evil would delight to see the church cracks split into open division we must all seek for Adventist unity. Careful consideration of Paul’s message in Ephesians 4:1-16 could help us toward the unity which Paul begs for and God yearns to see in his people.

REACT

What is the single most important specific action each of the following segments of the church can take to enhance unity?

college faculty

pastors

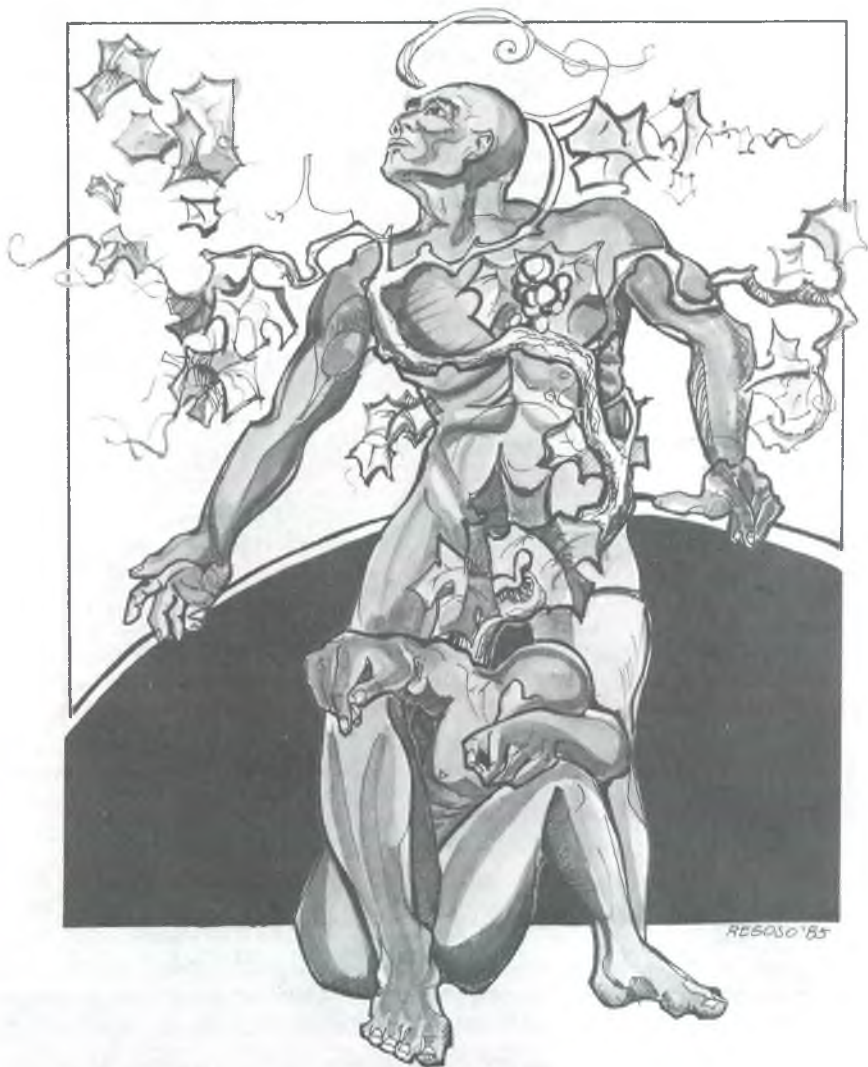
lay persons

church administrators

you

THE NEW YOU

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, . . . to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24, NIV).



When Feelings Aren't Enough

by Cherilyn Christen

Jeff glanced around the cluttered dorm room. "Why did I tell Mrs. Tucker that I would play my trumpet for church next Sabbath? I don't feel like practicing. Besides, I want to sleep in." He went to the closet and pulled a sack out from behind his ski boots, took out a can, opened it and sat down to relax while the lukewarm beer slid past his tongue and down his throat. Fourteen months ago, when he became a Christian, he had stopped drinking. Even this last summer he had enthusiastically shared his relationship with Christ at the summer camp where he worked. But his religion had gone out with the summer styles, and now he felt like the dead leaves on the ground outside his window. He didn't *feel* like a Christian any more. His tight schedule didn't allow much time for Bible study. Whenever he needed something, his prayers were fervent, but they seemed like one-way conversations.

Jeff thought that he had done everything possible to use Christianity to regulate his emotions. And now that he had failed, he turned to an older

comfort—drinking. He didn't want to drink; he just used drinking as a mask to hide his guilt. On Sabbath mornings he sang hymns; on Saturday nights he drank. He realized that he was trying to live a double life and he hated himself. Frustrated, he poured the last half of the can of beer into the sink.

He knew the facts. He was a sinner, he had been saved, and God had promised to be with him. Just as surely as God heard his prayers God would forgive him. For the seventeenth time that day, he prayed. But, his prayer seemed only to echo around the four, posterred walls.

Jeff decided that he would call Mrs. Tucker in the morning and tell her that he couldn't make it. No more would he go on with these double standards. He determined to resolve his inner life before he put on any public performances. The clock and his stomach reminded him that it was supper time. He stepped out into the hall as his door clicked shut behind him.

On his night stand in the darkened room lay the answer, but it was covered with dust.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:17-32

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Spiritual Revolution

LOGOS

Theme: The Christian life involves spiritual revolution leading to a new self characterized by purity, truthfulness, usefulness and compassion.

1. No Longer a Gentile (read Eph. 4:17-19)

"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking" (4:17, NIV).

Paul appeals to his readers to turn from their old way of life to the life-style of the Christian. In contrast to this new pattern for living, Paul gives a synopsis of what the old life was like. He has alluded to it several times before in the letter—"We were by nature objects of wrath" (2:3), "foreigners . . . without hope" (2:12)—and now he goes into more detail.

Those who don't believe in God are concerned with empty, meaningless things—"the futility of their thinking" as Paul describes it. This preoccupation with the superficial comes as a result of being separate from God. The order here seems to indicate that Paul is outlining the progression of sin. The first step in this progression is a stubborn rejection of God's revealed truth. Thus one becomes ignorant of God and his workings and the gulf of separation broadens, and with this broadening, meaning becomes increasingly elusive. Fulfillment must come from elsewhere, but apart from God it amounts to that which is not bread and labor which does not satisfy (cf. Is. 55:2). Sensitivity to God and his promptings is lost and with the increasing emptiness of life, the search for fulfillment intensifies, leading gradually to sensuality in whatever degrading form it may take, whether sexual, criminal, or material. And what is left? The continual desire for more.

Does rejection of God always result in the finality of the downward spiral that Paul describes? What about a humanitarian atheist or the "good" nominal Christian next door?

2. You Were Taught (read Eph. 4:20-24)

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds" (4:22, 23, NIV).

A so-called "Christian lifestyle" is still the norm for a large portion of Western civilization today. But Christianity means more than being passively socialized by one's environment. Christianity makes great demands upon the individual. This was especially true in Paul's day when belief in a crucified savior was deemed ludicrous and adhering to the morals this so called "savior" propagated even more so. But even today in the relative ease and freedom of belief, Christianity is a serious matter. Living its lifestyle involves a conscious change from the "norm." We don't, says Paul, come to know and follow Christ in the stream of life described in vv. 17-19. It is

something learned. "What had they been taught, then? They had been taught that becoming a Christian involves a radical change, namely 'conversion' (as the human side of the experience is called) and 're-creation' (the divine side). It involves the repudiation of our former self, our fallen humanity, and the assumption of a new self or re-created humanity."¹

Paul's description here is neatly balanced. The old self was being corrupted, but the new is created to be like God. The old life was dominated by lust and sensuality, but the new is created in righteousness and holiness. The desires of the old life were deceitful, but the righteousness of the new is founded in truth.

Can a person who was raised in an Adventist environment and accepts the norms he was taught correctly assume he is living an authentic Christian life-style?

3. Practical Advice (read Eph. 4:25-32)

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (4:31, 32, NIV).

Once the Christian life is taken on specific things begin to happen, and must happen. It is not enough to put off old clothes (filthy rags) but new ones must be put on. Dishonesty should be discarded and replaced with truthfulness. Anger should also be banished. When examined carefully it becomes evident that anger is rooted in selfishness. "My rights, my feelings, my person have been trampled on; therefore, I've a right to be mad." But the Christian's concern is for the rights and feelings of others. His self has been surrendered to Christ and in Christ's care it remains.

Here is the key to the rest of Paul's advice. We are in Christ's care; thus it becomes our duty to care for others above ourselves. "He [Paul] tells us to be kind (*chrestos*). The Greeks defined this quality as the disposition of mind which thinks as much of its neighbor's affairs as it does of its own. Kindness has learned the secret of looking outwards all the time, and not inwards. He tells us to forgive others as God forgave us. So, in one sentence, Paul lays down the law of personal relationships—that we should treat others as Jesus Christ has treated us."²

Is there any place for anger in the life of the Christian? Is there such a thing as righteous indignation? Is there ever a point where we should stop thinking of others and think of ourselves?

E.R.M.

1. John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society*, p. 181.
2. William Barclay, *Ephesians*, pp. 153, 154.

Christ's Representatives

selected by Clifford Dolph

TESTIMONY A Changed Character

Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:17-32

The inhabitants of the heavenly universe expect the followers of Christ to shine as lights in the world. They are to show forth the power of the grace that Christ died to give men. God expects those who profess to be Christians to reveal in their lives the highest development of Christianity. They are recognized representatives of Christ . . . and they are to show that Christianity is a reality. They are to be men of faith, men of courage, whole-souled men, who, without questioning, trust in God and His promises.

All who enter the city of God must during their earthly life set forth Christ in their dealings. It is this that constitutes them the messengers of Christ, His witnesses. They are to bear a plain, decided testimony against all evil practices, pointing sinners to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. He gives to all who receive Him, power to become the sons of God. Regeneration is the only path by which we can enter the city of God. It is narrow, and the gate by which we enter is straight, but along it we are to lead men and women and children, teaching them that in order to be saved, they must have a new heart and a new spirit. The old, hereditary traits of character must be overcome. The natural desires of the soul must be changed. All deception, all falsifying, all evil-speaking, must be put away. The new life, which makes men and women Christlike, is to be lived.¹

**"All who enter
the city of God
must, during
their earthly life,
set forth Christ."**

The Secret of Holiness

No man receives holiness as a birthright, or as a gift from any other human being. Holiness is the gift of God through Christ. Those who receive the Saviour become sons of God. They are His spiritual children, born again, renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Their minds are changed. With clearer vision they behold eternal realities. . . .

Accepting Christ as a personal Saviour and following His example of self-denial—this is the secret of holiness. . . .

Communication With Kindness

We are counseled to let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth; but a corrupt communication is not simply something that is vile and vulgar. It is any communication that will eclipse from the mind the view of Christ, that will blot from the soul true sympathy and love. It is a communication in which the love of Christ is not expressed, but rather sentiments of an un-Christlike character. . . .

It should be our aim to bring all the pleasantness possible into our lives, and to do all the kindness possible to those around us. Kind words are never lost. Jesus records them as if spoken to Himself. Sow the seeds of kindness, of love, and of tenderness, and they will blossom and bear fruit.²

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 22, 23.

2. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1117, 1118.

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Grace Makes a Difference

by Sakae Kubo

Paul points out by contrasts the difference Christ should make in our lives. He characterizes the old nature with the following terms: futility, alienation, ignorance, hardness of heart, corruption, deceitful lust, falsehood, evil talk, bitterness and wrath, malice. The new nature, on the other hand, is described as renewed in the Spirit, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness, speaking the truth, doing honest work, being able to give to those in need, imparting grace, being kind, and forgiving one another.

The challenge of Paul's words is whether these contrasts show that Christ has made a noticeable difference in our lives. Can we point to the *then* and the *now* of our experience? New Christians who come to our Adventist academies and colleges are rudely shocked to find that "Christians" also lie and steal and swear like anybody else.

When in England, I visited two evangelical Christian colleges. At the first college, the bookstore had no attendant; everyone was on his honor to put the right amount of money into the designated box. This institution also had a place where students could purchase postage stamps on the same basis. At the second institution students checked out books at the library on their own. At our own Adventist institution, we would never think of leaving the bookstore unattended.

Paul, who more than anyone else emphasized that faith—not works—justifies us, insists that life in Christ demands a revolutionary change in behavior. Claiming justification without commitment, says Dietrich Bonhoeffer, is "cheap grace." He names this the deadly enemy of the church. He says, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."¹

In writing this passage to the Ephesians, Paul is speaking against cheap grace. In his own day some misunderstood his message of justification by grace through faith. They concluded, "And why not do evil that good may come?" (Rom. 3:8, RSV), and asked, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1, RSV). Therefore, in Ephesians Paul makes explicit what it means to be a Christian. *Then* you lied, stole, and spoke vile, bitter and slanderous things, but *now* you must speak the truth, do honest work and share with others, speaking uplifting things: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32, RSV).

REACT

Does heavy emphasis on righteousness by faith inevitably lead many to embrace a "cheap grace" and encourage laxness in behavior?

EVIDENCE
Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:17-32

"Life in Christ demands a revolutionary change in behavior."

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 47.

At the time of this writing Sakae Kubo was a professor of theology at Walla Walla College.

The Gift of the New Self

by Robb Price

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:17-32

Many people today want to be "new" people. In any bookstore you can find countless self-help books with such titles as *Be the Person You Want to Be*, *Helping Yourself with Self-Hypnosis*, or *I Want to Change But I Don't Know How!* The title of this last book expresses the thoughts of most of us. We want to change, but the "how" of the process eludes us. The Bible contains practical advice for becoming the new person Paul speaks of. He says we must be "made new in the attitudes of our minds" (Eph. 4:23). The key word here is *made*. Changing thought patterns involves a process, and often it is a slow one. What are some of the practical ways through which we can experience these changes?

1. Give the Holy Spirit a chance to work. The most direct way we can allow the Holy Spirit to impress our minds is through Scripture. By reading about Jesus, concentrating on the great themes of the Bible, and prayerfully reflecting on them, our attitudes and thinking change. This internal change is a prerequisite for any external transformation. Thus, we must make a devotional time a matter of highest priority.

2. Share Jesus with others. If you want to become a new person, start sharing what Jesus means in your life. This alone will have a transforming effect. It will make your spiritual life exciting and vital. If you're nervous or apprehensive about this, try casually mentioning something about Jesus' life or his teachings that is relevant to a current topic in your conversation. If we gradually get into the habit of talking about Jesus, it will perhaps be easier for us to share what he has done for us.

3. Form positive habits in place of old ones. This is a fundamental step, as Paul says, in putting on the new self. We must have a plan to develop positive traits where the Spirit has convinced us we need to have them. The only way to put off the old ways of doing things is to start systematically doing things differently. Write the plan down, pray about it and remember what Scripture has to say about it.

4. Don't allow exceptions. If you make exceptions in the process of developing new habits, you will fail. You must set a goal and stick with that plan.

Becoming a new person is not a sudden transformation, but a continual process of developing new habits through the aid of the Holy Spirit within.

Robb Price is a junior theology major at Walla Walla College.

Changing the *Real* You

by Clifford Dolph

Considering myself to be highly understanding, I always figured I could relate to just about anyone. Patience, acceptance, and sympathy marked my relations with everyone, as far as I was concerned. In fact, I thought my character was quite well-developed. I was quite sure I had discovered the essence of Christianity.

That was until I worked at summer camp this year. Before my counseling binge was over, I had completely lost control of myself on several occasions, had found myself hating certain campers quite passionately, and had reacted to some behavior with an extreme indignation that cast all my supposed tolerance into the lake. I was ashamed.

I learned something, though. I learned that all those nice, appropriate little behaviors I practiced were not really me. Under enough pressure, a character came out that was basically selfish, vengeful, intolerant and downright hateful. And I don't think I am alone. There are many Christians who gain a sense of security from checking off certain behaviors on a list—not going certain places or eating certain foods or saying certain words.

As Adventists, we have a great deal of counsel about specific behaviors, and we can easily gain a false sense of security from meeting many standards. That is why so many of us like clear lines drawn on every issue. But clear lines only help people look good and thereby keep them from having to change their innermost attitudes—from “becoming new.”

At the opposite extreme some people do not worry about requirements at all. They glory not in all the rules they follow, but in their freedom. Taking gross advantage of the grace of God, they speak of all the rules one can break and still be saved. In reality, their error does not differ much from that of the conscientious rule-keepers. Though they set a very low standard, they are still assuming that salvation results from meeting certain requirements.

Actually, salvation comes only with the realization that God's standard is unreachable. We must give up trying by ourselves and realize that God is waiting to help. He is waiting to lavish his love on anyone who will accept it. That love changes the innermost heart. Interaction with Christ makes us like him, and real change occurs in life—not just on the outside or on a check sheet.

God helps those who are helpless. We must stop trying to cover up our badness by finding specific requirements which will make us look good. We must realize our need for the love of Jesus. When that love is realized—fully realized—beautiful things happen in human lives. This is not blind idealism. It is not fantasy. It is the essence of Christianity.

REACT

What role, if any, does the “counsel about specific behaviors” that we have in the Adventist community play in our Christian growth?

OPINION

Key Passage:
Ephesians
4:17-32

“Many Christians gain a sense of security from checking off certain behaviors on a list.”

Clifford Dolph is a junior English major at Walla Walla College.

CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1, 2, NIV).



The Imitator

by Mike Welch

The silence, the silence
Wavering imperceptibly,
the Apprentice
took the first step
and the second.
She could feel the thump
in her chest,
the tenseness
of her vocal chords
and the ache behind her eye
as they darted up and down
in front of her.
Her eyes grew narrow
squinting in the effort of
concentration.
Another step and another.
The rope was taut
and firm beneath her toes.

Ahead walked
the Master Tightrope Walker.
His sensitive feet seemed
to absorb the vibrations
that rang along the rope.
The Master stepped forward
firmly and confidently,
always maintaining stability.
The Apprentice followed
carefully,
attempting
every accurate motion
of the feet,
the precise swaying of
the Master's muscular torso,
and the dips and shifts
of the great balance bar.

The Apprentice quickly
looked
down in a moment of fear.
(It was her nature to do so.)
She thought the rope
was wobbling,
Then sharply, she looked

back to the Master . . .
too late.
She had lost her balance.
She was leaning, toppling,
she was beginning . . .
to fall, to fall.

Twisting and turning
she fell through the cold
dark endless air.
Then abruptly she stopped.
Strangely, inexplicably,
she felt herself
on the tightrope again,
delicately balanced,
in the warmth
of the spotlight.
Through bewildered eyes
she saw
the body
of the Master Tightrope
Walker
lying beneath her
where it had broken
the fall.
She could see
the Master's arms
stretched out
still
holding the balance bar,
His face and expression
of peace and pain together.
And then He was gone.

The memory of His example
lingered
She stepped forward
with tears of joy,
now confident.
Now she understood . . .
She was no longer
the Apprentice.
She was a child of light,
the Imitator.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:1-21

Mike Welch graduated in 1985 from Walla Walla College with majors in communications and English.

Living in the Light

LOGOS **Theme:** The self-giving love of Christ, revealed most clearly at the cross, is the paradigm for all Christian behavior.

1. Models of Ethical Behavior (read Eph. 5:1-4)

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (5:1, 2, NIV).

The first few verses of chapter five seem to be an overflow from the previous chapter. The thrust remains the same, that of encouraging the believer to the unity and purity of the church. These verses interlock the believers' Christian experience (what we are), Christian theology (what we believe) and Christian ethics (how we behave).¹ Paul's ethics are all Christ-centered. We are to "be imitators of God." In v. 3 Paul turns his attention away from the true love shown and given through Christ to the counterfeit of perverted, immoral love. Verse four continues by warning against "obscenity," "foolish tales" or "coarse joking." Instead Paul encourages us to express "thanksgiving." We should be thankful for the many gifts God has given, one of them being sex as God intended it, which is so much superior to the immorality Paul warns against.

What are the implications of this passage for the Christian's use of humor?

2. The Certainty of Judgment (read Eph. 5:5-7)

In the remainder of the chapter, Paul gives incentives to motivate the believer to adopt God's standards. He warns that some might be able to deceive others and even themselves with their actions in this life. But when the judgment comes it is certain that every inappropriate act and thought will be made visible.

During this time, some of the Gnostics were presenting the idea that bodily sins could be committed without endangering the soul. Even today people are saying that God, because he is God of love, will not destroy people and that everyone will eventually be saved and go to heaven. This belief Paul adamantly declares to be false. "God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient (v. 6)." Paul then concludes by stating that we should "not be partners with them." This however does not preclude association with them, for how else could the good news be brought to sinful persons? We should not share or be involved in their actions and activities that are contrary to the Kingdom that God has established.

Does the warning in v. 7 include business partnerships or other joint ventures that are proper in themselves?

3. The Fruit of Light (read Eph. 5:8-14)

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light" (5:8, NIV).

Paul continues his arguments for righteous living by reasoning from the past to the present. The believer was once darkness but now is light. This does not mean exclusively an environmental change but means a change in the total person, his whole behavior and outlook on life. An outgrowth of being "children of light" is to possess the virtues associated with God (v. 9).

Exposing a person has negative connotations. However, when Paul says that "everything exposed by the light becomes visible" and "it is light that makes everything visible" (vv. 13, 14), it is possible that he is saying that the light transforms and changes the evil which it exposes. When the Christian interacts in the community, he is not only an example of what is right but also is an influence on those he comes in contact with.

4. The Nature of Wisdom (read Eph. 5:15-17)

Paul exhorts the believers to behave wisely. The wise person is one who treats time as something important and for which he is accountable. He is disciplined in his use of time, "making the most of every opportunity" when it arises, at that very moment, since time waits for no person. A wise person understands "what the Lord's will is," for it is in the Lord's will that we find wisdom.

How do we find the particular will of the Lord for different areas of our lives?

5. The Fullness of the Holy Spirit (read Eph. 5:18-21)

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21, NIV).

Paul tells the believers to be "filled with the Spirit" instead of being "drunk on wine." When drunk a person is under the influence of alcohol, and similarly a Christian who is Spirit-filled is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Alcoholic drunkenness leads to "debauchery," which is uncontrolled behavior like or worse than that of animals. It has a dehumanizing effect. By contrast, the Spirit makes us more like Christ. The results of being filled with the Spirit include fellowship together "with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs," worshiping the Lord with singing and making music, and also thankfulness to God for "everything." The last result given is that of submitting ourselves to one another "out of reverence for Christ." Being filled with the Spirit results in displaying meekness, gentleness and humility.

When we are filled with the Spirit do we lose control over ourselves, in a sort of spiritual inebriation?

Is being filled with the Spirit obligatory or optional? What does it mean for day-to-day living?

P.H.H.

1 John R. W. Stott,
God's New Society,
p. 193.

Ellen White on Light: an Interview

by Bart Soper
and Twila Threadgill

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:1-21

What is light?

Jesus is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. His children are the children of light.¹ Whatever manifests the Lord Jesus Christ is light.²

What are the functions of light?

That man may increase in knowledge,³ to correct error,⁴ to perfect character,⁵ to provide security against disobedience and apostasy,⁶ to create other lights.⁷

How is light obtained?

We must watch with earnestness that we may discern any ray of light which God shall present to us. We are to catch the first gleamings of truth; and through prayerful study, clearer light may be obtained, which can be brought before others.⁸

How is light conveyed?

The consistent life, the holy conversation, the unswerving integrity, the active, benevolent spirit, the godly example—these are the mediums through which light is conveyed to the world.⁹

What does it mean to walk in the light?

Walking means moving onward, exerting ourselves, exercising our ability, being actively engaged. . . . We gain activity and strength by walking in the light, that we may have energy to run in the way of God's Commandments.¹⁰

Why do we so often seem to be in darkness?

Some who have been channels of light, whose hearts have been made glad by the precious light of truth, have denied that truth by assimilating to the world. They have thus lost the spirit of self-sacrifice and the power of truth, and have depended for happiness upon the unstable things of earth.¹¹

As children of light, what is our mission?

God has scattered His children in various communities that the light of truth may be kept shining amid the moral darkness that enshrouds the earth.¹²

Has the Lord given you light? Then you are responsible for that light: not merely while its rays are shining upon you, but for all which it has revealed to you in the past. You are to surrender your will to God daily; you are to walk in the light, and to expect more; for the light from the dear Saviour is to shine forth in clearer, more distinct rays amid the moral darkness, increasing in brightness more and more unto the perfect day.¹³

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 405-406.

2. *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 34.

3. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 256.

4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 322.

5. *Messages to Young People*, p. 368.

6. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 83.

7. *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 152.

8. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 708.

9. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 307.

10. *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 436.

11. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 278.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 486.

Bart Soper is a junior business major at Walla Walla College; Twila Threadgill graduated from Walla Walla in 1985 with a health major.

Paul Talks About Bad Sex

by Ernest J. Bursey

Paul insists that the ordinary people who make up the scattered little Christian churches are actually onstage before an audience that includes, in his words, the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Never mind the emperor! The exact assignment may sound a bit quaint—to reveal “God’s wisdom in all its varied forms” (Eph. 3:10, NEB)—but on reflection it leaves one dumb-founded.

In the passage for this week, Eph. 5:1ff, we read that one way to succeed at this task is to recognize ourselves as God’s own sons and daughters whom he dearly loves. In response to this love and as a result of it we are to act like him, looking to his Son as an example. This emphasis on love strikes a responsive chord. We believe in love and seem never to tire of being reminded that God is in the business of loving, too.

But to be honest, the bulk of the verses we have been studying this week say nothing at all about love, but rather are a barrage against sexual license and innuendo. Yes, next week, starting at v. 21, we’ll see Paul unpacking the theme of love. But this week we come to grips with a lot of strong negative words against immoral speech and action that draws God’s wrath. Christian missionaries of the New Testament taught their pagan converts standards of sexual conduct similar to the strict mores of Judaism. So Paul assumes his readers already know what is “immoral” and concentrates on consequences.

My hunch is that if he were writing to the faculty and students at an Adventist college about love today, he’d still bring up this matter of sexual behavior. The post-Christian world around us is virtually committed to pre- and extra-marital sexual freedom. Its values can seep inside our minds about as readily as the pagan morality intrigued the Ephesian Christians. Simply being Christian didn’t make the Ephesians invulnerable to moral confusion about what stands in the circle of love—and it doesn’t now, either. So Paul reminds them and us that a whole lot that looks like love is not love. God surely knows the difference and we’d better, too.

For the sake of your own moral reinforcement take a look at these verses again. See if you can spot the reasons Paul gives for the Christian lifestyle. How do you think his attack on immorality would go over on an Adventist campus? Do you think his approach would be effective in arresting the thinking of your friends? What should Adventist pastors and Bible teachers be saying about Christian sexuality? And what are you going to tell your children?

REACT

How would you apply Paul’s counsel to the Christian’s use of literature, television, and films?

EVIDENCE
Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:1-21

“Simply being Christian didn’t make the Ephesians invulnerable to moral confusion.”

Ernest J. Bursey is an associate professor of theology at Walla Walla College.

Loving the Unlovely

by Dan Kaempff

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:1-21

The story is told of a man who fell asleep on his front porch and had a dream. In this dream he saw his daughter riding her tricycle down the drive and out into the street. A hedge growing next to the drive prevented her from seeing a large truck coming down the street. Without a moment's hesitation the father leaped from his chair, rushed out into the street and pushed her out of the truck's path. But unable to avoid the truck himself, he perished under its huge wheels.

Immediately after this dream he had another. In the second dream the situation was identical to the first except the child involved was not his own, but rather the nasty little neighbor boy who was continually picking on his little girl. He saw the boy riding his trike out into the street right into the path of the truck. He hesitated an instant, then raced toward him and saved the boy's life at the expense of his own.

It's a simple thing to love our friends and those we consider as equals. But it is far more difficult to like, much less love, someone who irritates us. So how can we overcome our human nature and learn to "live a life of love, just as Christ loved us" (Eph. 5:2, NIV)?

1. Ask God for help. This is probably the most obvious step, yet I venture that it is also the most overlooked.

2. Choose one specific person you haven't always gotten along with as your "project." Make an effort to get to know this person better. Finding out more about a person will help you to see things from his or her point of view. And by concentrating on just one person at first, you will find it easier to change your attitudes toward others later.

3. Be realistic. You aren't always going to make lifelong friends out of former enemies. And if you try to make a radical change overnight, you'll soon be discouraged. But with time and effort you can develop an understanding of someone you previously found difficult to appreciate.

As Christians we should love as Christ loved—we should love everyone, without question. If we do this then we are truly Children of the Light.

REACT

Is it realistic or possible to love everyone without question as Christ loved? How did Christ love? Do we have to get along with everyone and like everyone?

Dan Kaempff is a senior communications media major at Walla Walla College.

Moral Neutrality and Motives

by Joe Galusha

It is not easy to understand and describe accurately the behavior of even very simple organisms. Though recent advances in scientific photography make possible nearly exact accounts of rapid motions and unique movements, it is still difficult to find patterns of meaning and to identify potential functions of behavior. By definition, behavior is action of the whole or some part of an animal. In a technical, scientific sense, behavior is merely coordinated muscle action. The greater the complexity of behavior, the greater the dependence of this tissue on the central nervous system for coordination.

Judgments about the value of specific behaviors are even more difficult to make. Biologically speaking, "good" behaviors are those that contribute to the continuance of species-specific material twisted in the genes of each organism. Natural selection weighs and measures each action, each movement, but it is unrelenting; only those acts are retained that confer "fitness on the next generation." An ethicist might evaluate a specific action or behavior by considering its impact upon members of the same or related species (especially the human species).

However, decisions about the "rightness" or "wrongness" of a behavior would undoubtedly have to be reserved for actions performed by human beings, primarily because ethical decisions are based upon capabilities that animals don't have, such as self-awareness, ability to understand cause-effect relationships, a sense of "oughtness," etc. Thus judgments about the morality of behavior must be restricted to those including a unique human precursor: motives—calculated intentionality.

In fact, I would cautiously suggest that all animal and human behavior, in the technical, scientific sense, is morally neutral. Taking life (killing), taking that which is not one's own (stealing), or telling things that are not true (lying) are in and of themselves neither right nor wrong, sinful nor righteous. They simply are. These actions can be identified and carefully described. They can be quantified and meticulously analyzed. But their morality or ultimate spiritual significance cannot be humanly determined, because motives reside in the mind of man and only God can judge these motives.

Our passage for this week reminds us that God expects new motives and attitudes of men and women who have been born again. For too long we have focused on modification of earthly behavior for heavenly reasons, when, in fact, behavior of any kind may be morally neutral. Instead, our concern must now turn to God-initiated changes in our intentions and motives for actions.

REACT

1. Do you agree with the thesis set forth by the author? Is motive the only consideration in every situation? What about the seventh commandment of the Decalogue—is motive alone sufficient here?
2. What role does God's law play in this discussion?

OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:1-21

"I would cautiously suggest that all animal and human behavior, in the technical, scientific sense, is morally neutral."

Joe Galusha is a professor of biology at Walla Walla College.

AS CHRIST LOVED

"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. . . . Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . ." (Ephesians 5:21, 22, 25, RSV).



Hard Times for Hazel

by Gary Tetz

Not so long ago, before the West was won, a certain husband stared fiercely into a pot bubbling over a fire. A wife stood humbly behind him, mute, but not by birth.

"Hazel," he said, "it has been a long, hard winter. That pot bubbles, but contains no nourishment therein. I have made a decision."

"Such is your prerogative," said Hazel.

"I have taken our lifetime earnings and bought a covered wagon. We are moving west."

Hazel's eyes moistened. "The money I earned pulling the plow when the oxen were dead and you were tired? You spent it? On a covered wagon?"

"That's right." His voice was confident and kind.

"Where will we live? What will become of my education? What will become of us? How could you do this to me? Woe am I."

"Hazel!" He spoke sharply. "We are going west. We will live in the wagon. I will get a job, if I have to. You will attend community college on weekends, if your work is done. What more do you want? And after all I've done for you."

"What have you ever done for me?"

"I married you," said

the long-suffering husband. "Isn't that enough?"

Then she cried and he patted her head. Later, with the wagon too heavy and the canyon too steep, Jake suggested he return for Hazel the following spring, and offered to build her a shelter. She readily agreed, for such was her love.

The lives of Jake and Hazel do not, in any way, mirror Christ's relationship to the church. Hazel is asked to be blindly obedient to a man whose love seems shallow and abusive. Christ would never require complete surrender had he not already paid the ultimate price, thereby proving the depth of his affection.

Hazel stood mute by the fire. In stark contrast, Christ's marriage to the church allows for earnest questions about destination and livelihood. We are free to inquire, "What will become of us?" knowing that the answer will be both rapid and encouraging.

Most important, at the canyon, Christ makes no springtime return trips. He has bridged the gap himself, with his own sacrifice. When we as an inquisitive church-spouse venture to ask, "What have you ever done for us?"

"I married you," comes the reply. "Isn't that enough?"

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:22-33

Gary Tetz is an admissions counselor at Walla Walla College.

1 + 1 = 1

LOGOS **Theme:** The relationship between husband and wife should be patterned after the relationship between Christ and the church.

1. Wives (read Eph. 5:22-24)

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord" (5:22, NIV).

This passage when not rightly understood elicits outcries of chauvinism from feminists. The two words *headship* and *submission* especially need careful scrutiny. What was Paul saying when he counselled wives to "submit" to the "headship" of their husbands?

The word *submission* has often been defined as meaning "subjection and subordination." To find what Paul meant by "submission," we need to look at the biblical meaning found in the particular context of Ephesians.

There can be little argument about the meaning of "submission in the ancient world." William Barclay relates how low a view the Jews had of women. "In the Jewish form of morning prayer there was a sentence in which a Jewish man every morning gave thanks that God had not made him a Gentile, a slave or a woman. . . . In the Jewish laws a woman was not a person, but a thing. She had no legal rights whatsoever; she was absolutely in her husband's possession to do with as he willed. . . ." ¹ There were movements toward equal rights for females that surfaced at various times and places, but on the whole, women in ancient times were severely oppressed. However, Paul's use of the words *submission* and *headship* can only be understood in the context of Jesus Christ. "The husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the church" (v. 5:23, NIV). Christ's headship, which the husband should copy, is discussed and described in Ephesians 4:15-16. "From him [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love" (Eph. 4:16). In this type of "headship" the emphasis is not on control and rule but rather on care and responsibility. As the church draws its nurture and growth from Christ, so does the wife from the husband. The last part of v. 23 adds that Christ is the "Savior" of the church. Thus, "saviorhood" is a characteristic of "headship." The wife's submission to her husband in v. 24 is compared then to the church's submission to Christ. This should be seen not as implying unquestioning obedience or slavery to his authority and command but *acceptance* of his *care* and *love* and *protection*.

Is the husband's "headship" to be understood as a cultural application of a principle or as a foundational principle of Scripture? Why?

2. Husbands (see Eph. 5:25-33)

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25, NIV).

The husband's duty is best characterized in the word *love*—the agape love of sacrifice, which Jesus expressed for his church at Cal-

vary. To love in this way, the husband must also cherish and nourish her as "Christ does the church" (v. 29).

Paul uses five verbs in vv. 25, 26 to show the stages of Christ's commitment and love to the church. He "loved her," and "gave himself up" for her, to make her "holy," "cleansing" her so he could "present" her to himself. These verbs trace the love Christ has for the church past, present, and future. This love which expressed itself in self-sacrifice at the cross had a purpose. Christ wanted to sanctify, or cleanse, the church. This cleansing culminates in the future when Christ returns to take his church.

Since his headship should be parallel to that of Christ's, the husband should never use that headship as a power to crush or frustrate his wife. Instead "he should give himself for her, in order that she may develop her full potential under God and so become more completely herself."² Paul concludes by pointing out that it is not always easy to reach the ideal standard involved in Christ's love. Therefore Paul gives the practical counsel of following the golden rule in v. 28—treating others as we would ourselves like to be treated (Matt. 7:12).

Paul reaches the height of his argument by connecting Christ's bride and Christ's body in v. 30. We are "members of his body," fused in as part of him. As husband and wife are in union together, so are each in Christ.

Is the view of marriage in Ephesians compatible with the seeking to establish and develop one's selfhood?

P.H.H.

1. John R. Stott,
God's New Society,
p. 224.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

Love Is Deferring, Not Demanding

by Darold Bigger

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:22-33

Paul's advice in Ephesians 5 is often used to justify or demand a male-dominated society and a male-controlled marriage. It's enlightening to recognize that Ellen White promoted a different interpretation of Paul's advice that was far in advance of her time.

The following excerpts are from a letter to a young married couple. It was published in 1902. At that time the status of women was considerably more restricted than it is now. Women were seen as men's helpers and almost invariably worked under men's direction. Women were beginning to protest their subservient status but weren't even given the right to vote in the United States for another 18 years.

"Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church. The spirit that Christ manifests toward the church is the spirit that husband and wife are to manifest toward each other.

"Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherished the church. And the wife is to respect and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other.

"My brother and sister, both of you have strong will power. You may make this power a great blessing or a great curse to yourselves and to those with whom you come in contact. Do not try to compel each other to do as you wish. You cannot do this and retain each other's love. Manifestations of self will destroy the peace and happiness of the home. Let not your married life be one of contention. If you do you will both be unhappy. Be kind in speech and gentle in action, giving up your own wishes. Watch well your words, for they have a powerful influence for good or for ill. Allow no sharpness to come into your voices. Bring into your united life the fragrance of Christlikeness.

"My brother, be kind, patient, forbearing. Remember that your wife accepted you as her husband, not that you might rule over her, but that you might be her helper. Never be overbearing and dictatorial. Do not exert your strong will power to compel your wife to do as you wish. Remember that she has a will and that she may wish to have her way as much as you wish to have yours. Remember, too, that you have the advantage of your wider experience. Be considerate and courteous. 'The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.' James 3:17."¹

**"Neither
husband nor
wife is to make
a plea for
rulership."**

1. *Testimonies
for the Church*,
vol. 7, pp. 46-48.

Darold Bigger is senior pastor at Walla Walla College Church.

Headship Is a Good Idea

by Loren Dickinson

Headship is a good idea. But what of headship? The kind in which the wife acquiesces because her husband is "head of the house," and no one's permitted to forget it? The kind in which when all is said and done, his way wins? Or at least he must be consulted about decisions great and small?

That's a bad idea about headship. It is if Paul is right when he insists that Christ is Head of the church (Ephesians 5) and that by extension the husband is head of his wife and his family.

The husband is head of the wife and "just in so far as he is to her what Christ is to the church," *and over the same matters*.¹ He loves her as Christ loves the church. He doesn't despair over her. He would give his life for her. He forgives her with exhaustless forgiveness. He cares for her unwaveringly through the worst of times.

"The headship of the husband consists in his ability and responsibility to care for his wife, in the same way that Christ cares for the church."² So headship is a quality, a style, a commitment. It's not stature or dominion.

When it comes to measuring one's marriage against the way Christ and the church relate, one can't make endless comparisons. There are some things, in fact, about Christ and the church that simply aren't so in a marriage, even in a good one.

FACT: Christ was crucified for the church. Few husbands and wives have ever been known to do that for their mate.

FACT: Christ has never divorced the church. He has never even threatened to. Yet consider the statistics about marriage and divorce. The divorce rate early in 1985 was 4.9 per 1,000 population.³

FACT: Christ waived some very heady opportunities of his day for the welfare of the church then and now. But no married person, through a function of that marriage, has to forego personal achievements.

FACT: Christ surrendered no freedoms when he took on Headship of the church. But couples do.

FACT: Any beauty the church may possess is the result of what the Bridegroom gives her. As C.S. Lewis says, he (Christ) doesn't find her (the church) lovely; he makes her so.⁴

And now a final note. Neither before nor after we were married did Carolyn discuss headship. That's because who is head of what and who submits to whom were never issues.

But none of that in the least blunts my vigor for the Headship model Christ provides for the church. He loves us, the church. He forgives us, the church. He cares everlastingly for us, the church. He never despairs over us, the church.

He is the master of our fates, the Savior of our lives, and pleads to be Lord of our marriages.

Headship is a good idea.

EVIDENCE
Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:22-33

"Headship is a quality, a style, a commitment. It's not stature or dominion."

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), p. 148.

2. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1036.

3. "Monthly Vital Statistics Report," Department of Health and Human Services, vol. 33, No. 9, December 26, 1984.

4. C. S. Lewis, p. 148.

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Putting Flesh on Love

by Ed Boyatt

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:22-33

"Wives, submit to your husbands," is all some people notice about our passage this week. But let's do away with quoting phrases in isolation. The essence of this section of Ephesians is not control, subordination, or subjection. The essence of this section of Paul's letter is love, the kind of love demonstrated by Jesus of Nazareth. Paul sees Jesus putting flesh on love.

Paul declares that our disposition toward each other should be patterned after Jesus' attitude toward us, his church. He then uses the analogies of the sacrifice of Jesus, baptism, and the parts of the human body to illustrate the kind of love that cements the Christian marriage.¹ The following points emerge out of these analogies:

1. The love of Jesus is **sacrificial**. The most selfless act in history was Jesus' dying for our sins. Christ was ready to make any sacrifice for the good of his children, thus placing more value on others than himself. Traditionally, women have tended to "sacrifice" more in marriages, but Paul says the husband is to sacrifice as Christ sacrificed for the church.

2. The love of Jesus **purifies**. Paul uses the symbol of baptism or a bath before marriage to illustrate what the husband's love for his wife should be. True love cleanses and purifies the life of the spouse, just like Christ's goal is to purify the character of his people. Any love that coarsens instead of refines, any love that results in deceit, any love that causes one to lose one's individuality is not love.

3. The love of Jesus is **nurturing**. A husband loves his mate as he loves his own body. He does not love in order to be served or to ensure his own physical comfort. The need to be always right, the need to be constantly in control, the need to be perfect, the need to possess, and the need to change others to suit ourselves, these needs are destructive and do not dominate the Christ-centered marriage.²

4. The love of Jesus is **unbreakable**. The husband is as united to his wife as the members of the body are united to each other. The Christian no more thinks of separating from his spouse than he would think of removing his own leg or arm. While some seem to change spouses with the ease of changing clothes, the Christian cannot leave a spouse without the pain of losing an eye or a foot. Christ never initiates a painful severance. His love toward the sinner is ever constant.

REACT

Could Paul just as accurately have said that wives are to love their husbands as Christ loved the church?

1. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and the Ephesians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 198-207.
2. Leo Buscaglia, *Loving Each Other* (Thorofare, N. J.: SLACK Inc., 1984), p. 197.

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Time for a New Look

by Pamela Ellis

Wives are to submit. Husbands are to love. Within conservative Christianity, interpretation of Paul's comments has created the traditional scenario: the husband decides and leads while the wife supports and follows. This scenario bothers me, primarily because this doctrine of submission, when isolated from the context of Paul's society, has unconsciously been used to continue classifying women as second-class citizens. It implies that women are somehow inferior to men, and in extreme cases, it is used to justify emotional and physical abuse.

Naturally, because I am a woman, I am sensitive to the implications of the submissive role in the traditional scenario. It is time to understand the cultural norms reflected in Paul's advice and for conservative Christianity to reinterpret the roles of husband and wife.

In Paul's patriarchal society, where women had few rights and male dominance was unquestioned, Paul had little choice but to advise submission. Paul could not write: "Women, march for your rights and fight for equality!" Such advice could have created upheaval and no end of hardship for the women involved; few husbands would have been ready for women's liberation. Paul and also Christ tried to work within the limitations and norms of their own culture. Regardless of Paul's personal views, his advice of submission helped the early Christian woman to relate smoothly to a husband who automatically would assume the authority position and expect to be unquestioned. By comparing marriage to the relationship between Christ and the church, Paul provided the only viable example of benign authority.

It is important to note that Paul is not concerned with defending male dominance; he does not provide any logical support why the male should lead; nor does he refer to other biblical passages. Why should a wife submit herself to her husband? I'm stumped on this. Does a man, simply because he is a man, have a clearer vision of the world, of God, or even of what's best for me simply because he is a man and is my husband? What if I marry someone who is spiritually and intellectually weaker than myself? Should I submit myself to him?

The roles of husband as the authority and wife as the supporter need to be reevaluated to reflect the developing equality of our society, where the male no longer exerts dominance based on physical prowess or cultural tradition. Both husband and wife deserve an equal voice.

It is time to allow for the dynamic nature of cultural norms and to stop applying Paul's advice literally.

REACT

Is Paul's patriarchal model of the husband/wife relationship an obsolete cultural norm, or is he following Gen. 3:16, which seems to pronounce male headship in the home as long as we are in a sinful world?

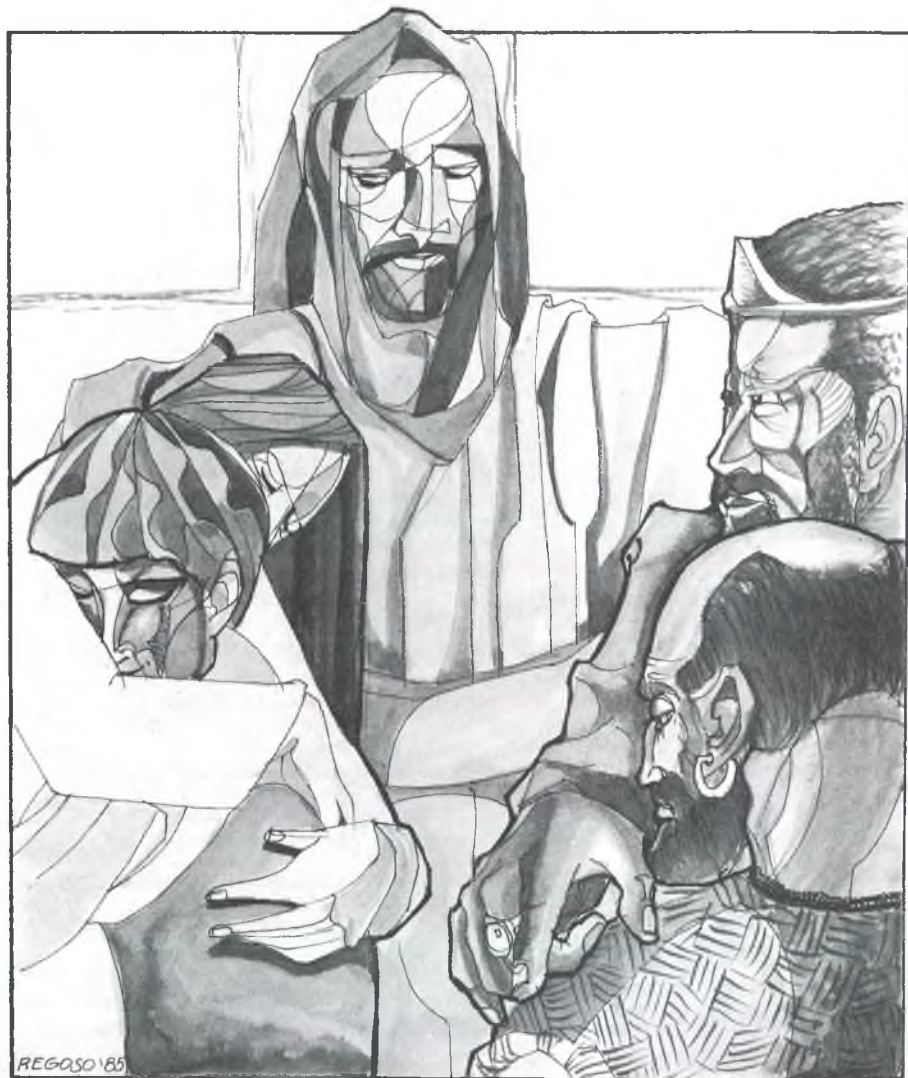
OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians
5:22-33

"Paul is not concerned with defending male dominance."

Pamela Ellis is assistant to the registrar at Walla Walla College.

CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS

"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does . . ." (Ephesians 6:7, 8, NIV).



The Unspared Rod

by Gary Tetz

When I was a small child, the book of Ephesians did not rest open and worn on my bedside table. While I understood that children must obey their parents in the Lord, my knowledge was passed to me through various forms of wooden cutlery, and obedience in the Lord became a metaphor for the absence of pain.

I have heard of my occasional post-natal rebellions. Indeed, they have become almost heroic tales, worthy of the oral formulaic tradition and a roaring Viking campfire. It is well known how, in a fit of three-year-old terrorism, I screamed to my overbearing parents, "If you don't be quiet, I'll throw these keys out the window." I found that freedom of speech was a privilege to be cherished more than exercised. And once again, I became the victim of an unspared rod.

A subconscious lesson was no doubt learned early. I obeyed because things went well with me when I did, and I found it a good way to insure a painless standard of living. The alternative brought the feelings of malaise.

With relative maturity came an understanding of Ephesians 6:4. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. . . ." As is true of most Scripture, this

new light did not dawn until I was able to understand its implications. As a child, I was unable to obey rationally, but instead chose the path of least resistance, which just happened to be my father's will.

Now that I have become a man, so to speak, or maybe just to speak, I am able to judge that will intellectually. Today, my father is accountable for the woodshed trips of a decade ago. I could find him guilty of provoking me to wrath, of administering cruel and unusual punishment, and could make my anger retroactive. Fortunately, my father's innocence is exceeded only by my own appreciation for a job well done. What was once a painful annoyance can now be seen for what it was, "the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

The same could be said of the infant Christian, cajoled and disciplined against natural inclinations. It is easy to become exasperated with the will of the Lord, but time alone will judge Christ's ability to raise children. Only spiritual maturity and the end of the Great Controversy will reveal the real truth behind the age-old phrase "this is going to hurt me more than it will hurt you."

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
6:1-9

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Emancipation in Duty

LOGOS **Theme:** Christ is the reference point for both sides of the relationships between parent and child and between master and slave.

1. The Duty of Children (read Eph. 6:1-3)

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph. 6:1, NIV).

In chapter 6 Paul continues to outline the duties of individuals in a Christian community. He points out that the basis for obedience of the children toward their parents is found in nature, the law, and the gospel.

Paul begins in v. 1 by stating that obedience to parents "is right." This is not a revealed insight into human relationships but part of the natural law God has written into each human heart. This is standard in all societies. We find the pagan moralists, Stoic philosophers and even Confucius putting a heavy emphasis on the obedience of children to their parents which is necessary for a stable society.

Obedience to parents is also part of the revealed law given by God in the Ten Commandments, to "honor your father and mother." This honor involves more than just "obedience" but also the giving of love and respect. It is a special reverence and relationship which is parallel to the relationship between God as father and his people as children.

The third basis for obedience is found "in the Lord" or the gospel. Children are to obey their parents "in the Lord." This modifies the parallel passage in Col. 3:20 where children are admonished to obey their parents "in everything." Here in Ephesians Paul states that children should obey parents only if it does not compromise their relationship with Christ. This statement also shows that obeying the parents is a Christian duty, resulting from one's own personal relationship with Christ.

Is the command to obey parents unconditional? When does the obligation of obedience cease, if ever?

2. The Duty of Parents

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4, NIV).

At the time Paul was writing, the head of the Roman family, the father, exercised total control and authority. "A Roman father had absolute power over his family. He could sell them as slaves, he could make them work in his fields even in chains, he could take the law into his own hands, for the law was in his own hands, and punish as he liked, he could even inflict the death penalty on his child."¹

Paul introduces quite a contrast in Ephesians. His counsel, which, as the Jerusalem Bible brings out, applies to mothers as well as fathers, is that parents use restraint, and bring the children up in

“training and instruction of the Lord.” The word used for “bring up” means to “nourish” or “feed” and is used to describe the nourishment of our bodies in Eph. 5:29.

The word *training* means training by discipline while *instruction* refers to a verbal education. The need for discipline and punishment is well-supported in the Old Testament in which a proverb warns that sparing the rod is a hateful thing (Prov. 13:24). Such counsel is sometimes used to justify excessive physical punishment and discipline. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his exposition of these verses counsels a type of controlled discipline. “When you are disciplining a child, you should have first controlled yourself. . . . What right have you to say to your child that he needs discipline when you obviously need it yourself? Self-control, the control of temper, is an essential prerequisite in the control of others.”²

The Christian upbringing of children includes instruction. This should not be confused with indoctrination, which is when parents or teachers impose their mind and will on the child. Proper instruction is a stimulation that encourages the child to respond in his own way to various situations. The parents and teachers should act as catalysts, by teaching and encouraging acceptance of Christian values, but they should not use pressure or coercion to get their way accepted.³

How would you distinguish between “indoctrination” and the proper “training and instruction of the Lord?”

3. The Duties of Slaves and Masters (read Eph. 6:5-9)

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men” (Eph. 6:7, NIV).

Slavery was universal in the ancient world. It was estimated that in the Roman Empire there were 60,000,000 slaves.⁴ The institution of slavery was a fact of life—of economic life. Despite their lowly social status Paul addresses slaves as full, responsible members of the Christian community.

Their primary responsibility was to serve Christ, and their service to their masters was to be a reflection of that higher loyalty. For the masters, Paul gives three principles of conduct. First they should “treat [their] slaves in the same way.” This refers to the golden rule. The second is “do not threaten them.” The master should not misuse this authority to threaten and punish his slaves. Thirdly, Paul establishes the fact that Christ is “Master” of both slaves and slave owner, and there is “no favoritism with him.”

Can the same principle of the master and slave relationship be applied to contemporary Christians to their work situation?

Why does the New Testament not explicitly condemn slavery?

1. John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society*, p. 245.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

P.H.H.

A Strong Bond of Union

by Myron Iseminger

TESTIMONY
Key Passage:
Ephesians
6:1-9

Concern for one another was a subject Ellen White often included in her practical applications of biblical principles. Thus, Ephesians 6:1-9, dealing with both child/parent and slave/master relationships, receives healthy emphasis in her writings.

The most familiar statements concern a child's responsibility to honor and obey his parents. Some of these statements are quite strong. For instance, she writes that "children who dishonor and disobey their parents, and disregard their advice and instructions, can have no part in the earth made new."¹

However, even in her own forceful language, Mrs. White's motherly concern is evident: "Children, do you desire eternal life? Then respect and honor your parents. Do not wound and grieve their hearts and cause them to spend sleepless nights in anxiety and distress over your case. If you have sinned in not rendering love and obedience to them, begin now to redeem the past."²

Although a child's obedience is important, Ellen White did not overlook the responsibilities of parents. She implores parents: "Provoke not the youth to wrath. Stir not up in them, by unjust charges and harsh treatment, the impulse to act rashly. Often those who ought to know how to deal with the youth drive them away from God by injudicious words and actions. God records such treatment of the youth as a sin against Himself."³

"He taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery."

Mrs. White also spoke adamantly against the practice of slavery, a controversial issue in her day. She makes the following comment on Paul's attitude toward slavery. "It was not the apostle's work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society. To attempt this would be to prevent the success of the gospel. But he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system."⁴

Mrs. White concludes her discussion of slavery by emphasizing Christ as the reference point for both sides of the relationship between master and slave. "Christianity makes a strong bond of union between master and slave, king and subject, the gospel minister and the degraded sinner who has found in Christ cleansing from sin. They have been washed in the same blood, quickened by the same Spirit; and they are made one in Christ Jesus."⁵

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 497.

2. *Adventist Home*, p. 302.

3. *Medical Ministry*, p. 180.

4. *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 459-460.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 460.

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Paul —A Subversive?

by Holiibert Phillips

The onus is always upon the one who would deny the obvious to show that the denial is well-founded. What, for example, could be more obvious than that the sun rises in the east? So glaringly obvious is it, in fact, that even though our intellects tell us otherwise, we indulge the seeing-is-believing habit and keep right on saying that we see what, it turns out, we could not possibly see. But deny it, and for good reasons, we must: the sun does not rise; it merely appears to, and things are not always what they seem.

To understand Paul's discourse in Ephesians 6, the seeing-is-believing habit must be informed by the things-are-not-what-they-seem restraint. This is especially the case when we get to Paul's counsel to slaves and his non-mention of mothers.

Without so much as a single word deploring their demeaning status, without a thought bemoaning their servile station, Paul lectures the slaves in what constitutes ideal servitude. Charge: Paul is an insensitive, ultraconservative preacher.

Other than by oblique implication, why is it that mothers receive no particular recognition in what seems to be a list of everyone who made a social difference? Charge: same as above.

Granted, selected passages of Paul's rhetoric can today have the immediate effect of offending in areas where we tend, quite properly, to be very sensitive—such as our attitudes towards slavery and the status of women.

But the problem, if a problem there is, is hardly ever one of Paul's making. In Ephesians 6, Paul speaks with the deep concern of a shepherd of the sheep. He employs accepted social categories, not to categorize or to apportion tasks or to clarify responsibilities, as might at first appear, but to promote the vitals of Christian community. In fact, it is for this central reason that the slaves are admonished in such detail. And no sooner is Paul through with them than in a most remarkable turnaround he warns that precisely what was said to the slaves applied doubly to masters!

More generally, one may ask: Does Paul have a theology, a convincing one, of the socially faceless, of the dispossessed, of the oppressed? The answer must lie in the inner depths of his single-minded emphasis on unity in Christ. Paul's teaching is subversive in a profoundly spiritual way. To take Paul seriously is in every instance to build community. To take Paul seriously is to build, not bureaucracies—political, social or organizational, but aggressive Christian community where the truly free in Christ are fellow servants to the world.

REACT

Is Paul's emphasis on unity in Christ (see especially Gal. 3:28) "subversive" in relationship to the structures of today's church and society?

EVIDENCE

Key Passage:
Ephesians
6:1-9

"Paul's teaching is subversive in a profoundly spiritual way."

Holiibert Phillips teaches philosophy at Walla Walla College.

Living Paul's Counsel

by Pamela Ellis

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
6:1-9

Study in Spain! Travel Nepal! Travel brochures draw me like steel to magnets. Unfortunately, I have never left the U.S. and have only ventured outside the Northwest a half-dozen times, so the call of the "wild" rings loudly in my ears.

My parents always eyed my steady stream of travel brochures with telling silence. Mom and Dad did not argue against the rich experience of travel; instead, they argued for finishing college at a time when they could help me pay for my education. They were afraid I would get sidetracked and never finish.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord." These were the last words I wanted to hear. I knew obeying my parents meant crushing my travel dreams and returning to school for another grinding quarter.

How was I to deal with Paul's advice? How do we, as children, parents, employees (slaves) and employers (masters) live the counsel of Ephesians 6? Remembering that Christ is the reference point in the child/parent and employee/employer relationships, we can live Paul's counsel in the following ways:

1. Children, honor your parents by listening. Too often our ears are closed with the din of our own ideas, opinions and desires. Honoring my parents meant sitting down at the kitchen table and listening to Mom and Dad as they told me why they wanted me to continue college. Keep in mind that obeying parents "in the Lord" does not constitute blind obedience. Consider what your parents tell you and see how it fits into your idea of Christ's example.

2. Parents, listen to your children and show them Christ-like love and acceptance in your own life. Too often our minds are filled with the desires we have for our children. Paul admonishes us to bring up our children in the "way of the Lord." Teaching our children Christian principles, such as accepting people regardless of their skin color, is what Paul had in mind.

3. Employees, be obedient to your employers by arriving to work on time and doing your best. Doing your best means working consistently and carefully on the project you have been assigned regardless of who is watching you.

4. Employers, listen to your employees. Listen to find out what kind of work they like to do and get to know them as people. Show them courtesy and let them know you value them.

There are many more ways to respond in the child/parent or employee/employer capacity. By pointing to Christ as a reference, Paul encourages all the Christian principles embodied by the Lord's example.

REACT

How should we relate to authority figures such as parents, bosses, deans, teachers, etc., when we feel that they are unfair, hypocritical, or abusive? What do the following passages suggest: 1 Peter 2:18-25; Acts 5:29; Isa. 1:17?

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Serve God by Serving People

by Bob Gardner
and Susan Gardner

OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians
6:1-9

Although we commonly think of social relationships as a matter between individuals, how we act toward each other is always carefully defined by the rules set by our culture. Paul instructs the Ephesians, and subsequent centuries of Christians, on what the new Christian ethic and community means to their everyday lives. Paul's concern is not just with the sanctity of the nuclear family or slavery as social institutions; his advice is for Christians and their social relationships in all cultures. Disciples of Christ, Paul says, live lives of love, just as Christ loved his disciples and gave himself for them (Eph. 5:1). Christians, whether in feudal, slave-owning, socialist, communist, or democratic societies are to exhibit unselfish love and concern for all their associates.

In his two examples of parent/child and slave/master, it seems that Paul's emphasis is on the actions of the subordinate person (child, slave). But it is equally important to understand the message to the one in authority. Legitimate authority over the life of another does not give the Christian absolute power. A father, who has the socially accepted right to discipline his children, is cautioned to avoid "exasperating" or "irritating" them (Eph. 6:4). In the modern context of the "slave/master" relationship, accepted business procedures may not incorporate Christian ethics in the treatment of employees. Implementation of principles like profit-making and efficient production, however, is often transformed by a Christian employer's fairness and compassion.

Education offers another contemporary example of the relationship of subordinate to superior. The Christian teacher, though, has a deep respect for the abilities and creativity of his/her students. Obedience, humility, selflessness, and compassion characterize the relationships of Christian parents, teachers, and employers and their children, students, and employees.

Paul provides one other insight into Christ's kingdom when he says in verse 9 that God has no favorites. Great knowledge, wealth, and social position may benefit people in most societies, but God is not partial. It is not who you are, or what you know, or what you have that is important. Rather it is how you treat those whom you meet every day.

The theme of our passage this week is the importance of willing service—children to their parents, employees to their employers, and those in authority to their subordinates. Willing service "with the whole heart" to all humans is service to God.

REACT

Which is more important: for Christians to work for change in unjust social structures, or for them to show genuine Christlikeness in whatever societal role they find themselves?

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Susan Gardner teaches English at Walla Walla Valley Academy.

CHALLENGING THE POWERS

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Ephesians 6:10, 11, NIV).



Dressing for Failure

by Deanna Davis

"We call it 'Achilles' Syndrome' after their legend. It manifests itself in all types of casualties, but there is only one cause, a flaw in the armor. Come, there's a new patient in Room 210." The aging Chief of Staff at the Veterans of Spiritual Wars Hospital guided the group of eager new interns into a room where a young man lay.

"What seems to be the trouble, son?"

"When I was young, I put on the belt of truth and promised never to take it off. But now I find I have outgrown it and it chafes me and gives me welts and sores."

Turning to the interns, the old doctor remarked, "We see hundreds of cases like this every year. Imagine outgrowing Truth!" The interns smiled and shook their heads but did not know why. "Son," the doctor said gently, "Let me have a look. Hmm . . . Yes. You have some nasty sores here. Let me remove your belt."

"No! Don't! I promised I would never take off the belt of truth."

"You're not taking it off, my boy, I am." And he handed the belt to the astonished patient. Inscribed on the inside of the belt were these words, "All man-made materials: 50% dogmatism, 20% legalism, 20% spiritual laziness and 10% immaturity. Assembled in Delusionland."

"But Doctor, if this is not

truth, what is truth?"

"Not 'What,' son, but 'Who'? When you know the answer to that question and have girded yourself with real Truth your belt will be ever expanding, ever unfolding. You will never outgrow it."

With the interns trailing sheepishly behind, the good doctor continued his rounds. "Here we have the Manley brothers," he said as he pointed through the window of the Intensive Care Unit. "It's too early to tell if we'll be able to save them. They might've had helmets of salvation as a free gift, but they doubted free helmets would be of good quality. They paid a high price for helmets composed of their own works. From the start their visors were defective. Soon they rusted shut and left their wearers in darkness. Being blinded, they attacked not the enemy but each other.

"In the Cardiac Care Unit you will find patients who did not avail themselves of the breastplate of righteousness. Their hearts have failed from fear and broken from despair.

"Why is it men and women know how to dress for success in the material world, but dress for failure in the far more important spiritual realm? When will they learn to put on the whole armor of God?" There were tears in the old man's voice now. The interns looked steadily at their shoes and made no reply.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Key Passage:
Ephesians
6:10-24

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The Superior Power

LOGOS

Theme: God provides comprehensive and effective armor for the Christian's struggle to stand against the powers of darkness.

1. The Power

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Eph. 6:10, 11, NIV).

Verses 10 and 11 help clarify the divine and human roles in the Christian's battle. In urging us to find strength in the Lord's "mighty power," Paul is using the same terminology he used in 1:19, 20 to describe God's power in raising Christ from the dead. Only this resurrection power is big enough to cope with the opposition.

Our role is not a passive one, though. We can only benefit from the "mighty power" if we take up and put on "the armor of God." No one can do that for us; it's a matter of personal decision and commitment.

How does one go about putting on the armor of God?

2. The Opposition

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12, NIV).

The Christian's opposition includes not only the devil and his legions of evil angels, but also the structures and authorities of human society which, in collusion with the demonic, threaten us with domination and manipulation.

Some of these "rulers and authorities" or "principalities and powers" (KJV), such as government, organized religion, and economic systems are not intrinsically evil. They were created by God to order human life (Col. 1:16) and should be cooperated with (Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 6:5-9). But they have a tendency to step out of their bounds and demand ultimate, idolatrous allegiance. The individual seems powerless to resist the demonic grasp of such powers. But Paul boldly asserts that the dominance of the principalities and powers has already been broken by Christ (Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 15:24-27). Therefore, we can remain free of their clutches by putting on the armor Christ offers. The principalities and powers still operate in the "heavenly realms" (Eph. 3:10)—the devil is the "power of the air" (Eph. 2:2) and the structures of society are transcendent in a metaphorical sense. But Christ has been raised far above all principalities and powers (Eph. 1:19, 20) and by the grace of God, we already share in that exalted status! (Eph. 2:6).

Do you sense "principalities and powers" at work in today's world? How would you identify them or their manifestations? How should the Christian relate to them?

3. The Armor

"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:14-17, NIV).

The belt of truth. According to Markus Barth this term could refer to any of three different types of belts: "(a) The breech-like leather apron worn by Roman soldiers to protect the lower abdomen; (b) the sword-belt which was buckled on together with the sword . . . as the decisive step in the process of preparing oneself for battle; (c) the special belt or sash designating an officer or high official."¹

The truth of the gospel does protect us from confusion and wrong "a" and it is an essential preparation for conflict "b". But Barth believes Paul has "c" in mind. In Isa. 11:5, the Branch (or Messiah) wears a belt of righteousness and faithfulness as a distinctive sign of his high office. In the Messiah's army, Paul may be saying, the insignia of supreme dignity is conferred on all.

The breastplate of righteousness. In Isaiah's prophecies, "righteousness" means the "help, salvation and peace for the downtrodden" which can only be established by the Messiah.² Paul develops this understanding of righteousness by declaring it to be God's free gift in the Messiah, Jesus, whereby he brings people into right relationship with himself by grace alone through faith alone (Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21-31; 6:23). This righteousness gives us the hope and assurance that empowers us to stand with courage. It is "an essential defense against an accusing conscience and against the slanderous attacks of the evil one, whose Hebrew name ('Satan') means 'adversary' and whose Greek title (*diablos*, 'devil') means 'slanderer.'"³

The footwear. The "readiness" or "firm footing" (NEB) that comes with the right kind of footwear is an absolute must for successful soldiers or athletes. The Christian's footwear is the gospel of peace—the good news that through Christ those who were once alienated are now reconciled. Only by sharing in this Messianic peace do we have the stability necessary to stand firm against assaults of the principalities and powers.

The shield of faith. The word Paul used for "shield" denotes the large, oblong shield that covered nearly the whole person, rather than the small, round shield. The leather covers of these were often soaked in water before battle in order to more effectively defend against arrows that had been dipped in pitch and set on fire before being shot. Zechariah prophesied a time when "the Lord will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David" (Zech. 12:8, NIV). When by faith we grasp the promises of God, his strength encircles our weakness, and the feeblest is able to withstand the devil's fiery missiles of doubt, discouragement, suf-

fering, pressure, and temptation.

The helmet of salvation. In Isa. 59:17, the "helmet of salvation" is part of the attire of the victorious Messiah who brings justice to the world. In an earlier letter to the Thessalonians, Paul called it the "helmet of the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8). Markus Barth comments that Paul most likely has a "helmet of victory" in mind, "which is more ornate than a battle helmet and demonstrated that the battle has been won: the saints are to 'take' this helmet as a gift from God. They go into battle and stand the heat of day in full confidence of the outcome, with no uncertainty in their minds; for they wear the same battle-proven helmet which God straps on his head according to the original meaning of Isa. 59:17. . . ."⁴

The sword of the Spirit. Throughout Scripture the word of God is a sword or rod of judgment—an instrument of justice (Isa. 11:4; Hos. 6:5). In the Spirit's hands it penetrates the defenses of our hearts (Heb. 4:12), compelling us to an open, direct encounter with truth. Yet God also "puts his sword into our hands, so that we may use it both in resisting temptation (as Jesus did quoting Scripture to counter the devil in the Judean wilderness) and in evangelism."⁵

In his landmark study on the "principalities and powers," Hendrik Berkhof sums up how the armor of God equips us to face the enemy:

"His [the believer's] duty is not to bring the Powers to their knees. This is Jesus Christ's own task. He has taken care of this thus far and will continue to do so.

"We are responsible for the defense, just because He takes care of the offense. . . . The figurative allusion to weapons points to this defensive role. Girdle, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword (*machaira*, the short sword) are all defensive arms. Lance, spear, bow, and arrow are not named. They are not needed; these are the weapons Christ Himself bears. Our weapon is to stay close by Him and thus to remain out of the reach of the drawing power of the Powers."⁶

How would you distinguish between the "offense" and the "defense" in our struggle against "the powers"? What constitutes each role?

1. Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), p. 767.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 796.

3. John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), p. 279.

4. Barth, p. 775.

5. Stott, p. 282.

6. Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers* tr. by John Howard Yoder (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1962), p. 52.

4. The Process (read Eph. 6:18-24)

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (6:18, NIV).

Continual communication with heaven might be called the process whereby we put on the armor of God. But not only is it a means of acquiring spiritual armor, it is a means of strengthening fellow believers. And the apostle Paul, though he at times may seem the bold and fearless champion of truth, keenly feels his vulnerability and his need of the prayers of fellow believers that he might proclaim the gospel with clarity and courage.

D.F.M.

Battling With Unseen Powers

Compiled by Margie Lee

In the Word of God are represented two contending parties that influence and control human agencies in our world. Constantly these parties are working with every human being. Those who are under God's control and who are influenced by the heavenly angels, will be able to discern the crafty workings of the unseen powers of darkness. Those who desire to be in harmony with the heavenly agencies should be intensely in earnest to do God's will. They must give no place whatever to Satan and his angels.

But unless we are constantly on guard, we shall be overcome by the enemy. Although a solemn revelation of God's will concerning us has been revealed to all, yet a knowledge of His will does not set aside the necessity of offering earnest supplications to Him for help, and of diligently seeking to cooperate with Him in answering the prayers offered. He accomplishes His purposes through human instrumentalities.¹

We must put on every piece of the armor, and then stand firm. The Lord has honored us by choosing us as His soldiers. Let us fight bravely for Him, maintaining the right in every transaction. Rectitude in all things is essential to the welfare of the soul. As you strive for the victory over your own inclinations, He will help you by His Holy Spirit to be circumspect in every action, that you may give no occasion for the enemy to speak evil of the truth. Put on as your breastplate that divinely protected righteousness which it is the privilege of all to wear. This will protect your spiritual life.²

Could human beings know the number of the evil angels, could they know of their devices and their activity, there would be far less pride and frivolity. Satan is the prince of demons. The evil angels over whom he rules do his bidding. Through them he multiplies his agencies throughout the world. He instigates all the evil that exists in our world.

But though the principalities and powers of darkness are both many in number and unceasing in activity, yet the Christian should never feel hopeless or discouraged.³

If we have on the heavenly armor, we shall find that the assaults of the enemy will not have power over us.⁴

REACT

How important is it for Christians to discern specific, direct activity of Satan and the evil angels in today's world? Is this even possible?

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Ephesians
6:10-24

"Knowledge of His will does not set aside the necessity of offering earnest supplications."

1. Manuscript 95, 1903.
2. *Youth Instructor*,
Sept. 12, 1901.
3. Manuscript 33, 1911.
4. *Review and Herald*,
May 22, 1905.

Margie Lee is a junior English major at Walla Walla College.

Rewards of Two Armies

by Ethel Trygg

EVIDENCE Key Passage: Ephesians 6:10-24

About 1600 B.C., long before King Arthur and his knights in shining armor, Greeks in southern Europe were using armor more like that described by Paul in our passage for this week.¹ Paul, of course, lived about seventeen hundred years after the introduction of this armor, and by then every detail had been worked out "scientifically" so that a soldier could "march, leap, and fight" while wearing it and go "unscathed amid a perfect shower of arrows."²

Since Paul had spent two years chained to Roman soldiers he was probably well acquainted with their equipment.

Roman soldiers were often young men from the provinces, drafted for 20-25 years. Not only were they required to render immediate and unflinching obedience or risk blows from the "vinestock"—or worse—but they also had to keep their physical skills in peak condition. They were also required to show complete loyalty to their legion, sometimes not even being allowed to marry during the whole twenty years lest that fragment their loyalties.³

Like his punishments, a soldier's rewards were many and retirement brought full Roman citizenship (if he didn't already have it)⁴ and often a government post, a grant of land, or a lump sum of money.⁵

Paul could see obvious parallels between the Roman military and the Christian army. But the Christian's rewards far surpass any hopes a Roman soldier had. Instead of mere citizenship in an empire, the Christian receives full status as prince—a child of God—not for just a few years, but eternally (1 John 3:2). If the legionary was killed in action, he lost any chance at reward. A faithful Christian killed in "action" is assured of his crown (Rev. 2:10). And while the Roman empire eventually crumbled, Christ has already won the victory that assures God's kingdom will be forever.

Above all this, the hard core of Roman ambition rested on conquest and control by inflicting pain and suffering until the soldier himself risked becoming a brutal, unfeeling, and unhappy animal.⁶ But Christianity's foundation is a loving and caring Savior who shares with his army the joy of service for others—the only true happiness—throughout eternity.

No wonder Paul, writing as a Roman prisoner repeatedly encouraged his converts, and us, to make full use of the Christian armor and "having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:13).

REACT

What specifically is required of us in the phrase, "Having done all, to stand"? Does this phrase imply that Christians are not called to wage aggressive war against evil in society?

"The Christian's
rewards far
surpass any
hopes a Roman
soldier had."

1. *Academic American Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (Danbury, Conn.: Grolier Incorporated, 1984), pp. 174, 175.
2. William Stearns Davis, *A Day in Old Rome* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1958), pp. 318, 319.
3. *Academic American Encyclopedia* vol. 2, pp. 174, 175; Davis, pp. 329, 330.
4. R. W. Moore, *The Roman Commonwealth* (London: English Universities Press, Ltd., 1953), p. 107.
5. Davis, pp. 329, 330.
6. Grant Showerman, *Rome and the Romans* (New York: The Macmillan Company 1932), p. 465.

Ethel Trygg teaches anthropology and works in research at Walla Walla College.

The Christian and the State

by Mark Hatfield

*In the analysis of many biblical scholars, the state is included among the "principalities and powers" that challenge the Christian. In the following excerpt from his book *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, Senator Mark Hatfield briefly explains why the state is a concern to Christians. He then gives New Testament-based principles for using the "armor of God" in dealing with this particular "power."*

**HOW TO
Key Passage:
Ephesians
6:10-24**

Every State has within it a demonic potential, the New Testament tells us. Further, it suggests that the nearly unavoidable temptation is for Caesar to claim that which is God's, and thereby become the instrument of Satan. Every State, pluralistic and totalitarian, faces this temptation in the glorification of its mission, its righteousness, its authority, its divine blessing, its power, and its nationalism.

Yet the State is a part of God's order. It is intended to function, in a fallen world where evil reigns, as a servant of God. But this role is only temporary and provisional and is always in danger of becoming an instrument of demonic power. We can live, however, in the hope of knowing that Christ is Lord over all. . . .

We can [now] summarize certain basic biblical principles which should guide the Christian in his or her relationship to any State. **First, there is the clear scripted admonition, mentioned often, to pray for those in authority.** Such prayer, in my view, should recognize that the rulers of this world find themselves faced, usually unconsciously, with the temptations of power resulting from the spiritual warfare raging in the world. I know such talk sounds foreign and strange to our modern, secular culture; yet, I am convinced that such biblical insight has a deep relevance to this era. Those in positions of authority need our prayers not only for wisdom in facing difficult decisions, but also so that the State may resist those cunning and persistently powerful temptations which would make it an instrument of evil, rather than let it seek its intended and humble place in the divine order of things.

With prayer goes a certain respect for those holding authority, mentioned by Paul and similarly by Peter (1 Pet. 2:17). This respect, however, is rooted in the proper and intended mandate that should be sought by those who hold earthly authority. Often, the Christian may see this mandate far more clearly than the one in authority, and hold it up with greater seriousness. Such respect in no way prohibits criticism and rebuking of those individuals in their misuse of authority. John the Baptist and Christ, as well as the prophets, give us clear examples.

Then, the Christian is to obey the laws of government, so long as this does not entail any disobedience of Christ, the Lord and King.

The principle of paying taxes is clearly accepted by the New Testament, for the government has valid and important functions to perform. However, whether specific portions of tax might be withheld from the government for activities which the Christian cannot

Mark Hatfield is a United States Senator from Oregon.

condone could still be an open question not totally answered from Scripture; either side of such an argument could offer strong points from the Bible and Church history.

Next, the Christian is called to responsible disobedience of the government if and when obedience would entail disobeying God, a principle set forth clearly by both teaching and example in the Bible. However, the Christian is still personally accountable for such actions and must willingly suffer the consequences inflicted by the State. This part of the Christian's witness is evidence of faith in the Lordship of Christ, and for the glory of the Lord.

Finally, and most importantly, the Christian community, by its very being, is called to witness to the State with prophetic power. From the Old Testament through the New, we see that God, speaking first through the prophets and then in Jesus Christ, rules over history as Lord, speaking his Word to the world. That Word shatters the myths and pretensions of earthly power, calling them to repentance, and holding forth the understanding of their true identity. This is how the Word addresses us today, in our individual hearts and in the corporate world. As we proclaim and embody its life, we inevitably witness to earthly authority—to the State. That Word may not be heard; or it may be heard, undermined and rejected, and even persecuted. Christ warned his disciples:

You will be handed over to the courts. You will be flogged in synagogues. You will be summoned to appear before governors and kings on my account to testify in their presence. But before the end the Gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. So when you are arrested and taken away, do not worry beforehand about what you will say, but when the time comes say whatever is given you to say, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:9-11).

The personal consequences of our allegiance to Christ will differ with the specific nation and historical time in which we find ourselves. But our task remains the same: to witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ, and to build his new society, his Kingdom, which takes root within his Body, the community of believers. Membership in that Body will invariably place the believer in tension with manifestations of earthly power, which make constant but fraudulent claims on the Christian's loyalty and faith. Every State, in some way, will do so. Yet we know that Christ is building his Kingdom, that we are called to be a part of it, and that in this new order, all history finds its true meaning and fulfillment.

It is not unusual, then, that we should live as a "pilgrim people," as if we are foreigners in this land, without our true and ultimate allegiance given to another Kingdom, in obedience to its sovereign Lord.

As a "peculiar people" called by God, Christians may find that the

State is so threatened by their existence that brutal persecution results. If so, we may be called to suffer and even die, always returning hatred with love, always leaving vengeance to the Lord. In other cases, the State may be more tolerant. Then the Church faces temptations of another kind, for she will find the State trying to seduce her into legitimizing and blessing its existence and its actions. The natural tendency of any State is toward idolatry and self-glorification. Believing that a State has a special calling in history, or a particular mandate of God, or embodies the hope for humankind's future all evidence the subtle power of such idolatry. The task of the Church in that case is to preach the Word, resisting all the idolatry claimed by the State, and to live out in its witness the Church's identity as first fruits of God's new creation. That never comes through accommodation to the values of a fallen world, but rather through living as "faultless children of God in a warped and crooked generation in which you shine like stars in a dark world and proffer the word of life" (Phil. 2:15-16).

John Howard Yoder provides a succinct summary of the relationship of Christians to any State when he writes: "No State can be so low on the scale of relative justice that the duty of the Christian is no longer to be subject; no State can rise so high on the scale that Christians are not called to some sort of suffering because of their refusal to agree with its self-glorification and the resultant injustices."

REACT

In your present setting, what does faithfulness to Senator Hatfield's third and fourth points entail?

Excerpted from *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* by Mark Hatfield, pp. 71-74. Copyright © 1976; used by permission of Word Books, Publisher, Waco, Texas 76796

An Armor to Surrender In

by Diane Forsyth

OPINION
Key Passage:
Ephesians
6:10-24

I had some armor once. I used it in the battle to get along with kids who pestered me. It consisted of a quote: "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words can never hurt me."

Or was that armor? Actually it was something I threw at them. More of a counterattack. That's how some people use the armor described in Ephesians 6. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is especially good for counterattacks. You call me a name, and I'll use a text on you. You say that Sunday is Sabbath, and with the sword of the Spirit I'll prove you wrong.

We *can* use that shiny armor to counterattack.

But I don't think that's what it's meant for.

Ephesians 6:11 doesn't read: "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to fling flaming darts back at the evil one." It says, "Put on the armor so you'll be able to stand."

Don't counterattack. Don't run. Just stand. Stand still! That's the hardest thing in the world to do when you're under fire. Stand still! That's the most powerful thing in the world to do when you're under fire.

When we're threatened, everything in us screams, "Get out of here" or "Mow 'em down." Fight or flight is as natural as breathing.

But God said, "Don't do either one. Stand still instead."

"That sure takes a lot of gumption," you protest.

Sure does, but that's why God gave us armor. It frees us also from the insecurity that makes us counterattack. That armor provides peace and faith so we *can* stand still.

Because we have armor, we can stand. We can refuse to fight or run. That's surrender—not surrender to the enemy, of course, but surrender to the understanding that we are not powerful enough to take on the enemy, or to tell God what to do. It's the most powerful thing we can do when we're under fire. Surrender is powerful because it neither assumes power over others, nor caters to the power of others. Surrender is a divine idea that is foreign to most of us. Why not get acquainted with surrender by considering how each part of the armor—truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God—gives you freedom to *stand*.

Diane Forsyth is an associate pastor at the Walla Walla College church.

Coming Next Quarter:

LIVING BY FAITH

Studies in Habakkuk and Hebrews

Lesson 1, (for Sabbath, April 5) - THE QUESTIONING OF FAITH

Scripture: Habakkuk 1:1-2:4

Theme: Though suffering and injustice may raise doubts and questions that are never fully resolved in this life, God's people live by their faith in him.

Lesson 2, (for Sabbath, April 12) - THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Scripture: Habakkuk 2:5-20

Theme: Though evil may appear to succeed for a time, it contains the seeds of its own destruction, and faith affirms God's ultimate control over human affairs.

Lesson 3 (for Sabbath, April 19) - THE CELEBRATION OF FAITH

Scripture: Habakkuk 3:1-19

Theme: The assurance that the God who has acted in the past on behalf of his people still goes forth to bring salvation makes life a celebration of praise to God.

Lesson 4 (for Sabbath, April 26) - REMEDY FOR FAILING FAITH

Scripture: Hebrews 2:1-4; 3:7-19; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-25, 35-39

Theme: Hebrews is a written sermon designed to revive the flagging faith of its readers by showing the supremacy of Jesus Christ and the assurance of salvation that comes through him.

Lessons 5-13 complete the study of Hebrews.

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REACHING

“Don’t just reach for the top of the coconut trees,” Pastor Paterno Diaz, president of the South Philippine Union Mission tells his people. “Reach for the stars. Even if you don’t get there, you’ll be higher than the trees.”

Diaz follows that motto in his leadership of the church in the less-developed area of his country. During the last nine years the membership of the South Philippine Union Mission has grown from 50,000 to more than 134,000; from the smallest of the three Philippine unions to the seventh largest union in the world.

Much of the population consists of unreached tribal peoples, Diaz states.

FOR THE STARS

They worship spirits and have never heard the gospel. Diaz has big plans to reach these people for Christ in 1986.

Already nearly 50 percent of his union's yearly baptisms are among tribal peoples. "They live at a subsistence level," Diaz says. "They seldom handle cash and cannot afford to build churches." Chapels, built with previous Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings, have provided a focal point, that attracted many tribal people to Jesus.

But many tribes have no Christian witness. Their villages will not hear the gospel unless laymen and workers join hands to build outpost evangelism centers. "These are simple meeting places," Diaz explains. "They are made

of native material." One of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Special Projects is to provide the tin roofs and nails so that hundreds of chapels may be built in unreached tribal villages.

And reaching for the stars, as usual, the South Philippine Union Mission aims to enter hundreds of unreached villages in the next five years. You will add momentum to the thrust of frontier mission this quarter, by supporting the World Budget Offering and planning for a special love gift on March 29.

Other projects to share from this offering are:

1. *Outpost evangelism centers, division-wide.*
2. *Men's dormitory, Philippine Union College.*
3. *New dormitory, Central Philippine Adventist College.*
4. *Office building, East Indonesia Union.*

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