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# Our Times

A FAMILY MAGAZINE FOR BETTER LIVING

RESURRECTION POWER AND GLORY



## SOMEONE CARES FOR YOU

Even if everyone else should leave you, God is always close by.

You are not alone. God's strong and loving hand is reaching down right now to grasp your weak and trembling one. He knows all about your present circumstance, and His voice is whispering, "Do not let your hearts be troubled" (John 14:1). God stands ready to comfort and strengthen you no matter what the need.

One who suffered greatly was Martha Snell Nickolson, yet in one of her poems she gratefully acknowledges God's presence:

*"Lo, I am with you always,"  
Softly the promise steals  
Like sunlight into my  
shadows  
And brightens and warms  
and heals,  
Heals my anguish of spirit  
And horror of loneliness,  
Flooding my heart's dark  
chambers,  
Words that comfort and  
bless.*

Yes, the promise of God's presence is a wonderful assurance to all who are His. He has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

### Strength for your every need

In addition to God's presence, the Bible also promises, "He gives strength

to the weary and increases the power of the weak" (Isaiah 40:29).

This is why God invites us to commit our needs into His hands. "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you" (Psalm 55:22). Not just part of your burden or some of your care, but "cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

### Light in your darkness

To countless individuals life is a dark street, a meaningless riddle. But Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, declares, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Happy indeed is the person who can say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

If circumstances around you appear dark just now, remember that "God is light; and in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

### God's gift to you

God's love is demonstrated to us in that He offers us the greatest gift possible. How wonderful that He should

offer this fallen race, separated from Him by sin, the gift of eternal life. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The Bible also tells us that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son [Jesus Christ], that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:16-18). Everyone who puts his trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour at that moment begins an eternal relationship with God.

How wonderful it is that this salvation does not depend on our own righteousness, which the Bible describes as "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6), but on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. His death paid the penalty for our sin; His resurrection made eternal life possible.

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# DISABLED—SUDDENLY!

by Cynthia Karnoscak

**The amazing stories of four people who have determined to live whole lives in spite of accidents that dealt them broken bodies**

**I**n his own words, Mervin Becker says that his life has been "tragically altered"—not once, but twice. First, by a malignant tumour found near his heart (which delayed his completion of dental school by one year); and second, by a fateful airplane crash eight years ago involving him and his wife, Judi.

The tumour was successfully treated. But the physical impairments from the plane crash—a lower back injury—left Mervin paralyzed from the waist down.

In his struggle for normalcy since the crash, Becker says his faith in God gives him assurance that he is still being "guided to a productive and fulfilled existence." But there is no sugarcoating. He admits, "Life without the use of one's legs is a giant frustration."

Suddenly disabled! Thousands each year come face-to-face with the unexpected, the unthinkable. One moment they are whole, the next moment they are not. Surviving the initial

trauma is only half the battle. How does one adjust, cope, and retrain for a new life?

What follows are glimpses of Mervin Becker and three other alumni from the Loma Linda University (LLU) School of Dentistry. Each has suffered sudden, disabling accidents. Each has been confronted with one of life's most difficult detours. Each has struggles with agonizing questions. But each has gone on to be rehabilitated.

## **Where Do I Go From Here?**

In retrospect, Mervin Becker says his biggest challenges have been accepting the delay in achieving certain goals, as well as working through the uncertainty of *how* to go about achieving them now.

A legal battle for a workmen's compensation insurance settlement took six years but ended favourably for the Beckers (who had never been able to obtain medical insurance on Mervin because of his history of cancer). The settlement made it possible to pay the \$70,000 in hospital bills and rehabilitation fees.

But the Beckers also faced the costs of remodelling Mervin's office so that he could continue to practice dentistry—from his wheelchair. Extensive remodelling had to be done at home—so extensive, in fact, that the Beckers felt it would have been easier to build a new house.

Originally, Mervin's goal had been to become a board-certified orthodontist, but the price tag—including

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**"We cannot control everything that happens to us, but we are responsible for how we react to life's circumstances."**

**—Mervin Becker**

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time, education, and relocation—was prohibitive. So Mervin took up postgraduate training in reconstructive dentistry, a field he finds fascinating and rewarding.

"It is a wonderful experience to begin with a patient's badly deteriorated teeth and end up with a beautiful smile and properly functioning dental restorations," Becker says.

Both Mervin and Judi are interested in helping other newly injured couples with their adjustments. And one thing Mervin has learned for sure: "We cannot always control everything that happens to us . . . but we are responsible for how we react to life's circumstances."

**W**hile skiing one day, dentist John Munce collided with a ponderosa pine four feet in diameter. After the accident his right hand was virtually useless; it took two steel plates and 12 screws just to help him regain slight function, but little could be done to mend nerves and muscles.

"I was sure I would never practise dentistry again," he says.

While still in the hospital, however, John received a T-shirt from an anonymous gift-giver that boldly read: "Everyone is born right-handed. Only the greatest can overcome it!"

### Learning Left-handedness

It set John to thinking. With the encouragement of

several faculty from the School of Dentistry, John decided to retrain—as a left-handed dentist!

Through therapy John switched his hand dominance from right to left. He also began strengthening his right hand, which, at best, would be only 20 per cent efficient in assisting his left hand.

With perseverance he regained his pre-accident skill level. This encouraged him to pursue yet another goal: specialty training in endodontics.

At first, the graduate programme's admissions committee at the dental school was skeptical. But John wasn't ready to take "NO" easily. The LLU Medical Centre Hand Rehabilitation Centre helped design a series of dexterity and strength tests for John to provide the committee with an accurate evaluation of his ability. The committee acquiesced.

Armed with special instruments like large-handled mirrors and ambidextrous needle holders, John entered the programme in 1986. Today he is in full-time endodontic practice in Santa Barbara, California.

What are some of the ongoing injury-related challenges? John says they include: "Preventing concern among referring dentists regarding my clinical abilities when they recognize my deficient right hand; flossing down the rubber dam (prior to root canal procedures), since my right-hand grip remains weak; and buttoning the top button of my shirts with one

hand."

Summing up things learned from the experience, John adds, "It is possible to switch hand dominance—it just takes that first step; there are many sources of help (for the disabled); and if you're going to ski in the trees, *don't catch an edge!*"

**A**t 10,000 feet, high in the San Bernardino Mountains north of Loma Linda, another adventuresome outdoorsman and dentist, Joe Murphy, had his life dramatically interrupted and permanently altered.

A 1982 LLU graduate, Joe had returned to attend the School of Dentistry's annual alumni-student convention. Lured by the mountains, he organized a small side trip, a hiking and camping excursion with a group of friends.

It was nothing complicated—just a simple fall on a patch of ice. But like John Munce's Joe's fall stopped abruptly at a large tree. The impact broke his back.

"I knew I was paralyzed," Joe says. After 18 gruelling hours and several helicopter rescue attempts, Joe was finally lifted onto a sled and carried out of the mountains to an ambulance.

Surgery and some physical therapy stabilized Murphy enough for the trip home to Texas. His 10-week rehabilitation in an Austin rehabilitation hospital was not a long process in comparison to some, but it was, Joe says, *intense*.

Because of the nature of his upper level back injury, his sense of balance was greatly impaired. At first, even to sit in a wheelchair with both arms raised to work on a patient made Joe very unstable. But he returned to a half-day office schedule after that initial 10 weeks.

"Practising dentistry, now, is very fatiguing," he says. "I have to exert a tremendous amount of energy just to maintain balance while performing (the various) procedures." To build upper-body strength, Murphy maintains a strict exercise regimen, which includes swimming six miles a week.

### Unexpected Benefit

One of the pluses Joe experienced in his rehabilitation was the relative ease with which he could adjust to practice in his private office. It was designed to be completely accessible to wheelchairs. He adds, "But it was done with the *patients* in mind." Now, the easy access enables the dentist to maneuver around the aisles and operatories freely.

Joe is back to a full-day schedule and plans to attend 40-70 hours of continuing dental education annually. Beyond that, he wants to pursue a graduate specialty in periodontics—and train for a triathlon competition!

**K**aren Vanderlaan was 17 when an automobile accident left her paralyzed below the waist. But this

spunky girl had already set her sights on a career in dental hygiene.

Shortly after her accident, Karen received her official acceptance to Loma Linda and tenaciously dedicated herself to completing prerequisite studies on the La Sierra campus.

After earning her two-year Associate in Science degree, Karen entered the LLU dental hygiene programme as its first disabled student.

Before her first classes, the faculty met with Karen to discuss any special modifications that would be necessary. Only a few adjustments proved necessary. The school relocated a hand-controlled dentist's chair exclusively for Karen's use in the hygiene clinic. And it acquired a hand-held control for a piece of equipment normally controlled by foot, which Karen would need when cleaning and polishing a patient's teeth.

These and some additional modifications contributed to Karen's confidence, as well as to the faculty's, that she would be able to perform successfully in dental school and go on to enjoy a productive, fulfilling professional career. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Dental Hygiene in 1987.

Today Karen works in two thriving practices in the inland Southern California area and admits the pace gets a little hectic at times. But, she enjoys her work and is glad to

be able to do what she likes best.

Disabled—suddenly! Each account of adversity and victory is unique. Each portrays the surprising resources of faith and determination that lie above and within us, and the human body's amazing resilience and capacity to adapt.

But transcending disabilities is more than an individual challenge. Mervin Becker's closing comments offer a sharp public reminder:

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Disabled—suddenly! Each account of adversity and victory is unique. Each portrays the surprising resources of faith and determination that lie above and within us, and the human body's amazing resilience and capacity to adapt.

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"When I talk to newly injured individuals who are trying to learn coping techniques amid a generation who still park in wheelchair accessible parking spots for 'just a minute,' I recognize the education that still needs to be done for the general public."

It is the privilege of families, friends, associates, and the public to encourage and care for those among us who are disabled. Primarily, it is our moral obligation. But in fact, the obligation is much larger. After all, we never know when we ourselves might become disabled. Suddenly. □

# "I BATTLED LOW SELF-ESTEEM"

by Marcia Garland

My pet names for myself were "jerk" and "stupid idiot."

**D**O YOU OFTEN feel you're not worth much, you can't do much, you're a failure? Is it hard to get out of bed and face the day? Are you looking for that rock to hide under and stay there? Do you feel so low you have to look up to see down? You are not alone!

I had joined the ranks of those who battle with low self-esteem. Even though I was a believer in Jesus, I was feeling totally disgusted with myself. I felt fat, ugly, and good for nothing. My prayer was "Lord, take me home with You. I can't do anything here but mess up." Sounds familiar?

But God, in His loving, gentle way, brought about changes in my life that helped me to look at myself in a different way. Miracle of miracles. I actually came to like myself and to enjoy living.

If you are battling low self-esteem, I'd like to share a few suggestions with you in the hope that they can help.

## 1. Understand that God

This is pretty basic stuff! God wants you to have an

abundant life (see John 10:10). He created you; there is not another person anywhere just like you. He gave you certain talents and abilities and wants you to receive pleasure from all of these things.

So take a moment and say, "God, thank You for loving me, for giving me abundant life, and for giving me talents and ability (even though I'm not sure what they are yet!). Reveal those things in my life that you want me to do for Your glory."

Now that a thankful Spirit is working in your life, lets move on.

## 2. Keep a journal.

Write down your dreams, fears, concerns, praises to God, and frustrations. Keep at it. Pour out your heart. As you work on your self-image, this will help you see how you've progressed in your walk with the Lord and in your life.

I wanted to write, but had not been able to further my education because of my home life. A friend who knew my desire gave me a journal and said, "write" I did. That journal has been a real boost for me.

## 3. Release your creativity!

Recently I started doing a little sewing—finishing up projects that had been left incomplete for quite some time. The more I did, the better I got. I started looking into craft magazines and getting ideas and made up enough crafts to do a holiday craft show. I even thought of original ideas to make!

I was ecstatic! I felt like the Proverbs 31 woman: "She perceiveth her merchandise is good" and sells it. What a boost to my self-image! I could make nice things, give them as gifts to people, and even sell some!

You may now sew, but there is something you *can* do to release your creativity. "Me? creative?" That's right. God has given you special abilities and wants you to use them.

You might have a musical talent. You may be able to paint (have you tried?), sew, cook, write, or work with wood. Your gift may be working with children at home or at school. But you won't know how much joy there is in using your talents

unless you try. You've got to start somewhere.

#### **4. Clean up your messes! Finish that project!**

Sometimes we get so busy doing routine things that little "clutters" gather around us. You know what I mean—the cupboard that attacks you when you open it, the three-foot stack of unread magazines that keeps toppling over, the desk piled high with papers, the closet whose door you are finding harder and harder to close.

We look at them and sigh and think, "I've got to do that." But we don't. And it gets worse. And we feel like a failure as a result.

So take that messy desk, cluttered closet, outrageous garage, and get to it. Set a goal for yourself of one clutter every two weeks. As you accomplish these tasks, you will feel better about yourself.

#### **5. Exercise! Lose Weight!**

The Word of God says, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

Gulp.

If your body is out of control, chances are you feel terrible about yourself. You may feel that it doesn't matter how much you diet, it won't do any good. Well, you're wrong.

If you want to get yourself in shape—really want it—you can do it. Start with a small goal—a loss of five pounds in a month and 10 minutes of exercise a day—and see what happens.

You will feel better about yourself. As you lose weight and firm up your body, you will have more energy to do things and, in turn, will want to keep it up. And if you exercise, you will have more energy. I know, I know, I didn't believe it either, but it's true. I tested it out myself.

I weighed 20 pounds more than I should have, but could cover it up pretty well with clothes (except, of course, during bathing-suit season). A woman at work went on this nutritious three-week diet and suggested it to me. Well, the word *diet* is definitely a four-letter word in my vocabulary, but I thought, "Three weeks, I can handle three weeks."

Well, it worked. I lost 10 pounds and was totally amazed! Then I started working out every morning with an exercise programme on TV. Lo and behold, I got thinner and, while dieting, lost another 10 pounds! Talk about a self-esteem builder! (Of course, I've still got a way to go on these thighs!)

So get off the couch and do some floor exercises, nothing drastic to start with—your body might not be able to handle it. You will find yourself feeling better about yourself and firming up.

#### **6. Quit calling yourself names.**

We mentally beat up on ourselves sometimes. My pet names for myself were "jerk" and "stupid idiot."

God says a lot of things about you in His Word, and never have I seen Him use the

words *jerk* or *stupid idiot*. He says we are "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV), "a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Satan loves it when we mentally beat up on ourselves. He will bring thoughts into our lives so that we will call ourselves names, and feel bad about ourselves.

So when the temptation comes to call yourself names, remember what God calls you in the Word of God. Say it right out loud. Stop insulting yourself.

#### **7. Confess sin!**

Unconfessed sin can get you down. Sometimes confessing a sin may mean we need to go to others and ask forgiveness. This is very hard to do, but I have found that once it's done, I feel so free and so much better about myself.

#### **8. Give thanks!**

Finally, as you do all these things, thank God for enabling you to do them as you go along. He wants your life in order. He wants you to use the talents and abilities He's given you. And He wants you to return the glory to Him.

As you do these things, you will start to peek out from under that rock. You will no longer groan upon waking, but face the day with a sense of excitement.

So get off that couch and do a few stretches. That's it. Now didn't you really want to clean out that hall closet and get it over with? You'll

probably find that small cross stitch kit tucked in there in the bottom of a bag. Save it to work on while you're watching TV tonight. Enjoy the abundant life God has given you.

Don't you feel better about yourself already?



## THE SPANKING I HAD NEVER FORGIVEN

by Aileen Andres Sox

**W**HEN I THINK of my second grade teacher, I remember that she gave me the only spanking I ever got in school.

On that day in second grade, my teacher told me I could go to the library (a couple of bookcases in the back of our room) "one more time," and then I had to stay in my seat until lunch or else she would spank me. I made my choice and returned to my desk. There I discovered that I had chosen what I thought was the most boring book in the entire room. After fidgeting a bit, I got up again and went back to the library.

She had told me she would spank me, and she did—in the cloakroom with a ping-pong paddle.

For years, each time I met my teacher, I reminded her of that spanking. I met her at camp meeting the year I was 20. When I mentioned the spanking again, she said, "Aileen, aren't you ever going

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to forgive me?"

Forgive her? I had never thought of forgiving her. I had been convinced for years that I had not deserved a spanking. Why would I think about forgiveness?

### Holding hurt

It is no news that this world is imperfect. We can be perfectly sure that we will be hurt or angered with some regularity. Sometimes we nurture these hurt feelings, bringing them out for special occasions to brood about, to share, almost to rejoice in. We want to remember and be angry, just as I wanted to remember my spanking and hold it against my teacher.

Other hurts, of course, go much deeper. An abusing spouse, a drunk driver who killed our child on the road, a business associate who stole an idea or money—all inflict wounds that maim us and seriously hamper our ability to forgive.

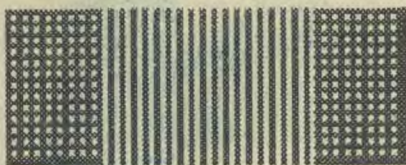
And yet we must think about forgiveness in every case. Jesus told us that if we expect to receive forgiveness from Him, we must forgive (see Matthew 6:14, 15).

We find the reason for this command in Ephesians 4:32: "Be generous to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you" (NEB). We receive the infinite mercy of God in His act of forgiveness; we show that His love and mercy have filled us when we extend forgiveness to others.

I am not naive enough to suppose that forgiving someone is easy. But when we

listen to the prompting of the Spirit and have the good sense to pray about our anger, God's forgiving peace settles in our hearts. The deeper the wounds or the more stubborn our pride, the longer we might have to pray.

Our prayer might go




something like this: "Lord, I'm angry and hurt, and frankly I feel justified in my anger. But You have asked me to forgive my enemies and do good to those who hurt me. And harbouring these feelings is destroying my peace. Please take away my anger. Help me to see this person as valuable to You, as someone You love and for whom You died."

### New perspective

From the vantage point of forgiveness, I can look back upon that day in second grade and see a tired, dedicated woman trying to teach 20 or 30 children and keep them occupied. I probably had completed my work in my usual haphazard fashion. Unable to find the book I currently was reading, because of the perpetual clutter in my desk, I no doubt had disrupted everyone in my vicinity by talking and bouncing up and down. I did need something to do, but I was wrong to conclude that disobeying would not matter because my reason was a good one.

Modern educators might question my teacher's methods of classroom control and discipline, but that is not the issue. The issue is that I must seek to understand the other person's motives or weaknesses insofar as the Spirit enables me to do so. And then, whether or not he deserves it, no matter what the mistake or the cause, I must forgive. God's plan for human harmony on this planet demands it; my need to live at peace demands it.



We can take our hurts and anger to the foot of the cross and leave them. The miracle of peace and forgiveness is there, waiting for us to claim it. 

# RESURRECTION P



# POWER AND GLORY

by David West

**I**t's Easter Sunday and I've just asked the neighbours what the resurrection means to them. They're a nice, young, two jobs, two cars, no children, professional couple in their twenties.

'Christ coming back from the dead,' said Richard, 'and a couple of days off work.'

'No real personal significance then?'

'No, not really.'

A day that changed the course of human destiny and here I am, like Richard, enjoying a day off work and writing this article. Perhaps you were one of the few who went to church this morning—and then went for a trip or caught up on some work around the house.

**'Couldn't you do something dramatic, Lord, just to remind people about your resurrection?'**

By some macabre quirk of Easter TV scheduling the series is showing the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews. Six million died in the holocaust. The stench of death almost radiates from the TV screen. A survivor is telling how a frustrated Rabbi, faced with the horrors of the gas chamber, shouted, 'God, show them your power!' But nothing happened

and he went to his death saying, 'There is no God.' What a programme for Resurrection Sunday!

**'Why don't you use your tremendous power, Lord, to intervene and help people in dreadful situations like that?'**

Yet, come to think of it, God didn't step in when His own beloved Son faced an agonizing death on the cross. Like the Rabbi in Auschwitz, Jesus felt forsaken by God. And when He was dead and buried His disciples felt as if the bottom had fallen out of their world too.

**'Lord, instead of waiting for Resurrection Sunday you could have done it dramatically from the cross. Then you could have dazzled and defeated your enemies. And your followers would have been delighted instead of depressed.'**

Perhaps God wanted to show us that He was prepared to share our human experience not only in the activities of life but also in the 'sleep of death' as Jesus called it. Jesus rested peacefully in the grave during the Sabbath waiting for the moment of resurrection. Just as we await that glorious day

when 'the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.'

Back in Old Testament times Job experienced the tragedy of losing his health, his family and his possessions. Frustrated and angry he nevertheless refused to stop trusting. 'I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.'

Like Job and Jesus we too can face suffering and even death with a faith that cannot be shaken by agony—or ecstasy. By poverty—or plenty. Tested—yes. Shaken—no!

Like the Bible characters our faith targets a God who reveals Himself not by waving a magic wand but by walking with us every step of life's way. When we focus on His friendly face we see a God who shares our joys and sorrows. Someone who created us able, like Himself, to experience a range of emotions—yet with a mind to know that His love remains constant even when our feelings fluctuate. '... for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear

what man shall do unto me.'

No wonder we sing with confidence—'Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son, endless is the victory Thou over death hast won.'

But the Bishop of Durham says it didn't really happen the way the Bible describes. Lots of ordinary folk are confused because he is supposed to be leader of those who believe in a Risen Saviour.

**'Couldn't you arrange for an independent eyewitness report to be discovered in some archaeological dig, Lord?'**

Let's think about it as human beings for a moment—if you had declared your intention to come back to life after you were buried wouldn't you make sure the reporters and TV cameras were there to record the glory of your resurrection? It would guarantee you instant fame when the world saw it on live TV and read all about it in the papers. Not to mention the power and influence you would certainly have as someone who resumed life as a real flesh and blood person and not as some ghostly apparition.

Any publicity man worth his salt could see the potential influence of a predicted resurrection taking place. Yet the only people who saw the flash of light in the early morning darkness of that first Easter Sunday were soldiers who were later bribed to silence under fear of death.

**'Lord, you seemed to miss an**

**awesome opportunity to convince the world—I wonder why you did things so quietly? A bit like your birth, come to think of it.'**

Jesus seemed to know that His disciples weren't much better than the bishop of Durham. Most of them scattered at the first hint of trouble. Later, huddled together behind locked doors, their hopes and ambitions evaporated into clouds of despair and disbelief.

If you had declared your intention to come back to life after you were buried, wouldn't you make sure that the reporters and TV cameras were on hand to record the glorious event?

And of all the people to get in touch with first! A woman with an unstable background like Mary Magdalene! Can you blame the disciples for disbelieving her amazing message? Mind you, Peter and John shot off down to the tomb to double-check. John got there first but hesitated respectfully at the entrance. Then Peter came puffing up and had the nerve to push right past John and into the grave cave. I wonder how he felt when he found it empty?

I wonder too, about the expression on Jesus' face when He looked at Peter after he had denied Jesus in His hour of greatest need and the crowing cock reminded him of his brash promises to stick with Jesus to the death? Only a look of compassion could have turned his cursing to crying and prevented another tragedy like Judas' suicide.

Imagine the nerve of that

fellow Thomas demanding to check for himself when the rest of the disciples had told him the resurrection was for real. Why didn't Jesus tear a strip off him for doubting His authority? What did Jesus mean when He said: 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed'?

Then there was Cleopas and his friend trudging dejectedly along the road to Emmaus. They must have had a really thrilling Bible study when Jesus joined them incognito. Instead of plucking out a few solid proof-texts and revealing Himself, Jesus spent about two hours going right through the Old Testament scriptures showing them how God had revealed Himself and His saving plans for all who cared enough to read His Word thoughtfully.

**'Why didn't you tell them right away that it was you, Lord? Surely you only needed to reveal yourself to them and they would have believed anything you said—without the long Bible study?'**

Was Jesus trying to show us that He wants our faith to build on an examination of His character and government as revealed all through the Bible? What a wonderful challenge and privilege to use our God-given abilities just as the noble Bereans who 'searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so' and discovered that Christ was the God of their Old Testament.

Maybe that's how we can

*Continued on p. 17*

# ONE AND MUCH MORE

by Daniel Augsburger

The Trinity may be one of the most controversial and confusing of Christian doctrines, but it assures us that God can truly relate to the endless variety of our natures and supply the multiplicity of our needs.

## FEW

Christian doctrines are as controversial as that of the Trinity. The idea of three "persons" in one God has not been easy to explain or to understand. It caused one of the most heated disagreements in the early church, and it still divides Christians. For Jews and Moslems, the very suggestion of anything other than simplicity of a single God constitutes blasphemy. A prominent clergyman stated recently that the Trinity is a confusing and misleading belief. Little wonder that many people see little relevance in the Trinity to daily life.

As difficult as it seems to be to conceive of one God composed of three "persons," most people today have little difficulty understanding that the physical world is made up, not of simply blocks of inert

matter as earlier generations commonly imagined, but of minute specks of energy called atoms. *Atom* means "that which cannot be divided." It's true we cannot break an atom into atom "crumbs" which continue to possess the characteristics of the original atom. But we can easily identify components of the atom—diversified particles that are related and attracted to each other, each with its own purpose and motion. Although atoms are truly one, they are not simple. Nuclear science has revealed the awesome power of the bond that holds this single, yet incredibly complex, system together.

Likewise, the Godhead is truly one. We cannot divide the Godhead into separate divine beings that can function independently as

gods. Polytheism assumes so, but Christianity has always denied a belief in several gods. It has asserted one God composed of three divine "persons." Our modern understanding of the physical universe should enable us to accept more readily the idea that God, the ultimate reality of the universe, is not a simple being, but a unity of "persons" each capable of individual feelings and activities, yet bonded together by love into a perfect unity.

The early followers of Christ arrived at belief in the Trinity not abstractly but historically. They had lived with one who claimed to be God and who described His relation to God as that of a Son. Shortly after the ascension of that Son, the Holy Spirit manifested His presence with stupendous power at

Jerusalem and elsewhere, as the Son had predicted. See Acts 1:4, 5. All this agreed with what they had seen at the baptism of Jesus, when the Father's voice from heaven had identified the person being baptized as the Son and the Spirit had come upon Him in the form of a dove. See Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22. So in the case of the Trinity, as in other areas, the faith of the church was grounded on the acts of God rather than on human speculations. The New Testament told of the activities of those three "persons," but it did not provide answers for the many theological questions which the deeds themselves raised.

The term "person" to describe the components of the Trinity has been especially difficult to understand. A "person" usually refers to a self distinguished sharply from another self. When Tertullian used that term in the late second century to explain the Trinity, it meant an actor's mask, the element which identified the different roles within the unity of a play. Tertullian, also a lawyer, may have been drawn to that word as well because of its judicial use for the different parties in a trial, different forces held together by a joint issue.

Through the centuries the church has struggled to insist on the unity of God, while maintaining at the same time His trinitarian dimension. The emphasis has fluctuated, however, from the unity end of the spectrum to its opposite

pluralistic extreme. The Monarchianists, a group within the early church, saw in the three "persons" of the Trinity three different manifestations of one God, just as steam, water, and ice are different forms of the same substance. For them Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were only passing aspects of one God, suited to fit certain situations such as creation, redemption, or regeneration. Others went to the opposite belief: that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are different beings who live on different planes. In some of these schemes, the Son and the Spirit had only derived existences, while the Father was underived. The Arians proclaimed that Christ is a created being (as do some today), making Him inferior to God and unable to truly reveal Him. Some argued that the Spirit is only an influence, thus placing the third person of the godhead on a different level from God.

The New Testament never questions the unity of God. Jesus proclaimed it: "The first [commandment] is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one,'" Mark 12:29. The church asserted that unity in its contacts with pagans. "We know that 'an idol has no real existence,' and that 'there is no God but one.'" 1 Corinthians 8:4. Jesus commanded to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19. But we must not overlook that fact that baptism is in the *name*, not the *names*.

The Bible ascribes to the Son and the Spirit divine

attributes. For example, the Son is creator of all things and holds all things together. See Colossians 1:15-17. He knows the thought of men. See John 2:24, 25. As the Father has life in himself, so does the Son, and worthy of the honour given the Father. See John 5:22, 23. Creative power is also attributed to the Spirit. See Job 26:13.

The New Testament gives many a trinitarian dimension to aspects of salvation. Jesus' revelation of the Father is set in a trinitarian context. "He [Jesus] whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit." John 3:34. True revelation depends, therefore, upon the joint activity of the three. Romans 8:3, 4 summarizes salvation in a trinitarian key. "God had done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." 1 Peter 1:1, 2 suggests the same pattern. "To the exiles ... chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood." "When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared," states Titus 3:4-6, "he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ Our

*Saviour.*" The saving work of one member of the godhead is always bound with the activities of the others, just as the motion of one part of a clock is always related to the motion of the whole.

As he describes Christian life, Paul uses trinitarian language: "But when the time had fully come, *God* sent forth his *Son*, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, *God* has sent the *Spirit of his Son* into our hearts." Galatians 4:4-6.

According to Ephesians 3:14-19, it is in the Trinity that we can comprehend *God's* love. "For this reason I bow my knees before the *Father*, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through *his Spirit* in the inner man, and that *Christ* may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you... may... know the love of *Christ* which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of *God*." The gift of the Spirit also involves the whole Trinity. "I [*Jesus*] will pray *the Father*, and he will give you another *Counsellor*, to be with you for ever, even the *Spirit of truth*." John 14:16, 17.

The conviction of the early church that there is one *God* composed of three "persons" is affirmed in Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body and one *Spirit*... one *Lord*, one faith, one baptism, one *God* and *Father* of us all, who is

above all and through all and in all." The divine unity is diversity of the godhead appears clearly in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. "There are varieties of gifts, but the same *Spirit*; and there are varieties of service, but the same *Lord* [a term that applies to *Jesus Christ*]; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same *God* who inspires them all in every one." Human aptitudes and endowments come from the Spirit. Forms of service are offered by the supreme Servant, *Jesus Christ*, who called others to follow Him in His life of self-denial. Practical uses and results are inspired by the *God* who rules history. The different activities of the members of the Trinity so perfectly blend together that it is truly one *God* who works.

Because of this variety within a real unity, some have taught that a *God* who is *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit* can be compared to a person who is a unity of thinking, willing, and feeling or to a person who at the same time is spouse, parent, and son. This functional differentiation has been called an economic trinity.

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**Jesus' vision of the unity of His followers came from His knowledge of the unity between Himself and the Father.**

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This concept, however, is not quite accurate, for the Bible teaches clearly that each "person" of the Godhead is conscious of and loves the other members, something that would be impossible if the different "persons" of the

Trinity referred only of the different functions of the same being. "The *Father* loves the *Son*, and shows him all that he himself is doing." John 5:20.

How far we are from the quarreling, jealous, capricious gods of the polytheistic Pantheon, the goddesses who greedily reach for the golden apple offered by *Discord* to the most beautiful and who will pursue with their rage the innocent boy who gave the apple to *Venus*, the goddess of beauty! The Christian godhead is a moral and mental unity, welded together by mutual love and common purpose.

While on earth, the *Son* was constantly linked with the other "persons" of the Trinity. He found the purpose of His activity in the *Father*. It is in the *Father* that He rested the assurance of the total success of His mission. "I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, *Father*, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made." John 17:4-5. His vision of the unity of his followers came

from His knowledge of the unity that exists between Himself and the *Father*. "Holy *Father*, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that thy may be one, even as we are one." John 17:11. From the love that binds the Trinity would

come the love that will bind the disciples, See John 17:26. Jesus assured the disciples that through the Holy Spirit His teaching mission would find completion. "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." John 16:14. The world would eventually be made aware of spiritual issues because of the continuing work of the Spirit. "When he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." John 16:8. Whatever the Son did, therefore, He did it in the setting of the Trinity.

The Trinity is the reason the apostle John can say: "God is love," rather than "God is loving" or "God has love." 1 John 4:8. "God is love" suggests that love is the very essence of His being. This means far more than saying that God has love for His children or for sinners. To *be* love requires the possibility of experiencing love fully. One may love a pet, but not in the same way that one loves

parents or a husband or a wife. Love finds its complete dimension only when it is directed toward one who is of the same essence and who can respond on an identical mental and emotional level. **The Trinity, therefore, can experience love at the highest degree possible since it is shared by three equally divine "persons."**

We may go one step further. The ground of God's existence is love, since it is love which unites the three persons and incites their activities. Just as the unity, the motion, and the power of the atom can be explained by electromagnetism, so all we know about God is best accounted for by love. Since Jesus Christ was truly God, the love that He manifested was really divine love. Thus in Him, God is fully revealed.

The doctrine of the Trinity assures us that there can be an unbelievably strong bond between God and man. The God of the Bible is a God who can be wholly Other; above

and beyond all that we can comprehend, and yet can be called Father and Brother. The Christian God is not the distant, unconcerned god of the deists nor the ever-present supreme being of the pantheists who cannot enter into a personal relationship because He is impersonal and diffused. The God who is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost has a dynamic dimension that is lost in unitarianism because a supreme being to whom no other being can truly relate (and who must therefore be absorbed in the contemplation of himself) is closer to a block of inert matter than to a source of knowledge and love.

Just as the unity and complexity of the physical atom allows a multitude of physical and chemical bonds, so the Trinity assures us that our God is a God who can relate to His creatures in the endless variety of their natures and supply the multiplicity of their needs. □





*Continued from p. 12*

actually be more blessed than Thomas.

Like Cleopas and his friend, our hearts can burn within us when we read thoughtfully through the Old Testament and discover story by story that God was actually just as loving and patient with the children of Israel in the Old Testament as He was with those motley disciples in the New. And even with us today.

That's why He could cope with the boastful promises of Peter, and still give him a look of love in spite of his denial.

Now I can begin to understand why Mary was there in the garden so early that Sunday morning. Like the others she may not have fully understood Christ's

mission. But she had learned that even someone with a reputation like hers was safe with a person like Jesus. It had been a sad Sabbath and now she was in tears as her last expression of love for Him seemed thwarted. Through the mist of her tearfulness He seemed like an ordinary gardener until she heard His voice speaking her name. How wonderful to know Jesus valued her love and trust so much that He contacted her first.

It seems as if the Risen Christ preferred people to examine the evidence individually and discover for themselves that He is a person whom they can trust. With all that divine power and authority at His disposal He

could easily have taken a short cut to convincing people. If He had used His resurrection to put on a dramatic display of divine power the world would have been forced to recognize Him as Lord. We would have had no choice. How kind of Him not to overwhelm us with miracles or power. How gracious of Him to allow us to respond to His life-giving love in our own unique and personal way. Like Mary and Peter. And Cleopas and Thomas. And me.

**'Thank you, Lord, for a resurrection that demonstrates the power of your love and the glory of your character and allows me, like Thomas, to confess you as my Lord and my God.'** □



# MISSING HEAVEN BY 18 INCHES

by Paul Empet

**The distance between your head and your heart  
can be eternal**

**D**OES THIS TITLE startle you? How can anyone get so close and yet in the end hear the Lord say, "I never knew you: depart from me" (Matthew 7:23)?

However, this will be the terrible result of many in our churches who are professing Christians, often with responsible positions, but who have only a head acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tragically enough, even teachers, preachers, and religious workers are not exempt from the possibility of this chilling indictment.

The distance between the head and the heart is 18 inches. Unfortunately, a head knowledge of Jesus Christ—fully knowing and giving mental assent to the plan of salvation, in other words—without also a heart acceptance that brings the personal relationship that the Bible demands, avails nothing to anyone.

Listen to Paul's heart cry concerning Israel as he spoke under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2).

He was speaking about misdirected efforts, energies expended in the strength of the flesh but not under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The lack of power today in many of our churches as well as the lack of power today in the lives of many professing Christians can be laid directly to this.

It is only as we see ourselves in the mirror of God's Word as without excuse and without hope, utterly lost and undone, that the truth of the Scriptures convicts us, for the Bible clearly reveals that this is how God sees us (see Romans 3:10-18, 21-23).

Then, when the wonderful truth of the gospel brings us to recognition of our own sinfulness, and in true repentance we cry out to God asking forgiveness and help, asking Him to come into our hearts, not our heads, we experience the new birth.

Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

The Bible also tells us that "he that hath the Son hath [eternal] life; and he that hath

not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:12).

Also, the Bible promises "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).

Christ wants your heart, not just your head because "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

It is vitally important that you make sure it is not just head knowledge and mental assent you have given to Jesus Christ. He needs your complete trust so that you can be truly born again.

Eighteen inches can mean eternity with Christ or an eternity without Christ. Are you sure of your personal relationship to Him? Why not settle the question in your heart once and for all right now?



# PENNY'S BEST TRICK

by Ginger Church

**M**y daddy was a minister.

One day as he came home from visiting, he took a box from the back seat of the car.

"Tommy, Kathy, Ginger, Patty. Come see what I've brought for you!"

Daddy would often surprise us with things— a bushel of apples, a watermelon. So we all came running quickly.

Penny, as we called our new puppy, was so small we could hold her right in our small hands. She was not a collie, cocker spaniel, or poodle. Daddy said she was a "mutt." But she was ours, and we loved her.

Penny grew every day. Soon we taught her to do tricks. "Shake hands, Penny." "Roll over."

She learned fast. Mamma and Daddy said she was a smart dog.

Penny was not allowed on the carpet. So we taught her to stop and lie down where it started. She could look into the dining room and living room but not come in.

One evening as we ate, Penny laid just the tip of her nose on the rug.

"Look, Mother," I said, "Look at Penny." She looked so cute that we all laughed. The next evening the tip of her nose was on the rug again. The next

night it was her nose and one paw.

"Oh, Mother," we all chorused, "she's not hurting anything."



Before long she had both paws under her head on the rug. And then—you guessed it—little by little she was inside the room.

Penny reminds me of the small seeds of sin that sneak into our lives. At first you might wait a few minutes before answering your Mother, or you are just a little cross. Each time it gets easier to disobey or to pout when things don't go your way.

The next time you are tempted by a little thing think of Penny. Big problems start from little things. □

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