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Dr. Richard I. Gregory
IFCA International
Executive Director & Voice Editor

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Rev. Steven W. Butts

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Mrs. Joy Chipchase

● [Crucified with Christ](#)

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Rev. Ralph H. Manchee

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God commanded the Prophet Isaiah to get their attention by crying loudly without restraint, and by raising his voice like a trumpet to tell them that they were transgressing and sinning.

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...if you really want to "support" their ministry, you might want to consider "giving your missionary a raise" since they probably have faced cost-of-living increases in the years they've been gone.

Mrs. Kathy Dane

● [My Faithful Companion](#)

The conscience is the moral database of the soul that recognizes the distinction between right and wrong and then speaks forth with an inner voice its unsolicited opinion.

Rev. David J. Brown

● [Laymen with a Mission](#)

The men at Mesa Hills Bible Church in Colorado Springs have a group called "Men for Missions." (Not to be confused with some large organizations that use the same name.) Encouraged by Senior Pastor, Richard Keltner, and Missions Pastor, Ray Whitlock, these men have a willingness to do manual labor for the Lord.

Mr. Allen McDermott

● [*The World's Storytellers Tell Another Story*](#)

...our children (tomorrow's future) are left with a lack of knowledge concerning God and His Word, the Bible. This leaves them and the lands with the only option to listen to the mighty "storytellers" known world wide...that storyteller is Hollywood, television and other media.

Mr. Daniel McIntosh

● [*The Discipline of Decision*](#)

I really made a haul at our local library's used book sale. Not only did I get a whole bagful for \$2.00, but one of those books was that little gem of V. Raymond Edman's, *The Disciplines of Life*: and autographed at that! Talk about being in the right place at the right time!

Rev. Raymond Shive

● [*The Precious Blood*](#)

Efforts have been repeatedly made within the Christian community to eliminate the emphasis upon "the blood of Christ." As modernism crept into the organized Church, songs extolling "the blood," were removed from hymn books. The preaching of "the shed blood of Christ" was labeled "a slaughter-house religion."

Rev. Robert Isbell

● [*What Do I Do & How's It Going?*](#)

At the time of this writing, I have been on the job as IFCA Executive Director Designate for less than three months. Many have asked me to explain what I do and how it's going.

Rev. Les Lofquist

IFCA International Executive Director Designate

● [*Reflections on Childlikeness*](#)

"To be a Child again," a sentiment reflected in a Country song, strikes an occasional chord in the heart of everyone who has assumed the responsibilities of adulthood. We all envy the simplicity of a child, such as the freedom to go outside and play!

Rev. Tim Keeley

● [*Discipline Across Congregations*](#)

Raymond had always been an active member of our church. If the church building was open, he was there. He taught Sunday school and had been a youth sponsor. He tithed faithfully, and he took notes during the sermon-even if it was dull. Yet, he had a hidden side.

Steven A. Long

FEATURES...

Chaplains' Diary

● [*God at Work at Offutt AFB & Kuwait*](#)

Chaplain Peters described in the July/August '99 issue of VOICE the ministry he has with the Flying Wing, Security Police, and personnel of Headquarters Strategic Command. He now shares the ministry he and his wife Kimberly have with individuals and couples at Offutt AFB, Nebraska and during his deployment to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia.

Chaplain, Captain Jason Peters, USAF

Our Youth

● [*What This Youth Group Really Needs Is...*](#)

He was one of the main guys in our youth group, and I noticed as the rest of the teen Sunday school class dismissed and headed off to the morning service that he had waited back for my attention. As he approached me to ask if we could talk, I noticed his eyes beginning to fill with tears.

Rev. Van Marsceau

It Feels So Right

Dr. Richard I. Gregory

Through the years I have received numerous articles contributed by men and women of our Fellowship that did not fit the themes established for the issues at hand. I have had to write back and say that I am not able to use the article right away but if the author would allow me to use it in a future issue, I would like to keep it on file. The articles in this issue of Voice represent a number of years of such gatherings. Although this issue has no central theme, it is evident that the articles reflect the varied concerns, desires and opinions of our constituency. I would like to take the freedom to join them with some observations of my own.

This is the first issue of a new century. There is some debate as to whether the new millennium starts with January 1, 2000 or January 1, 2001. Personally, I am of the opinion that the calendar we are using completes 1000 years on December 31, 2000 making the start of the new millennium January 1, 2001. But what matters my opinion. The vast majority of people have placed a great deal of significance on the year 2000 and the popular opinion is that we are beginning a new millennium on January 1. I have viewed with interest the prophetic significance imputed to the year 2000. Numerous believers have looked upon this date with a sense that it must mean something special in God's great calendar. There are those who believe that January 1, 2000 begins the seventh millennium since creation. They are not sure what this means but since the next event in God's program is the rapture of the church, they speculate that it might be of mysterious significance. Others feared that God's judgment might be manifested and the impending problem known as Y2K stirred the minds of believers to take all kinds of measures to avoid the chaos predicted. Numerous speakers both secular and religious offered Y2K Kits, sold books, tapes and videos. It was noteworthy that it was believers who bought them by the thousands and those that offered these items made merchandise of the people of God.

This reminds me of the commentary of Jesus in his parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16. He points out that "the children of this world in their generation are wiser than the children of light." It concerns me that God's children are so prone to being manipulated. They often fail to exercise discernment in carefully evaluating the claims of those who would lead them. Jesus pointed out that the crowds that followed Him did not seek him because they saw the miracles, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled. (John 6:26) They were not awed by the fact that He was God, but were drawn to Him by what He could do for them.

There are many applications to this observation. One that comes to mind right away is the reason why believers are attracted to particular churches in our day. People are manipulated by what a church offers that appeals to their particular desires. If the programming is entertaining, many of God's people are attracted. If the ministry does not make too many demands to live holily, righteously and sacrificially in the midst of our affluence, then many of God's people are attracted. If preaching of the Word is minimized, music is maximized and the length of the worship is limited, then many of God's people are attracted. The axioms of self-denial, disciplined prayer, seeking first God's Kingdom, the salvation of the lost and the elevation of a person's responsibility to be a servant rather than to be served cannot be emphasized in this atmosphere of responding to "what can this church do for me." Confrontation, let alone church discipline, is incompatible with churches that order their ministries to attract people rather than disciple and shepherd them. It is amazing to me how many of God's people are manipulated by the religious salesmen of our day who seem to play upon giving people what they desire.

Why is it that God's people often seem to be so gullible? Why is it that believers can be manipulated so easily? The Apostle Paul discusses this in his letter to the Galatian believers. In Galatians 5:17 Paul suggests that the "lust of the flesh" is manifested in "doing the things that you

would." Wuest in his translation renders this phrase "And these (the flesh and the Spirit) are entrenched in an attitude of mutual opposition to each other so that you may not do the things that you desire to do." In other words, the flesh is often manifested when one is controlled by his feelings and does the things that he likes to do. The axiom here is that you cannot trust your feelings to lead you in the path that pleases God.

Believers today are conditioned to be able to do whatever they like to do. Their likes and dislikes become the basis of their actions. If they like a particular preacher, they follow him. If they like a particular kind of music, they listen to it. If they like a particular food, they eat it. It matters not whether something is God's best; what is important to them is "Do I like it?" It reminds me of a song parody I once heard that said "It must be the will of the Lord because it seems so right to me." Since our desires are often our weaknesses, they become the vehicle of the expression of the flesh. It is obvious that our enemy would use our propensity to act upon or desires to manipulate us into doing his will. Paul encouraged Timothy to gently seek to help believers to recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who captivates them into doing his will (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Discernment comes as a result of walking in the Spirit. It is the characteristic of one who not only is filled with the Word of God but is also filled with the Spirit. Carnality always emphasizes the senses. When one is carnal he is controlled by his desires and is manipulated by his feelings. The Corinthian believers were following men. Some liked Paul, some liked Apollos. The result of their preference was envy, strife and division. They were following their feelings. To some, Paul was their kind of man. To others, Apollos was more to their liking. The result was that the enemy manipulated them and the flesh was manifested in yielding to their feelings. Division was the natural consequence. The moral is plain. Do not trust your feelings. Do not be controlled by doing what you feel like doing or what you like to do. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Seek holiness and a life of spiritual discipline. Submit yourselves under the mighty hand of God and HE will exalt you in his time. Prioritize obedience and through this you will resist the devil and he will flee from you. Remember "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

Seeker Friendly Services

Matters of Faith

Steven W. Butts

Is your church growing? If not, a new trend may be the solution-Seeker Friendly Services. Church growth experts offer yet another way to fill those empty pews. This time, however, the focus is on reaching church dropouts suffering from a case of religious boredom. In seeker services those disillusioned by traditional religion or sick of the liturgy are offered church that doesn't feel like "church." These services are typically contemporary, non-threatening, and informal. The gospel is offered softly; worshipers drop by for a chat with the pastor. Each visitor may remain anonymous as long as he or she desires. One leader of the trend says, "We don't ask seekers to sign anything, say anything, give anything or do anything."

In some places seeker services have drawn large crowds of non-churched people. However, a few churches using these methods acknowledge the difficulty of moving seekers beyond the seeker levels. Calls for commitment and willingness to serve are only answered by a small percentage, a dilemma faced by traditional churches as well. Jesus' demands of self-denial, daily cross-bearing, and laying up treasure in heaven instead of on earth hardly fit with the soft-sell approach used to attract "seekers." Moving seekers to such commitment is as challenging as securing committed Sunday school teachers in traditional churches.

One writer observes, "The real irony is that we have assumed that growing church membership means that the ranks of the Christian army are growing whereas the number of combat troops is in fact shrinking. Churches have become hospitals where sin-sick souls are given aspirin and entertainment to distract them from the diseases of their souls. God forgive us; we are more concerned with numbers than with holiness. The Church's growth is largely a cancerous growth, and we do not even know it."

I have often wondered how a church service for seekers would use the Bible verse that says, "No man seeks after God" (Rom. 3:10). Those considering or involved with "seeker" services should reflect on a distinction made centuries ago by St. Thomas Aquinas. "Aquinas said that we confuse two similar yet different human actions. We see people searching desperately for peace of mind, relief from guilt, meaning and purpose to their lives, and loving acceptance. We know that ultimately these things can only be found in God. Therefore, we conclude that since people are seeking these things they must be seeking after God. People do not seek God. They seek after the benefits that only God can give them. The sin of fallen man is this: Man seeks the benefits of God while at the same time fleeing from God himself. We are, by nature, fugitives" (Chosen by God, by R.C.Sproul).

According to the New Testament, people do not seek God unless his Spirit works in their hearts. Jesus told us what kind of inner work the Spirit would accomplish. He said the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment-three unlikely themes for seeker services.

Rev. Steven Butts is pastor of Millersville Bible Church in Millersville, PA. In addition to his pastoral duties, he carries on an extensive student ministry at Millersville University, writes a monthly religion column in the Lancaster Sunday News, hosts a weekly radio program and writes the monthly Bible Study for the Songtime USA radio program.

The Broken Cow

Joy Chipchase

"From the grandchildren." It was addressed to me and it was in Nancy's, my daughter-in-law's handwriting! My fingers couldn't get the package opened fast enough! Oh, maybe they had been to a fun day at a yard sale...6 beautiful country ceramic animal buttons and one black and white cow broach. Nancy knew I liked country things and especially cows. A feeling of acceptance filled my heart. It wasn't my birthday or any other special occasion...They just thought of me. How precious.

I decided no ordinary project would be assigned to those buttons. And the PIN...I would cherish it forever.

That's why it was tears that filled my eyes just a few short weeks later. There is a young lady in our church who struggles with loneliness. She does such nice things for me at Christmas and I knew she ALSO loved cows. I weighed the sacrifice it would be for me to part with that cow pin...but in the end I decided to bring it to her on January 1st as a blessing to start the new year. I walked into my husband's study and promptly dropped it. It was in two pieces. Now the deed was lost. My heart was broken, too. What a waste! If I could glue it, I would have to tell her what had happened...and maybe she would feel she was only worthy of BROKEN things...or worse yet she might think I didn't intend to give it to her at all until it WAS broken.

Then I began to reflect on the sacrifice that God the Father gave to me, a starved-for-acceptance, unworthy person. How very much it cost the Father to send His Son and then watch Him broken on the cross for unworthy sinners. The heavenly Father knew His gift would not be cherished by all those for whom it was intended. But He gave it anyway. Some would believe Him and cherish His gift and I was one who did.

I thought a lot about that. It gave me courage. "Father," I prayed, "I need the BEST SuperGlue job possible!"

Joy Chipchase was a pastor's wife for 41 years, mother of three sons, conference and banquet speaker, soloist, and has taught in three Bible institutes and colleges, and three Christian high schools. She has earned a B.A. degree in Christian Education and an A.A. in general education. Joy has served as National Women's President of IFCA for three years and presently ministers with her husband, Dr. Elwood Chipchase, President of Calvary Bible College and Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri.

Crucified with Christ

Ralph H. Manchee

In Galatians 2:20 we read, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

If we are to claim this truth for ourselves, we need to consider what it means to be crucified with Christ. From the seven statements our Lord made from the cross, we can find some of the meaning of being crucified with Him.

Forgiveness

"Father, forgive them...." This is not the response of the self-life. The "I" wants retaliation, get even, not forgiving those who perpetrate the wrong upon us. But our Lord taught that we are to forgive those who wrong us. When Peter asked how many times shall I forgive my brother who has wronged me, seven times? Our Lord answered seventy times seven. He didn't mean we were to keep count and after 490 times we shouldn't forgive anymore. We are to do as our Lord does to us, forgive and forget. When God forgives He forgets. He remembers our sins no more. God has put our sins behind His back, and He never turns back to look at them. He blots out our sins, as the winds blot out the fog. He has placed our sins under the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our Lord taught us in the model prayer that He gave us, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors'. If we expect forgiveness, we must be forgiving. Forgiveness is to be a mark of the believer in Jesus Christ.

Fellowship

"Today, shalt thou be with Me in paradise." These words spoken to a criminal, speak to us, that we must also welcome into our fellowship those with a past, that may not seem to be the person we would choose to be a part of our fellowship. Belief in the saving work of the Saviour is the requirement for admission to Christ's family. When the Philippian jailor asked Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved, Paul answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." In the first chapter of John's gospel we read, "but, as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God."

The fellowship of believers is not dependent upon their past, but upon their relationship to Jesus Christ by faith in Him. There are degrees of growth in the believers, and the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives to bring us into conformity with our blessed Saviour; but remember He is still working on us, we are not conformed to His likeness. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul tells us, "we shall all be changed." At the rapture God will complete the work of conforming us to the likeness of His dear Son. We shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, what a day that will be. We need to be able to say to that sinner who trusts the Lord, welcome into the family of God.

Filial Love

"Behold, thy son; behold thy mother." Even as our Lord hung upon that cross, he had a concern for those He loved. As He hung there seeing His mother and John, the disciple that was so close to Him, He gave the care of His mother into the hands of John, who took her from that hour into his own care. James tells us in his epistle that "pure religion and undefiled is to visit the orphans and widows in their trouble." Our Lord's command to His followers, that ye love one another. Brotherly love is to be one of the marks of the Christian. 1 Corinthians 13 gives us a picture of Christian love.

Forsaken

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" When Jesus was bearing our sins upon that cross, the Father could not look upon sin. For Christ was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God through Him.

Because He was forsaken, we shall not be forsaken. Because He bore our sins on the tree, we shall never know the agony of being forsaken by God. When we take a stand for our Lord, the world may forsake us, but we will not be forsaken by God. Those who allow the Holy Spirit to direct their lives have the promise of Hebrews 13:5, "He will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Our Lord told His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations and He would be with them unto the end or consummation of the age. He was forsaken that we might never be forsaken by God.

Fulfillment

"I thirst." In Psalm 69:21 we read, **"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."** His thirst on the cross was the fulfillment of the Scriptures. It also speaks of His humanity, for He was the Eternal Word made flesh. John 19:28 tells us, **"Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, 'I thirst.'"**

As believers we need to thirst also; in the beatitudes in Matthew 5:6 we are told, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Every believer should have a genuine thirst for the things of God; and when we have this thirst, we have the promise from God that we shall be filled. This too is the fulfillment of God's Word.

Finished Work

"It is finished." The work that our Lord came to earth to do has been completed. He came to do the Father's will. As a child of twelve in the temple, He had asked his parents, **"Wist ye not, that I must be about My Father's business?"** He had left heaven to take upon Himself a human body and being found in fashion as a man, He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He, who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God through Him. He was faithful in doing the work the Father had sent Him into the world to do; as the Father sent Him into the world, so has He sent us, who are His followers into the world with a job to do. **"Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son (our Lord Jesus Christ) and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you."** He finished His work; it is our responsibility to complete the task He has given us to do!

Future Secure

"Into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Having completed the work He had come to earth to do, He commended His spirit into the hands of the Father. While it looked as if the enemies of our Lord had won a victory as He hung on the cross, He was in complete control. In commending His spirit unto the Father, He was restored to the glory that was His with the Father before He came to redeem lost mankind.

As believers, we too can know the security of commending our lives into the hands of our Lord and our Heavenly Father. We are in the hands from which we cannot be plucked. John 10:28,29 says, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

The Psalmist had this assurance as in the 23rd Psalm we read, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Ralph H. Manchee is a retired pastor living in Oak Bend Community in Ocala, Florida. He served on and was chairman of the IFCA International Youth Committee and pastored churches in Kansas, Illinois and Missouri. He also served in the Kansas, Greater St. Louis and Central Illinois IFCA International Regionals. Ralph Manchee directed youth and junior camps in Kansas (15 years) and Central Illinois (7 years). He was also a radio announcer in Asbury Park, NJ, Chicago and Peoria, IL.

Words are Not Enough

Dr. Robert W. Provost D.D.

Cry loudly, do not hold back; Raise your voice like a trumpet, And declare to My people their transgression, And to the house of Jacob their sins (Isaiah 58:1).

In the verses that follow, the Prophet Isaiah goes on to report that God's people in the house of Jacob were seeking Him daily, and delighting to know His ways...as if they had done righteousness. As if they had not, in fact, forsaken the ordinances of their God, they were asking Him for just decisions and expecting His favor. They were amazingly oblivious to their sin.

Into this setting, God commanded the Prophet Isaiah to get their attention by crying loudly without restraint, and by raising his voice like a trumpet to tell them that they were transgressing and sinning. In God's eyes, their fasting was less than sincere. They had developed ways to avoid doing without on fast days. And, on fast days they had been abusing their workers and fighting with one another.

At the same time, they were careful to keep up the appearance of humbling themselves and fasting. They bowed their heads like a reed and spread out sackcloth and ashes as a bed. God was appalled that they would call their charade a fast and consider it a day acceptable to Him. Their worship did not flow from hearts devoted to God, but was merely external religious exercise for all to see.

And yet, they were unaware of their sin. They had totally deceived themselves. They were so confident of their righteousness that they were delighting in the nearness of God. They were so proud of their obedience that they were questioning the fairness of God and demanding His proper reward.

God called upon His prophet Isaiah to awaken them from their deception. He wanted them to repent of their sins and begin to worship in a manner which would be pleasing to Him. He described deeds of goodness to others that would flow from hearts truly devoted to Him.

He wanted them to demonstrate their love for their neighbors by loosening the bonds of wickedness, by undoing the bands of the yoke, by letting the oppressed go free, and by breaking every yoke. He wanted them to divide their bread with the hungry, to bring the homeless poor into their homes, to provide clothing for the naked, and to be careful not to avoid the needs of others. Then God promised many great and specific blessings to those who would worship Him by serving others and meeting their needs (Isaiah 58:8-12).

According to David

One who cares for the poor will be greatly blessed by God. In Psalm 41:1-3, God promises that the Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble, protect him, and keep him alive; that he shall be called blessed upon the earth, that he shall not be given over to the desires of his enemies, that the Lord will sustain him upon his sickbed, and that in his illness God will restore him to health. In Psalm 112:9, David writes that one who gives freely to the poor, God will bless by having his righteousness endure forever, and by exalting his horn in honor.

According to Solomon

God has such a great interest in the poor that He has not only commanded us to help them, but He has given us many promises to encourage our obedience. He who despises his neighbor sins, but happy is he who is gracious to the poor (Prov. 14:21). He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him (Prov. 14:31). He who is gracious to a

poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed (Prov. 19:17). He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry and not be answered (Prov. 21:13). He who is generous will be blessed, for he gives some of his food to the poor (Prov. 22:9). He who gives to the poor will never want, (Prov. 28:27).

According to Jesus

To the rich young ruler, Jesus said, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." (Matthew 19:21) But perhaps nowhere in Scripture is the importance of ministering to those in need more profoundly stated than when Jesus describes the coming sheep and goat judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. Here He states that how a person treats the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, and the prisoner, is how that same person treats Him.

According to James

That our words must be backed up by our deeds is strongly stated by the Apostle James. "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." (James 2:15-17)

According to Paul

In his epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul summed it all up, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10) He was known for seizing opportunities. God's priorities were his priorities. His words were backed up by his deeds. He could write, "For me to live is Christ..." (Philippians 1:21)

The words of Isaiah, David, Solomon, Jesus, James, and Paul, of course, all have one enormous thing in common. These words are all the very words of God, Himself, to us. They force us to take a hard look at our lives. As God considered the worship and fasting of the House of Jacob, He is looking upon our worship and our obedience today. Words are not enough!

In September 1994, Dr. Robert W. Provost assumed the presidency of Slavic Gospel Association at a critical time in the life of the Church in the former Soviet Union. As the Iron Curtain was falling, he initiated and developed ministries in Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Russia and Ukraine. He has served as European director for SEND International, as executive vice president of The Master's College and Seminary, and as the senior associate pastor of The Chapel in University Park, Akron, Ohio. Dr. Provost received a B.A. in Russian from Syracuse University in 1963, a masters of divinity from Grace Theological Seminary in 1977, and an honorary doctorate of divinity from The Master's College in 1988.

Thoughts from Kathy

Kathy Dane

"The next time you get a raise, how about putting some of it in the Samaritan's Purse?"

Twenty years ago, you promised Jim and Suzy Missionary that you would support their ministry in Africa with \$25.00 a month. You've been faithful in fulfilling that pledge every month, with no misses, even when you had unexpected bills. But if you really want to "support" their ministry, you might want to consider "giving your missionary a raise" since they probably have faced cost-of-living increases in the years they've been gone.

You and I have gotten raises, cost-of-living increases, promotions, extra pay for longevity, etc., for the past twenty years. Have we been passing some of this financial blessing on to our missionaries, who have been serving in the same country and mission for years, learning new skills, taking on added leadership? If not, maybe now is the time to look at your giving and see where you can "give a raise" to each worker you support.

The next time you see an increase in your paycheck, why not pass some of that on to someone in home or foreign missions who may not have had a raise in twenty years!

One other way to save you and the mission agencies money is to send one check a couple of times a year, rather than a small check every month to several agencies. For example, instead of writing ten \$25 checks to ten groups every month, send all \$250 to one mission each month. You use only one check, one envelope and one stamp, and the mission sends you one receipt yearly, saving on paper and mailing expenses.

The Bible says that God loves a cheerful giver. And He especially loves those who put some thought and planning into their giving so they can use more effectively the wealth, great or small, He has entrusted to them.

Kathy Dane is the wife of retired Air Force Chaplain Warren Dane, Director of Chaplaincy for IFCA International and So. Calif. Regional Representative. They are celebrating their 38th anniversary this year. She attended BIOLA University where she earned a Bachelor of Music degree, and did studies at Alabama State University and the University of Illinois. The Danes attend Cornerstone Fellowship Bible Church in Riverside, where Kathy directs the adult and children's choirs and is one of the teachers for the women's program.

MY FAITHFUL COMPANION

Thoughts on the Conscience

David J. Brown

The conscience is the moral database of the soul that recognizes the distinction between right and wrong and then speaks forth with an inner voice its unsolicited opinion. Thus, depending on the nature of our conduct, the conscience is both friend and foe, accusing or else excusing us. We do well to ponder every so often the nature and beginnings of this little friend, so that we may nurture, protect and train it to be a valuable companion.

The Beginning of the Conscience

As with most doctrines of the Bible, we find the first information on the conscience in the book of Genesis. After Eve had somewhat imperfectly rehearsed the Lord's command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Satan began to question and deceive. "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

Was Satan lying? No. After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, "the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil' (Genesis 3:22)." God confirmed that indeed man had become like God in the sense that he knew good and evil. What Satan didn't tell Eve (as the master of not telling the downside) was that unlike God, they could not resist the force of evil which, after they ate of the fruit, came and infected their bodies and souls and killed their spirits.

Although pervaded by the evil force called sin, man now had a knowledge of good and evil; he was innately able to differentiate between good and evil.

This code of right and wrong in the heart of man is what is known as the conscience.

The Nature of the Conscience

The Genesis narrative then describes the first feelings of shame and embarrassment. "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves coverings" (Genesis 3:7). Who told Adam and Eve that they were naked?

Did God tell them? No. Did He also tell them that nakedness was shameful? No. Amid the new depravity of their sinful hearts, they now had an internal code of ethics and morality; laws of right and wrong were written into their conscience. This code or law is known in philosophical writing as "Natural Law" - not the "laws of nature" which deal with one animal eating another, or weather patterns, or the forces of gravity and centrifuge. Natural law is the moral code placed into the heart of man after the fall giving him an innate sense of right and wrong, good and evil.

The Apostle Paul was convinced of the existence and importance of natural law. In Romans 2:14-15, Paul asserts: "...For when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them." Paul here goes so far as to argue that the law in men's hearts is so evident that it gives God a sufficient basis to hold them accountable for sins at the final judgment.

They will not be able to plead that they didn't have the Mosaic Law and thus didn't know.

The Dispensation of the Conscience

Many theologians refer to the first dispensation after the fall of man as the Age of Conscience. Why? There is little evidence in Scripture of any instruction that God gave to man after the fall regarding personal conduct, civil law or ceremonial law. We do know from Hebrews 11:4 that Abel offered up a sacrifice by faith (i.e., in response to God's revelation on sacrifices). But basically, God let the first couple and their descendants live with each other and otherwise aim to please Him based only upon the dictates of their own consciences.

In a few short years, the conscience proved to be merely an ignored advisor.

Cain murdered Abel. Although it would be 1500 years until the death penalty was mandated by God in Genesis 9:6, Cain's conscience taught him that the natural penalty for the malicious slaying of a human being was death. "Anyone who finds me will kill me," he told God as he begged for mercy in Genesis 4:14.

In the years that followed, mankind failed miserably to govern himself or to serve God, and thus, God gave more revelation after the Flood and eventually gave to Israel in His own words a detailed code of right and wrong. However, the civil and criminal code of the Mosaic Law was nothing new to mankind according to what Paul says in Romans 2, but was largely a written version of the law already written in people's hearts.

The Laws of Conscience

The Bible gives us insight into natural law by mentioning things that "by nature" are wrong. Public nakedness is wrong. We see this in Genesis 3:7 where not a word was said, but Adam and Eve felt a sense of shame. Homosexuality, by nature, is wrong. Paul said in Romans 1:26,27 that wicked men and women exchanged the natural use of their bodies for what was against nature. I Corinthians 11:14 states that nature itself tells us that it is a shame for a man to have long hair.

John Locke, the great 17th century philosopher and writer, in his Second Treatise on Civil Government, argued from the books of Genesis, Exodus and Romans that God has given to men the inalienable rights of life, liberty and property. We have convictions in our consciences which are the underpinning of law in western culture - that a person cannot be deprived of life, liberty or property without due (proper) process of law. To kill someone while not acting in self-defense, to strike or restrain a person, or to take someone's property or money is wrong, whether or not there is a written law against it, unless that person is being punished by a proper authority after the proper process of law has been carried out.

Our legal system tacitly confesses to the existence of natural law. There are two basic divisions in criminal law: crimes which are malum in se-actions which in and of themselves are universally held by all mankind as evil and wrong (such as theft, rape, murder, etc.), and crimes which are malum prohibitum - actions which are only wrong because the authority says they are wrong (such as driving 70 mph in a 55 zone - there is nothing inherently wrong with driving at 70 mph). Malum in se-crimes are a reflection of the natural law written in the hearts of all men and have therefore been codified in state and federal criminal statutes.

The Cleansing of the Conscience

Paul said that he wanted to always maintain a conscience without offense toward God and men (Acts 24:16). There are several very important reasons for wanting to remain sensitive to a clean conscience.

A clean conscience is critical for worshipping the Lord, properly understanding His Word and serving our fellow believers. Paul's building of these principles into his first letter to Timothy is fascinating.

He begins:

"Now the purpose of the commandment [of all true religious teaching] is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith" (ITimothy 1:5). He then warns young pastor Timothy: "Wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck" (1:19). Further, he requires that church leaders in particular must be those "holding [as in a cup or vessel] the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience" (3:9). Those who crack the vessel of a pure conscience by sinning and failing to confess and forsake that sin become unable to hold the faith (doctrinal purity) and will eventually suffer the shipwreck of apostasy or moral impropriety. The false teachers in the latter times of the church "will depart from the faith . . . having their consciences seared with a hot iron" (4:1,2). Thus, doctrinal accuracy is inextricably intertwined with a pure conscience.

The writer of Hebrews adds that we should draw near to God "with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22). Confession - saying to God with a contrite heart what your conscience has already been whispering to you - brings the cleansing of the conscience (I John 1:9).

Resolving to maintain a clean conscience before God and men also gives us a counter-rationale for obedience to authorities. Paul mentions in Romans 13:5 that we are to obey government authorities, not just because we'll get in trouble if we don't ("for wrath's sake"), but because of our consciences.

In the employment context, Peter mentions that we can feel commended by God even if, for conscience sake, we suffer wrongfully (I Peter 2:19, 3:16).

Maintaining a clean conscience also compels us to guard the consciences of others, and especially those who are younger or weaker in the faith. "It is good neither to eat meat nor to drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles [he joins you and disregards his conscience], or is offended [his conscience tells him that you are doing wrong] or is made weak [he sees your conduct as a believer and is now uncertain about which is right or wrong]" (Romans 14:21). That which is done by faith is done with confidence, not with a doubting conscience (verses 22 and 23).

The Schooling of the Conscience

There is one caveat to those who would now tenaciously commit to follow every dictate of their conscience. The conscience needs continual retraining.

Although the foundation of the conscience is natural law, over time it also becomes home to the teachings, fears, prejudices, ruts and cultural vices that we and our family, friends and acquaintances have developed over the years.

Through a careful and thorough study of the Word of God over time, we must retrain our conscience to affirm only those standards that will enable us to worship God more perfectly, understand His Word more correctly and serve our fellow man more fully. We must shed the needless constraints. Needless guilt is a cruel taskmaster. We need to have our consciences purged from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews. 9:14).

The Spirit and the Conscience

Our conscience speaks with the inner voice of our mind, not some other person's voice such as Jiminy Cricket of Pinocchio fame. The Holy Spirit resides within the believer and also

communicates (bears witness) with us through our mind's voice, letting us know that we are His children (Romans 8:16), comforting us (Acts 9:31), guiding us into all truth, etc. (John 14:26, 16:13).

Maturing believers must progressively learn to differentiate between the prompting of the conscience and the prompting of the Holy Spirit speaking through the conscience. The conscience can bring feelings of guilt about one or many things, feelings which Paul calls "accusations," but the Spirit brings conviction about one thing at a time and encourages the believer to positively respond. If a believer sets a pattern of disobeying the inner voice of the conscience, not only will he be condemned by his conscience, but he might establish a more dangerous practice of disobeying the prompting of the Spirit of God.

Fortunately, the fruit of the tree in the garden did not give the knowledge of evil only; the human race would have ended quickly in a murder/suicide. Even in the fall, we experienced God's mercy - an inner witness of both good and God. May we each commit to nurture, protect, train and, if need be, restore our conscience so that it may be a faithful, valuable and Spirit-led companion.

***All Scripture quotations from the NKJV.**

David J. Brown serves as Area Director for Europe with Biblical Ministries Worldwide. He was a litigation attorney in the Philadelphia area for seven years, and then served as a church planter with BMW near Johannesburg, South Africa.

LAYMEN WITH A MISSION

Doing Manual Labor for God

by Allen McDermott

The men at Mesa Hills Bible Church in Colorado Springs have a group called "Men for Missions." (Not to be confused with some large organizations that use the same name.) Encouraged by Senior Pastor, Richard Keltner, and Missions Pastor, Ray Whitlock, these men have a willingness to do manual labor for the Lord. They donate their time, pay their own expenses, and use their hands and their experience to do building or remodeling projects for Christian organizations. Others in the church get involved by prayer support and by contributing to the cost of building materials.

Work done in April of 1999 was an example of one of their projects as ten men and four teenagers contributed labor to a modern church building being constructed in Delicias, Mexico. For a little over one week, they assisted Biblical Ministries Worldwide church planters, Larry and Lilia Baird. The Bairds gladly opened their home for meals and sleeping quarters with many of the men willingly sleeping on the floor.

Some of the men were retirees with flexible schedules and others took vacation time for the trip. Among the young men were those who were home schooled and able to take time off. The group included professional carpenters, a plumber, a welder, a sheet rock installer, and an electrician as well as others with strong backs and a willingness to attempt any job. The different trades cooperated so well that in the short time available, a significant amount of work was accomplished. Most of the walls had previously been constructed, but the Men for Missions workers added more walls, did the electrical wiring for the downstairs, installed the pipes and fixtures for two bathrooms, constructed and installed steel grills for door and window guards, and did concrete work.

Besides great fellowship while traveling in the van and during evening devotion times, the men got a firsthand look at a mission field. They had fellowship with local believers in church services and also were invited to share a meal with men from one of the churches. This left a lasting impression on all of them including the young men, who are possible future missionaries.

In 1998, Men for Missions participated in projects closer to home such as the construction of a new children's home and the remodeling of buildings at a Bible institute. Some men join one project and others join another, depending on how the schedules work out. Even pastors sometimes get involved! All receive a blessing as the building projects free Christian workers to continue their ministries with less cost and fewer manual tasks.

The men of Mesa Hills Bible Church also maintain a listing of skills and experiences represented in the congregation. This provides possible resources when a repair job comes along or when a widow or handicapped person needs some assistance.

Allen McDermott is a lay member of IFCA International and serves as treasurer of the Rocky Mountain Regional as well as missions treasurer at Mesa Hills Bible Church. He and his wife also operate Peaceful Pines which is a missionary retreat advertised in Voice.

The World's Story Tellers Tell Another Story Which "Flood's" the Earth With Lies and Deceit!

Daniel McIntosh

Luke 17:26-27, "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Cf. Matthew 24:37-38).

A little over 4000 years ago a great destruction covered the earth. God had destroyed all (land and air-based) life on earth except those saved with in the ark.

From our youth up we have heard the Bible stories over and over. They have become a major part of our heritage and history. But today many parents no longer tell or share the information given to us from within God's Word, the Holy Bible. As a result, our children (tomorrow's future) are left with a lack of knowledge concerning God and His Word, the Bible. This leaves them and the lands with the only option to listen to the mighty "storytellers" known world wide...that storyteller is Hollywood, television and other media.

The majority of America watches T.V. way too much. Should the airwaves be banned for even a week, many people would not know what to do, or how to live with themselves.

On May 2 and 3, the storyteller shared with us Hollywood's version of "Noah and the Ark." Within that filming many terrible lies were blasphemously shared. The beginning of the story, as written by Peter Barnes, stated this comment: "For dramatic effects, we have taken dramatic license with some of the events of the mighty epic of Noah and the flood...."

"Dramatic license...." Why don't they just come right out and say that they took the liberty to discard the truth and abuse the Word of God as they saw fit!

Viewing this apostasy, there was not more than thirty seconds being aired by which another lie was being shared with the public. If you had the opportunity to monitor this program, how many things were you able to pick out which were in terrible error of the scriptures? Here is just a handful of the things I noticed:

Although the story starts out displaying the verse Genesis 6:13, "*And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth,*" the plot begins in the time frame or story of (Sodom and) Gomorrah. Noah appeared to be living the life of Abraham, who of course lived after the flood and was born shortly before Noah died. Noah's "home town" (in this script) was the village of Gomorrah. And the "terrible sin" of that location was not that of homosexuality and immorality, but of the wickedness of war, fighting, and hatred, which is how the media used Genesis 6:13, obviously out of context. Even though this is a gross problem in presenting God's Word, Hollywood casually overlooked the sin of sexual immorality and problem of Sodom and Gomorrah, either with people of the same gender and/or with others outside the marriage bed. But wait, they didn't leave out sexual immorality, they gave that part of the story and script to Shem, Ham, and Japheth, as we will later see.

Genesis 13:10, 12-13 "*And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. . . Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.*"

Genesis 19:4-5, "But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men [angels] which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them."

Genesis 19:24, "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;"

The "men" of Sodom wanted to have sexual relations with the angels who came appearing to Lot in the form of men. Hollywood obviously did not want to portray this aspect of the scriptures since this sexual immorality is widely accepted and embraced in the modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah known as San Francisco and Hollywood.

While living in Gomorrah, Noah hears the voice of "God" speaking to him, and only Noah is able to hear this voice. While the story line easily explained away that "all voice was created by God" the impression given here is not that of God speaking to Noah, but of a "New Age" impression where God is in us and we can hear Him if we only listen...an internal God coming from within us, not an external God who comes to dwell within the lives of His believers.

During this time the movie depicts Noah appearing to be of a young age, about 40-50 years of age. While living in this Gomorrah, Noah and his wife Naamah already have their three sons. Whereas Noah was much older when his sons were born:

Genesis 5:32, "And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth."

The scriptures never reveal to us the name of Noah's wife, yet the storytellers inform us she was called Naamah. Naamah was daughter of Lamech. Lamech is also the name of Noah's father's (two different "Lamechs." Naamah's from the lineage of Cain, and Noah's from the genealogy of Seth). It appears that Hollywood is "trying" to tell us, or imply, that Noah was married to his sister, just like Abraham was married to his half sister, Sarah. And why not, since Noah was playing the role of Abraham at the beginning of the show? But scripture never reveals to us the name of "Mrs. Noah;" in fact the only reference we have to her are the words "his wife" (Genesis 7:7).

Genesis 4:17-19, 22, "And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah...And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubalcain was Naamah."

Genesis 5:1-29 shows the family tree from Adam, through Seth, to Lamech, the father of Noah.

The sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) were not only placed in the movie with a younger father than the Word of God reveals, but was also placed in the script with much passion and lust. They could not keep their eyes off the female. They were placed with more "sexual immorality" in the script than the entire cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Peter Barnes, the writer of this script had God finish building the ark. Maybe Mr. Barnes was not as patient as God is to see the task finished, so he had God hurry up and finish the task faster than history reveals. Then the televised play had rain begin to fall before all the animals were even in the boat. The door was closed manually by the sons of Noah (instead of God) after the boys fought to get their "women" to come to the ark. One boy punched his "girlfriend" in the jaw because she was resistant to leave her mother and enter the ship. The boys did not "marry" their gals until

after the flood had receded and they were off the ark, and then Naamah did the ceremony, which according to biblical times would not have occurred since women would not be placed in such roles of authority and leadership.

Genesis 7:6, "And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth."

Genesis 7:7 "And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood."

Genesis 7:16, "And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in."

The Lord is the one who closed Noah and his family, along with the animals, inside the ark. And the door was not opened again while the waters covered the earth (which was seen in the movie being opened for a peddler on a floating craft).

The sons were around 100 years old at the time they entered the ark, and not 20-30 years old as the movie represented. They were already married, for the sons and their "wives" entered the ark.

Genesis 5:32, "And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth."

Genesis 7:6, "And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth."

Genesis 7:7, "And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood."

Before going into the ark, a crowd was angered with Noah for the animals traipsing over their land to get to the ark. When questioning Noah the need for the huge ship, his reply was because of the rain. The leader of the angry crowd exclaimed that "it hasn't rained for a very long time." When in actuality, it had never rained on earth until the flood occurred.

Then the ark door was later re-opened to allow a peddler to bargain and trade jewelry and clothing for food and fresh water (as already mentioned, the door was not opened during the flood, definitely not as was depicted by this script). This peddler survived the poor excuse of a flood (television could have presented the breaking of earth and pouring of rain much greater and "dramatically" than it was). The peddler sold (traded) alcohol to Noah, and Noah had to be discreet to make it "medicinal purposes" so his wife would allow it on the boat. When at the same time it was apparent he was drinking it for the pleasures of the alcoholic effects on the body. Which does not display a righteous man in that manner.

Lot, who also lived in Gomorrah, was also saved from the flood. Again, how could he be saved when he was born almost 300 years after the flood? But he was presented in this tale traveling on a floating vessel and boarded the ark with a group of angry people in hopes to take over the ark and survive the rest of the flood on it.

After being scared off by the animals, the "God" of the movie caused a hurricane to wipe out the rest of life on the flooded earth, except for those on the ark. This obviously could not happen. Once the ark was closed, the flood then came and destroyed all other people and life. No one was allowed access into or onto the ark once the door was shut.

Genesis 7: 21-23, "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

After this hurricane, God speaks with Noah and says He "made a mistake..." and now was considering destroying even Noah and his family and all those on the ark.

Genesis 6:8, *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."*

How could God find grace on someone in this manner displayed by this film? God did not have an ark built and then "consider" if He would save those lives too; it was an unconditional fact that anyone who entered the ark would be saved from the flood. Had one other person from the towns and villages entered in, the scriptures would have told of the nine or so people saved through the flood.

2 Peter 2:5, *"And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;"*

Eight people saved from the flood, no one else, not even on ship sailing vessels. This "water world" was only inhabited by those who remained alive on the ark, and the fish and water mammals that lived in the water.

Noah at one point began to fight with one of his sons over the idea that his son was going to build a rudder for the ark to steer by. Again, not a righteous act by which God would find grace upon, plus they did not travel on the "top deck" of the ark in open sight, but remained encased within the protective covering of the ark. Hollywood showed the family walking on the "deck" of the ark able to see the water and all around them. This takes away the concept and truth of the "window."

Genesis 6:16, *"A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it."*

After many days on the ark the "storytellers" showed the entire family going mad and insane, doing strange things and speaking oddly. Noah sent out a raven to bring back hope and with that hope wishes to keep their sanity.

Throughout the flood in the show, God had been silent all that time with Noah, and finally spoke again. The reply was that God was still considering to destruction of those living on the ark. HIS reply to Noah was that He was going to wipe the slate clean and rid the earth of all sin, eradicating even the life on the ark. Noah begins to whistle and dance saying that God is not worthy of his tears. This dance and tune makes God laugh at Noah and say, "You've touched my heart once again, Noah... I'll give you one more chance...tomorrow I'll give you a sign, send out a dove...."

Genesis 8:6-12, *"And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more."*

The first dove was sent at the same time the raven was sent, and not after "God" said He would show Noah a sign.

Later on in this drama, a rainbow was given, but the family was still on the ark with no land visible.

Genesis 8:15-16, "And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee."

Genesis 8:18, "And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:"

Genesis 8:20, "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar."

Genesis 9:8-9, "And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;"

Genesis 9:12-14, "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:"

God placed a bow in the sky after they were off the ark.

Then after they finally do leave the ark, the movie goes on to have God speaking to Noah, stating He was making a covenant with him, and while doing so "God" says that He (God) can be wrong too.

God, the almighty is never wrong in any of HIS actions, words, or anything. If HE did anything wrong, that would be the same as sinning, and God is not capable of sin. It is against HIS very being, nature and character.

The entire movie was full of lies, deceit, slander, and was one huge slap in the face of God, Christians and Christianity. Just about the only truth to the entire movie was the title "Noah's Ark." While it is true God did rain down "brimstone and fire" upon Sodom and Gomorrah out of heaven, as the movie showed so clearly, that event took place many years after the flood, and even after the even of the tower of Babel.

God destroyed the earth in Noah's days, He will one day again destroy it:

2 Peter 3:7, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Revelation 21:1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

There was terrible wickedness in Noah's day, and the wickedness today seems to be overwhelming as well. This movie is one such form of wickedness, calling God's Word a lie and rewriting it to suit their own fantasies. In my opinion, this movie is the same as those who add and take away from scriptures. And with that comes terrible punishment.

Revelation 22:18, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:"

The movie industry sees God's Word as a fairy tale full of children's stories, and therefore it can be rewritten to suit their needs to make their story sell big to the audience.

We know better than that. Without God's Word in our life, we have no hope. Although the Scriptures inform us that these types of things will happen, it is still sad to see the abuse and misuse of the Bible today, especially in the hands of the world's storytellers, the media.

Even more so now, we need to share the message of hope and truth as God has given it to us in HIS TRUE WORD, the Holy Bible. Not as the movie industry sees it or wants to rewrite and show it, but as God has said it and declared it.

James Daniel McIntosh, Sr. is on the staff of Edmont Bible Church in East St. Louis, IL. He attended Southwest Bible Institute in Ashland, Kentucky and received an Associate Degree in Pastoral Studies from Brooks Bible Institute in St. Louis, Missouri.

The Discipline of Decision

Ray Shive

"We will obey the voice of the Lord our God" (Jeremiah 42:6).

I really made a haul at our local library's used book sale. Not only did I get a whole bagful for \$2.00, but one of those books was that little gem of V. Raymond Edman's, *The Disciplines of Life*: and autographed at that! Talk about being in the right place at the right time!

In his book, Dr. Edman talks about God's provision of guidance for every Christian and then notes three factors in the discipline of decision-making. They are:

1. Willingness to ASK guidance of God;
2. Willingness to WAIT for God's guidance; and
3. Willingness to OBEY the will of God.

Now, if I wanted to be cynical I would ask some questions. Like, "Who really knows anything about these things anymore? God's guidance? Waiting for it? Obeying it? Who even cares that much about them?" In other words, "With all this going for us, who really needs God anyway?" A lot of preaching, teaching, and testimony notwithstanding, many believers look to themselves and others long before they look to God. Guidance? Waiting? Obeying?

Why should I be concerned? There's so much that WE can do first...WITHOUT God. We can...

- Follow the advice of friends
- Accept unexamined expectations of our church subculture
- Drink in the wisdom of the self-help and pop Christianity sections of our Christian bookstores
- Pursue what seems right to our minds or fits our experience
- Act on what lines up with our training and education
- Attend the latest conference or seminar, subscribe to specialized journals, listen to tapes, or become disciples of the experts on radio and TV

With all this going for us, who really needs God's guidance anyway? And yet, His Word still says: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee...The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way" (Prov. 3:5,6; Psa. 32:8; 25:9; also see Psa. 37:5; Prov. 16:9; 23:4b; Isa. 30:21; 48:17; Jer. 10:23; Mt. 11:29; 1 Cor. 8:2 and others).

So much Scripture challenges our practice. It makes me wonder how the average Christian ever decided to trust God ALONE for His salvation when he seems to be so incapable of trusting God ALONE in other decisions.

Someone has said, "When we come to the place where God is all that we have, then for the first time we understand that God is all that we need." Sadly, so few ever get to that point. God ALONE is their last recourse. The list of others to be consulted first is so long that they never even get to God.

But how about us as pastors, missionaries, or Christian workers? Are there implications here for us? Yes, indeed. The danger is as great to us, if not greater. We can put God at the bottom of the list as easily as anybody else. We can do this with our . . .

- **Specialized studies and degree programs**
- **Professional associations**
- **Books, periodicals, journals**
- **Study groups, seminars, convocations**
- **Technology, databases, mapping programs**
- **Bandwagons of all kinds**

Will we seek first to "obey the voice of the Lord our God"? May it be so!

My copy of The Disciplines of Life is a 1948 seventh edition and is now out of print. But it's not out-of-date! Nothing has changed. Today, let us be willing to ASK for God's guidance, to WAIT for it, and then to OBEY.

Rev. Ray Shive is Associate Director of Fellowship International Mission in Allentown, PA. This article is adapted from a FIM publication.

The Precious Blood

Rev. Robert Isbell

Introduction

"...you were...redeemed with the precious blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1:18,19).

Efforts have been repeatedly made within the Christian community to eliminate the emphasis upon "the blood of Christ." As modernism crept into the organized Church, songs extolling "the blood," were removed from hymn books. The preaching of "the shed blood of Christ" was labeled "a slaughter-house religion." Leading pulpit personalities and professors in seminaries led their flocks and classes away from the hearing of the "the shed blood." A recent challenge, raised within the evangelical Christian community, aims to lower the high, biblical esteem for "the precious blood of Christ."

The Expiatory Blood

The usage of "blood" (haima, Gr.), shed by Christ on the cross, has for its primary emphasis, the atoning work of Christ. "The blood of Christ...betokens His death by the shedding of His blood in expiatory sacrifice...life eternal can be imparted only by the expiation made, in the giving up of the life by the sinless Savior." (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W.E. Vine).

If "the blood of Christ" is of little or no importance to His expiatory sacrifice, why did He not die by hanging on a gallows? Would it have made any difference to the Father if His blood was not shed in connection with His death? Just so Jesus died- is that it? All Christians readily agree that they are not literally, "washed in the blood of the Lamb," or that they, literally, "drink (His) blood (or) eat (His) flesh," by believing in Jesus. (Jn. 6:51-58). Stretching the analogy to the point of reducing its necessity to His atoning work, is going too far afield from the truth of God's Word.

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, wrote that "the blood of Christ was no more efficacious when it flowed from the cross, than when it flowed through His body as He went about doing good." (Science and Health). Shall we agree with her? Is that all the importance we place upon the shed blood of Christ? Was it a mere symbol, a type, as was the shed blood of sacrificial beasts offered under the law of Moses (Heb. 9:13,14)? Is not the shed blood of Christ worth more than "the blood of bulls and goats?"

The Propitiatory Blood

The shed blood of Christ is essential to His sacrifice in propitiating an offended, righteous God and His holy law. "Faith in His blood" is based upon Christ as "a propitiatory sacrifice." As such, Christ fulfilled the type of "the mercyseat...sprinkled with atoning blood on the Day of Atonement in token that the righteous sentence of the law had been (typically) carried out." (Ro. 3:25; He. 9:5; 1 Jn. 2:2;4:10 Scofield Bible). Would the requirements of His holy law had been satisfied, if His Son had died without shedding His blood? Why did God require the shedding of blood under the Mosaic sacrificial law? Why not strangle the sacrifices, or strike them on the head with a fatal blow? Was all that blood, shed in the Old Testament, necessary? Does it not point to the high importance of Christ's shed blood on the cross as being the one and only efficacious, expiatory and propitiating sacrifice for sin?

The Purchasing Blood

In the shedding of Christ's blood, the price of our redemption was paid. Redemption means, "to deliver by paying a price." It is a term understood in the marketplace, particularly, the slave-market. Sinners, "sold under sin," are under the sentence of death. In redemption, they are

bought out of the market; they are "set free by (the) paying of a price....The purchase price is the blood of the Redeemer, Who dies in their stead" (Ro. 3:24 Scofield Bible).

The sanctity of blood in the Mosaic sacrifices was held in the highest esteem. "The life of the flesh is in the blood." The value of the "blood" measures the value of the "life." The value of the blood of Christ is "precious." Its cost is "inconceivable." It was "(God's) own blood!" (Ac.20:28). "It is not the blood in the veins of the sacrifice, but the blood 'upon the altar' which is efficacious." (Lev. 17:11 Scofield Bible).

Not only was it necessary for Christ to shed His blood at His death, in order to fulfill the Old Testament types of animal sacrifices, but to give value to the giving up of His life as our Redeemer. The full price was paid when He shed His blood on the "altar" of the cross. (Heb. 13:10). "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30). "Full atonement, can it be?" Not without the shedding of His blood. "With His blood He ransomed me/Paid the debt and set me free" (Bliss).

The Pardoning Blood

The shedding of Christ's blood on the cross is essential to the pardoning of sinners. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22 NIV). They are "justified by His blood" (Ro. 5:9). If their pardon and justification could have been secured by the bloodless death of Jesus, why was it not so arranged? The Book of Leviticus reveals the violence, cruelty and agony that attended the slaughter of sacrificial creatures under the Mosaic law. We spend little time meditating on their excruciating trauma which prefigured the suffering of Christ. Long gone are the vivid portrayals of Christ's death by modern evangelists that moved audiences to tears over His agony.

Because we are "now justified by His blood," we shall escape all wrath "through Him." Not only has the believer's guilt for all his (past, present, and future) sins been removed, but he is "justified!" God "declares righteous" all believers in Jesus. (Ro. 3:21-28). He puts "righteousness" to their account (Ro. 4:1-8). Christ, "the Righteous One," becomes the believer's righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; Php. 3:9). "More righteous we cannot be; for in Christ, God sees us as righteous as He."

The Purifying Blood

In pouring out His life on the cross as our sacrificial Substitute, Christ shed His blood to validate His work. It established the basis for our "faith in His blood" as being efficacious to remove the guilt and stain of our sin. John makes it a point to record that "forthwith came there out blood and water," when Christ's side was pierced (Jn. 19:34; 1 Jn.5:6,8). Sin has two aspects: guilt and defilement. The shedding of Christ's blood signifies the removal of all guilt from the believer. He is "reconciled to God" (Ro. 5:10,11 NIV). Believers are "purified by faith," positionally (Ac. 15:9; Heb. 1:3 NIV).

Having been "bathed," once, the believer in Jesus has but to "wash his feet," when a "walk in the flesh" has defiled him and interrupted his fellowship with God (Jn. 13:10). Upon confession of sin, he is restored. "Let the water and the blood/ From His wounded side which flowed/Be of sin, the double cure/ Save from wrath and make me pure" (Toplady). It was typified in the Tabernacle. Having been bathed once at their consecration, the priests were required to "wash their hands and feet" at the brazen laver, in order to enter the Holy Place to worship, "that they die not" (Lev. 8:6; Ex. 30: 17-21).

The Perfecting Blood

The believer is "complete in (Christ)" (Col. 2:10). "Jesus...that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (of the city, which represented the religion of Judaism) (Heb. 13:10-14). In sanctifying believers, Christ perfected them, positionally, "once and for all...forever" (Heb. 10:10,14). In the ordinance of the red heifer, the sevenfold sprinkling of blood was typical of "the complete and never-to-be-repeated putting away of all the believer's sins" (Nu. 19; Heb. 9:12-14; 10:10-12; 1 Pe. 1:3 Scofield Bible). In their standing, they are as perfect as they will ever be. In their state, they progress in character and conduct toward their standing, as they yield to the Holy Spirit (Mt. 5:48; Gal. 5:16; Php. 3:12-14). Our final state of perfection will be reached at "the redemption of our body," when "we shall be like (Christ)" (Ro. 8:23; 1 Jn. 3:2; Ps. 17:15).

Conclusion

Reviewing the above characteristics of "the precious blood of Christ" summons the highest esteem of every member of His Body, which He purchased with "His own blood."

"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood...be glory and dominion, for ever and ever" (Rev. 1:5).

Biblical references are from the KJV except where noted.

Rev. Robert Isbell is a graduate of the Bible Institute of Pennsylvania. He served as Executive Director of Christ's Home, Warminster, Pennsylvania; as Chaplain at two retirement communities and as Minister of Visitation at the Church of the Open Door in Fort Washington. He is presently on call to minister at Shell Point Village, Ft. Myers, Florida, where he and his wife reside. He has been a member of IFCA International since 1981.

WHAT DO I DO AND HOW'S IT GOING?

Rev. Les Lofquist

At the time of this writing, I have been on the job as IFCA Executive Director Designate for less than three months. Many have asked me to explain what I do and how it's going.

In all honesty, I'm not sure what to say. I know that on the one hand I'm so new to the position I have hardly enough experience to make an accurate assessment. I have so much to learn before I can answer the question.

But on the other hand, I do realize this position is like the pastorate in one important aspect. And I do have enough experience as a pastor to see the similarity. Serving in the Home Office of IFCA International is similar to the pastorate in that both involve spiritual leadership and oversight of a group of God's people. Both positions require dependence on the Lord, spiritual wisdom, grace, courage, discernment and humility.

I now serve at the side of Dr. Richard Gregory and in our ministry I have met many wonderful men and women from the following Regionals: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Northern California, Kansas, Heart of America, Central Illinois, and Southern California. I was privileged by the Lord to travel to Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia then returned home and met with the men of the IFCA International Executive Committee who are from all over America. And recently I have been concentrating on meeting with many of the IFCA International brethren in the Grand Rapids area. All of this has been a humbling experience for me.

Often I have asked myself: "Why, Lord, did you select me for this? Why have I been chosen to lead IFCA International? What is it You want me to accomplish with this opportunity?" The people associated with IFCA International are truly outstanding servants and their faithfulness is inspiring to me, yet at the same time I wonder how to lead the IFCA International into the new millennium .

I visited with an IFCA International pastor here in Grand Rapids one weekday back in November. We met at his church the week after Thanksgiving with the thoughts of that holiday still echoing in our minds. As we walked throughout the church building discussing his ministry, both of us laughed with joy over the manifold blessings of God. "Why would God use either of us in this wonderful way?" we asked with profound gratitude. Both of us shared a sense of being overwhelmed by God's abundant blessings and a profound desire to walk worthy of His favor. Over lunch we returned to the theme, when he reminded me of the words of Jesus in John 21. We were challenged and encouraged.

THE CHALLENGE AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF JOHN 21

You may recall that in this chapter the Lord Jesus was about to re-commission the Apostle Peter after Peter's three-fold denial of Christ just weeks before. Our Lord gave Peter the opportunity to make a three-fold reaffirmation of his love for Christ. Then the Lord Jesus issued to Peter a three-fold command: "Feed My lambs ... Tend My sheep ... Feed My sheep."

In the midst of this most important scene, Peter was given the sobering prophecy of his own martyrdom (verse 18) and the subsequent, simple command: "follow Me" (verse 19). Peter's response was typical for him. "But Lord, what about this man (i.e. John)?"

The sovereign Lord silenced Peter and all of those who would so question Him: "If I will (literally "desire") that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me" (verse 22). King Jesus asserts He will do as He chooses with His servants and no one must question that. Jesus said that Peter's chief concern was to be simple: "follow Me and forget about what may happen with all of

My other servants." These words contain the challenge and encouragement of John 21 and represent a liberating reminder for me. They should have the same effect on all of us.

We are freed from comparing our ministries to others of God's servants. He can do as He wills with them, while we must love Christ and follow Him.

We are able to simplify the ministry. We must simply feed the sheep God has entrusted to us. We must be faithful shepherds of God's sheep and feed them the Word of God.

We need not worry how men may judge us. We need only concern ourselves with a genuine devotion and service for Christ alone, even to the point of suffering.

DID PETER LEARN?

As I pondered all of this further, I began to wonder if Peter learned the lesson. I wonder what he thought as James was martyred (Acts 12) and Peter recalled that day in John 21 when he and James' brother John received the lesson? Was Peter wondering why God miraculously delivered him from prison while at the same time God allowed James to be killed by Herod? Did Peter compare himself to James' short-lived ministry and question the ways of King Jesus?

Was Peter watching Paul's ministry with envy as it became more and more apparent that Paul also was blessed? What was Peter thinking that day at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)? Was he tempted to remain silent and let Paul face the wrath of the Jews (even though ultimately we read of Peter's strong and truthful account of the salvation of the Gentiles on that day at the Council)?

We need not wonder too long whether Peter learned. The answer is found in the words of his letters, written three decades after that lesson by the Lord. There we read Peter's admonition to the suffering church of Asia Minor: forget about what may happen with everyone else and love Christ as the genuineness of your faith is tested (1 Peter 1: 6 - 8a); focus not on the seeming unfairness of the suffering but rather submit yourself to the sovereign will of God (1 Peter 4: 12 - 19); shepherd the flock of God with all humility (1 Peter 5: 1 - 7). Then without any trace of professional jealousy so frequent among Christian workers, at the end of his life Peter called Paul "our beloved brother" (2 Peter 3: 15). Lastly, he warned his readers to concern themselves with their own responsibilities and "beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness ... but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3: 17 - 18).

It is apparent that Peter indeed learned the lesson of the Lord Jesus: "what does it matter to you how I determine My servants will serve Me? You just follow Me, feed My sheep, and do what you are called by Me to do." It was that simple for Peter. And it is that way for us today.

This is what my friend said he wanted to do back in November and wished we all would do in IFCA International. And that is what I determined to do as the IFCA International Executive Director Designate ... and that will be enough. Therefore, if you ever ask me to explain what I do and how it's going, I know what I hope will be my answer.

Reflections on "Childlikeness"

Tim Keeley

"To be a Child again," a sentiment reflected in a Country song, strikes an occasional chord in the heart of everyone who has assumed the responsibilities of adulthood. We all envy the simplicity of a child, such as the freedom to go outside and play! We yearn for the ability to reorder our priorities, pare our calendars down a bit, and take more time to enjoy that which is left as children enjoy their activities. In some of life's choices, these are good and necessary exercises; in others, we must maintain our commitments, praying for grace to do them well and with joy.

This whimsical longing to 'turn back the clock' is not all bad, nor do such feelings always indicate a lack of contentment with where God has brought us. In fact, nostalgic reflection can help one keep the present circumstances in perspective. The future is built on the foundation of the past. The most rudimentary lessons of life are imbedded during childhood. But the danger we must avoid is to dwell on that era of our life, to attempt to replicate those experiences in the hope that then we will be simpler people. We as Christians will be sorely disappointed if we think that by closing our eyes to the inevitable changes life brings we will actually be spared them. In other words, while we would reject being childish in outlook, maintaining a childlikeness is an appropriate goal for the Christian adult. A spirit of childlikeness achieves the balance between irresponsibility and joylessness, enabling us to simplify our lives according to biblical priorities. This is what the Lord Jesus meant when He told the disciples, "Permit little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of Heaven" (Mat. 19:14). He was not teaching that only minors are eligible for salvation, but that all people need to express the simple, uncomplicated, total trust of a child in order to be born again. And this is no less true for our Christian growth-the way to draw near to God spiritually is to follow the example of those little children who scrambled up onto the lap of Jesus, with full trust they would not be turned away!

Jonathan Edwards suggested three distinguishing characteristics of the childlike spirit in which God delights:

1. A Tender Heart (Eph. 4:32)
2. A Tender Mind (Romans 12:15)
3. A Healthy Fear of God (Isaiah 66:2)

These are ingredients to a life lived in fellowship with God, the 'home life' of a child with his Father. These are the 'simple' things to which we must return.

Tim Keeley is a graduate of Citadel Bible College and Capital Bible Seminary and serves as Sunday School Superintendent at Byron Center Bible Church in Byron Center, MI.

Discipline Across Congregations

Steven A. Long

Raymond had always been an active member of our church. If the church building was open, he was there. He taught Sunday school and had been a youth sponsor. He tithed faithfully, and he took notes during the sermon-even if it was dull. Yet, he had a hidden side.

One summer day, another youth sponsor spotted Raymond walking out of a pornographic video store carrying a small package. Later and privately, the sponsor asked him about what he had seen. Raymond protested that his personal life was no one's business.

Believing that Raymond had a serious problem, the sponsor talked with church leaders. The elders investigated further and decided that this was not an isolated incident-it was an addiction. They agreed to confront him privately.

The meeting was tense, but cordial. Raymond consented to seek counseling, but within weeks he stopped attending worship. After he missed two Sundays, the elders visited him. To their surprise, Raymond told them that he had started attending another church in town and that he no longer needed their help.

This story is fiction, but the situation is true to life. Many "Raymonds" come under the loving discipline of elders, only to flee to another church. By doing so, they avoid correction and restoration.

Church discipline is a tricky subject. Talking about it makes us uncomfortable. Exercising it is down-right difficult, especially when it involves exposing private facts about a long-standing church member. Complicating matters is the increasing potential of lawsuits from disciplined church members.

Sadly, many churches do not exercise any church discipline. Sadder still is that other churches can short-circuit the whole process for those that do.

A wayward church member can easily reject help from the leaders of the church and start anew somewhere else--we do not run "Jonesville" compounds. Superficially, getting a fresh start at a new church appears to be a good idea for a person caught in sin. This is naive, however, especially if the sin is addictive in nature. Few drug addicts, sex addicts, pedophiles, alcoholics, homosexuals, cross dressers, adulterers, spouse and child abusers stop their behaviors on their own.

Churches have a responsibility, then, to work together in matters of church discipline. Such cooperation can help break this discovery-confrontation-discipline-flight process. In addition, we can better protect our members from those people guilty of sins of prey (like pedophilia).

The first step of better cooperation is for churches to have a firm understanding of the process of church discipline and to carry it out. True, sometimes there is a cost. I have never seen our elders in more pain than when they are exercising loving discipline. Even so, it is worth the effort for our members and for our church.

Incidentally, prepare yourself; some people will not appreciate your efforts-they may even take you to court. Indeed, churches are facing increasing threats of liability in the form of lawsuits. In any church discipline, an angry member may sue us for invasion of privacy, infliction of emotional distress, negligence, alienation of affection, and any other theory that his or her attorney believes will work.

Church leaders can protect their churches by exercising wisdom and paying attention to some general legal guidelines. (I do not offer the following recommendations as legal advice for particular situations. If you have specific questions, consult the laws of your state and retain the services of an attorney.)

Recommended Guidelines

The activities of religious institutions are constitutionally protected-including church discipline-as long as we carry out those activities because of religious conviction. You can help protect your church from liability by writing down your procedures of church discipline, including the scriptural basis for it.

If you practice cross-congregational discipline, include this in your policy statement as well as the scriptural basis for it. This will help show that such discipline is constitutionally qualified as a religious activity.

In addition, make sure that you apply church discipline to the letter of your policy and consistently with each member of your congregation. If it is your religious conviction, the courts will expect you to do no less.

The courts have determined that members agree to the rules of a church by becoming a member. Communicate the policy in your congregational meetings and with the prospective members so everyone understands it is a rule of your church.

If you intend to share information about a disciplined member with the leaders of other churches they may attend, make sure that your members understand this ahead of time. The best protection is to have members sign your church discipline policy statement.

Further, be sure to discipline members only. Since non-members have not agreed to be governed by your policy, you may be liable if you discipline them.

Do not lose heart because of these legal considerations. The gratitude of those you rescue from sin through church discipline will lift your joy to new heights and soothe your battle wounds.

The second step we can take to increase cooperation between churches in matters of discipline is always to inquire about your new member at their former church, before they find a place of service. In our day of child molesters and abusers, this is doubly important. Perhaps you consider a transfer from another church a true prize. Add to this a teacher and a tither. Let's just say it doesn't get any better than that ! Since this new member comes ready-to-serve, you do not get to know them before giving them responsibility. Suppose that young lady who just transferred membership from the other church in town wants to be a youth sponsor. One phone call to a former congregation may tell you that they disfellowshipped her for refusing to cease sexual activity with vulnerable boys. Save yourself much grief. Make that call.

This situation raises a question, however, about church discipline, especially cross-congregational discipline: Legally, how far can we go in sharing information about members?

Part of the church discipline process in Matthew 18 involves sharing private information with the church. The courts recognize this as privileged communication for religious associations. That is, churches have the right among members to share information about members as a normal part of church business.

Still, we must be cautious. Share this information only in meetings closed to non-members. Remember this rule: always be discreet with private information about members.

Set up a working relationship with the leaders of other churches ahead of time in working together for church discipline as a normal part of church business. In this way you can limit the appearance of singling out one person for malicious communication of private facts.

Preferably, get permission from a member before inquiring about them at a former church. One way to do this is to have all church workers sign a paper agreeing to a background check. I know this seems radical. But consider this: you may expose the predatory child molester who just volunteered to teach a third grade Sunday school class. Additionally, realize that you may be held negligent if you do not check the background of a volunteer with a history of child abuse.

With permission, you can contact former churches, acquaintances, and even do a police check in some states, while limiting potential liability. If a person will not give their permission, do not check...but do not let them teach.

Third, respect, if possible, the discipline that another congregation exercises. You should strongly encourage a fleeing member to return to their home church to complete the discipline process before accepting them into your church. I have seen frustrated elders watch a sister congregation ignore this practice and repeatedly undermine our efforts to exercise loving church discipline.

If a congregation has completely worked through the steps of discipline, and as a result, asked a member to leave, respect that decision. If you feel absolutely convicted to bring this person into your church, make them accountable for their sinful behavior. If you do not do this, you are not showing love. You are, however, giving this person a hiding place where they can continue to enjoy the benefits of church fellowship, all the while continuing in their sin.

Fourth, do contact the new church of a former member, if the person has a problem the leaders in that church need to know about. Yes, confidentiality is important, but you must protect the members and integrity of the church.

A minister from a sister congregation once called me about one of our new members who had transferred membership from that congregation. Our new member already working with children-apparently had a long history of child abuse. I did not think to call his former minister. I am glad he called me.

In some circumstances, we may be liable if we do not share privileged information with other congregations. Suppose a child molester leaves your church in the midst of church discipline and says, "There are plenty of children at the church across town." In some states, you may be liable if you do not warn the leaders of the other congregation and this fellow abuses a child in that church.

Usually, you are safe in sharing privileged information if you meet at least one of two conditions. If the person consents to informing another church-perhaps by signing a church discipline policy statement that says this may happen-you may share the information.

If there is a legally compelling reason for breaking confidentiality, you may inform-or may be required to inform the leaders of the other church. If our child molester presents a serious danger to another person, we should tell the other congregation about his problem.

A final problem remains for those churches that exercise cross-congregational discipline: some members officially withdraw membership in the midst of church discipline. This is a tricky matter.

In *Guinn v. Church of Christ of Collinsville* (775 P. 2d 766 Okl. 1989) a church was held liable for the activities of discipline after a woman withdrew her membership. The court did not consider the discipline to be constitutionally protected, since she was no longer a member. The court

suggested that if she has waived her right to withdraw from membership, the decision might have been different.

The elders at this church made at least three mistakes. They confronted her initially at the public Laundromat, not privately. They did not have a written church discipline policy. They did not communicate their unwritten policy to this woman.

If we intend to carry out cross-congregational church discipline even after someone withdraws from membership, we need to say this in our church discipline statement, base it upon Scripture, and communicate it to our members. The elders at Collinsville would have been on firmer ground had they done this. We can conduct cross-congregational discipline-indeed all biblically based church discipline-in a way that lessens our risk of liability. Realize, however, in our society you can become wealthy by spilling your fast-food coffee on your lap-there are no guarantees.

Though our churches are appropriately independent in governance, we should have a spirit of cooperation in matters of discipline. We can lessen some difficulties that our churches have due to the sins of our members by striving for consistent discipline across congregations.

Steven A. Long is a Christian writer living in Rock Island, Illinois.

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CHAPLAIN'S DIARY

GOD AT WORK AT OFFUTT AFB & KUWAIT

by Ch, Capt Jason Peters (USAF)

Chaplain Peters described in the July/August '99 issue of VOICE the ministry he has with the Flying Wing, Security Police, and personnel of Headquarters Strategic Command. He now shares the ministry he and his wife Kimberly have with individuals and couples at Offutt AFB, Nebraska and during his deployment to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia.

OFFUTT AFB

God has really been leading us recently to focus our efforts and to attempt to think deeper instead of broader. What I mean by that is that in our first year at this assignment I have attempted to get to know the 1500 people I am assigned to, at least on a surface level. That has apparently been successful, but we realized that we were not following up closely on many we had counseled or witnessed to. Now, after an 8 day respite in the mountains of Colorado, we feel like the Lord is leading us to select a few whom we can really invest our lives into.

The Lord led us recently to a young couple named Vic and Nancy (not their real names). They are a racially mixed family, with one 2 1/2 year old and another baby due in October. When we met them neither of them were walking with the Lord. After being in their home three times (twice because of domestic abuse and once with the police), I was able to lead them to the Lord in their living room. Now, Kimberly and I have been meeting with them weekly for discipleship. Please pray that God will give us the wisdom to know where to take this relationship and what to study with them.

Our next request is for Kristen (not her real name). She is a young physician assigned to our base who is really struggling spiritually. The Lord led us together through routine checkups at the hospital with our children. She called me for counseling and we began to unravel an unbelievable web of deceit, abuse, and addiction. She eventually moved out of her home (and a terrible relationship), and into our home. Unfortunately, halfway through the first night, after repeated pages from her ex, she met with him and now is living with him again. She is still in close contact with us though and is planning to move again soon. Pray that she will come to know Christ. She has been overwhelmed with our concern, and has asked why we do it. We have tried to persuade her that the love we feel for her is from Christ but she has a hard time trusting anybody and is a very confused. Pray especially for Kimberly as she is the one who has the most contact and needs a special dose of wisdom as she counsels her.

There are many more stories we could share about how God is working, but we especially covet your prayers for Vic, Nancy and Kristen. Please also pray that we will have the Lord's direction as we attempt to reshape our ministry here at Offutt Air Force Base!

Following this report Chaplain Peters was deployed to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia. He share with us God at work in lives in a special mission to Kuwait...

I just returned from eight days in Kuwait and wanted to give you an update.

At approximately 0200, 10 DEC 99, a C-130 Hercules Transport Aircraft carrying 94 personnel was damaged attempting to land at a Kuwaiti air base. 3 people died as a result of injuries and 17 more Air Force members were injured.

5 Days prior to the crash I had been assigned as the primary chaplain for the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team that is responsible for the entire Southwest Asia Area of Operations.

I was notified in my room around 0630, 10 DEC 99, and told to be on the aircraft in an hour. A team of 6 CISM responders, 2 Chaplains, 1 Psychologist, 1 Psychiatrist, and two peer counselors, responded to Kuwait City International Airport via a C-21 (The military version of a Learjet). The team was briefed at KCIA by the Interim Safety Board President, Col. Tim Hershey, and visited the C-130 crash site. Following the in-brief, we divided into 2 teams, deploying separately to Ali Al Salem Air Base and Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base, both in Kuwait.

At Al Jaber, three formal debriefings were held the following day with approximately with 12 survivors in attendance at each. Each debriefing was 2 hours.

Within 65 hours of the accident, 100% of the survivors had been debriefed. Our team ended up counseling almost 50 people. What a great opportunity for ministry! It was amazing how people who normally wouldn't think of talking to a chaplain would begin to share thoughts about the brevity of life. What a great testimony to the validity of our faith! I heard so many people who had been plodding along, rarely giving pause to faith related subjects, share intense thoughts about their relationship with God and life after death.

The following days were spent counseling secondary victims (fire dept, police, and mortuary personnel who were first responders), briefing commanders and first sergeants, and facilitating the re-entry process for the survivors who opted to stay in Kuwait. So many great ministry moments!

Dr. Hamilton and I were exploring a souk (market) in downtown Kuwait City on what was supposed to be our last night when we received another call. An HH-60 helicopter from the same unit that had had a pilot killed in the C-130 accident had crashed. We jumped back in our vehicle and raced back to Ahmed Al Jaber airbase. When we arrived at the base, they were transporting the survivors to the clinic on base and we were relieved to discover that there were no fatalities.

Needless to say, our plans for the trip back to PSAB were discarded and I began to counsel the survivors. In this type of accident (Class A mishap), the survivors are not allowed to talk with their crew members or anyone else (other than a chaplain) about the incident until the investigation board is through interviewing everyone involved.

Because chaplains are the only ones in the Air Force who can guarantee absolute confidentiality, we are allowed to spend as much time as they need to help them process what happened. I was able to spend hours with the crew individually, and the Lord was able to accomplish some great things! Because of the confidential nature of the counseling I can't share any details now, but let me assure you that God was glorified through the situation! Each one of the crew members was touched with the hand of God in some way and it was awesome to be a part of it! Praise God!

I know that I am rambling, but this was some of the best ministry I have seen in my short Air Force career. Thank God for a country that provides chaplains to their troops even when they are at remote bases 20 miles from the border of Iraq!

After a few days with the HH-60 crew, we returned to PSAB with a day on the Island of Bahrain enroute. It was a much needed day off after an intense week! Thanks to all of you who are praying for the ministry here and we will certainly keep you updated!

For His glory and only by His grace,

JASON E. PETERS, Ch, Captain, USAF

What This Youth Group Really Needs Is . . .

Rev. Van Marsceau

He was one of the main guys in our youth group, and I noticed as the rest of the teen Sunday school class dismissed and headed off to the morning service that he had waited back for my attention. As he approached me to ask if we could talk, I noticed his eyes beginning to fill with tears. "Uh, Oh!", I thought. "What's going on?" This was not the kind of young man to cry very easily. I put my arm around his shoulders and asked him what was on his mind. To my surprise, it was not the parent or girlfriend problem I had expected. He admitted to me what I believe to be one of the most widely struggled-with problems among young people in our churches. *"Pastor Van . . . uh . . . (sob) . . .uh . . . I don't know if I'm really saved. I mean. . . uh . . . if I sin am I still saved? . . . I'm afraid that if I die I won't go to heaven, even though I asked Jesus into my heart."*

This young man was struggling with a vitally important matter. For some reason it surfaced in his thinking that particular Sunday morning and he decided he had better talk honestly about it. It occurred to me as we spoke that I really hadn't done a very thorough job with the doctrine of eternal security lately. After all, teens don't really like to study doctrine, do they?

I know that if you review the latest curriculum samples at your local Christian bookstore, or in a mail flyer, you probably won't see too much push for "hot talks" or "wild-wacky-weekly-lesson-plan-for-cool-teens" on basic Bible doctrine. It's easy to fall into the popular idea that the *real* need among our youth is to focus on the stereotype teen talk topics such as drugs, peer-pressure, dating, etc, etc. And, don't get me wrong, there are appropriate times and ways to deal with these important subjects. But, I would like to suggest that the *real* need among our youth is to get a handle on the essentials of Bible doctrine and theology. In fact, let me state that even more strongly. *Doctrine and theology are not only the crying need of our youth, but they are really at the heart of what teens want to know!* No, they don't say it that way, and I realize that to stand before them this Wednesday night at youth group and announce that we are beginning our new dynamic series on doctrine and theology is likely to result in moans and groans. Nevertheless, if you have been really listening, you know that teens are looking for something with substance at church. They want thoughtful, real answers to life's issues. They want to know what is really the truth. That means to me that doctrine and theology are what is needed!

Teens want to know - Is hell for real? What is heaven really like? Is there really only one way to heaven? Would a loving God really send starving little kids in "Umbagumba Land" to hell? If so, why is that fair? Is the Bible really true and how do we know that it is the truth? How come I keep repeating the same sins over and over if I am a Christian? Why don't we speak in tongues at our church? They do at my friend's church and they're good Christians. Am I saved if I hate someone? Why is homosexuality really a sin; you know they can't really help it, right? If someone gets divorced for really good reasons they can get remarried, can't they? It could be true that God used evolution to create the world, couldn't it? How do I really know God hears my prayers? When I prayed for grandma she still died. Do I have to obey my parents all the time? They really don't understand me and my friends. Are demons for real? Can a Christian be demon possessed? And the list goes on and on.

I have to ask a question when I look at a list of questions like that, and it is this - How do you give satisfying answers to such questions without teaching Bible doctrine and theology? Can you really understand sin, salvation, eternal security, the damnation of the heathen, victory over temptation, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and all related issues, the veracity and integrity of Scripture, Satan, hell, the last days events, etc. if you do not know your theology? The answer is NO! NO! NO! Can you have interesting talks? Yes. Can you get kids involved in discussion? Yes. Can you really get to the answers that satisfy the questions that need answering without it? NO! Bible doctrine and theology are not, contrary to some thinkers of our day, boring,

dry, and irrelevant to today's complex teen scene. NO! Bible doctrine is essential to, and at the very heart of discovering life-giving, life-relevant, real answers to the very questions our teens need to have answered and in fact are asking.

What does this youth group really need? Yes, we could use a few more kids. Yes, we could use some more money. Yes, we would love to have a new 15 passenger van. Yes, our own teen room in the church annex would be great. But, foundational to all that we are about in our IFCA International churches, and foundational to all that we want for our young people is Bible doctrine and theology! Notice, I did not say boring lessons. No one needs another boring lesson. It is a myth that Bible doctrine has to be boring anyway! Here are a few suggestions to help you evaluate your youth ministry from the teaching stand point:

- 1. Make it a priority to sit down with the youth leaders to discuss exactly what they have been teaching. Identify what areas of doctrine are, ought to be, and will be taught.**
- 2. Recognize that publishers of youth curriculum minimize many areas of doctrinal teaching because they seek the broadest market arena possible. (Yes, publishers are money driven!) However, most publishers do have some age appropriate material.**
- 3. Consider carefully what is the best teaching format for doctrinal teaching. For example, you might use your Sunday school hour to teach in a more structured, systematic way. Or, it might work to offer a small group Bible study for the express purpose of teaching specific doctrinal truths.**
- 4. Encourage your teen teachers to incorporate doctrinal truths within their topical lessons. (Teaching about dating? Make sure you clearly present God's plan for heterosexual, monogamous marriage relationships.)**
- 5. Schedule guest speakers to teach specific topics that are doctrinal, such as creationism, eschatology, eternal security, etc. Wrap up with a question and answer forum.**

Remember what Paul told young Timothy in I Timothy 4:12? Our young people are to live as examples to a watching world. How will they know how to live in this incredibly mixed-up world if they are not grounded in Bible doctrine? Never forget that doctrine precedes holy living!

Van Marsceau is the pastor of the Fellowship Bible Church located in historic Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. He is a graduate of Appalachian Bible College, served in full time pastoral youth ministry for 13 years. Also, he presently serves as the chairman of the IFCA International Youth Committee.

A Telling Survey For Churches

Some time ago a friend of mine shared the following survey with me. He had shared this with his congregation and the results were sobering. I am passing this along to you with the suggestion that you adapt this to your own situation as you feel appropriate. Don't be afraid to find out the truth about the people to whom you are ministering. Pastor friend, you might be assuming too much and taking too much for granted. [Ed.]

Your honest and thoughtful answers to this survey will enable us to meet individual needs. Please do not sign your name to this survey.

Underline the answer that applies to you

1. I am an isolationist, conformist, or alternativist.

Underline the answer that applies to you

2. I would like to be an isolationist, conformist, or alternativist.

3. How many unsaved adult friends do you associate with on a regular basis (at least monthly)?

4. How frequently do you have unsaved adult friends in your home?

5. How frequently do you visit unsaved adult friends in their homes?

6. Who is responsible for witnessing to the unsaved?

7. Does the pastor present the gospel in his Sunday messages on a regular basis?

**8. How often do you feel guilty about not sharing the gospel with your unsaved adult friends?
seldom, never, frequently**

9. Do you believe adults who have never heard the gospel are eternally lost in the Lake of Fire?

10. How many adults have you personally led to Christ in the last 3 years?

11. How many adults have you presented the gospel to in the last year?

12. How many minutes do you pray each day?

13. Do you pray regularly for your unsaved friends?

14. Do you invite your unsaved friends to attend church with you? seldom never frequently

15. Have you ever discipled a new Christian over a number of weeks using prepared material?

16. Would you be interested in visiting a visitor to our church in his/her home?

17. When you consider sharing the gospel with your unsaved friend, what are your greatest concerns or fears?

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

18. List in degree of difficulty for you the following stages of sharing the gospel. Number 1 should be the most difficult and #8 the least.

- **Committing myself to sharing Christ**
- **Developing a friendship directing the conversation towards Christ**
- **Sharing my love for Christ**
- **Asking them to receive Christ**
- **Discipleship after conversion**
- **Showing them Bible verses**
- **Knowing and understanding Bible verses.**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.