



*An Independent Church Journal
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IFCA International
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The love of the Great Shepherd for His flock is our motivation to love the flock. The church possesses a majestic head, an exalted position, and a glorious future and is therefore worthy of our love.

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Pain ripped through the muscles of my back, nearly continuous and almost unbearable. The combination of narcotics and muscle relaxant left me with little appetite, much weariness and with some of my hair falling out. After the loss of 25 pounds, I spent a few days in the hospital which did little to relieve my misery. I had been diagnosed with polymyalgia, giant cell arteritis and a fractured vertebra from osteoporosis...

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What do you mean, certain people do not like their pastor? Are they really upset with his ministry and his preaching? Are they really leaving the church because they think his sermons do not feed them?"

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I don't know when I have felt any more embarrassed. As I backed my car into our garage, I stopped just before entering and opened my door to look at something lying on the driveway. Then, looking over my right shoulder, I continued backing up. I was startled by the sound of steel hitting steel. I gasped in horror...

R. Larry Moyer

● [Canvassing for Christ](#)

This is a great idea for all our IFCA churches and the people at Portage Community Bible Church would like to encourage you to do the same in your community.

Portage Community Bible Church

FEATURES...

CHAPLAIN'S DIARY

The Missionary Ministry of Chaplaincy

● [Looking for a Few Good Chaplains](#)

I am a recent graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and have been ministering to 900 Marines and sailors in California's Mojave Desert for the past six months. As you can imagine, my ministry is many things, but it is never boring.

LT Mike Foskett, CHC, USNR

WOMEN'S VOICE

● [I Love to Sing](#)

Yes, I love to sing and even though I've never been able to carry a tune, it really doesn't matter. In fact, I'm like my father-in-law who was told while singing in the choir in Bible College, "Harry, you're a half note off." He replied, "O, thank you; I've never been that close before!"

Elvia Sprague

Love-The Heart of God, The Heart of the Believer

Rev. Les Lofquist
Executive Director

Marilyn Monroe has become a symbol of the emptiness of our Hollywood culture. Sinful, sensual, suicide. Those three words could describe her sad life's end. One of her several husbands was playwright Arthur Miller. In his autobiography *Timebends*, Miller wrote about his marriage to Marilyn Monroe. He watched her descend into the depths of depression and despair. He feared for her life as he watched their relationship crumble due to his wife's paranoia and growing dependence on barbiturates. One night, after another physician had been persuaded to give her yet another shot, Miller stood by her as she slept. "I found myself straining to imagine miracles...What if she were to wake and I were able to say, 'God loves you, darling,' and she were able to believe it!" (*Timebends*, NY: Harper & Row, 1987, p. 482).

To the unbelieving Arthur Miller, he apparently thought that a certain knowledge of the love of God would've changed the desperate condition he and his wife faced. That's remarkable, coming from a man who said he had "lost his religion" (*Ibid.*, p. 482). Yet in a world of tragic unbelief, God's love is truly life-changing.

THE LOVE OF GOD

"God is love" was twice repeated by John in his first epistle (1 John 4:8, 16). This is not the complete truth about God as far as His written revelation is concerned. But this is nevertheless an amazing truth which must be seen in its full context in order to be completely understood.

1. The Biblical context is essential. The Bible says that God is holy, undefiled, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens (Hebrews 7:26). He is "a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day" (Psalm 7:11). He is a jealous God absolutely committed to preserving His glory for Himself (Exodus 20:1-5). He "is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). God's love must be seen in that context, not negating any of those truths. It must be kept in the balance that Romans 11:22 presents: "Behold the goodness and severity of God."

2. The Ancient world's context is also important. In 1 John 4:8, 16 the Greek word for "love" was highly unusual in first-century culture. The word *agape* was not the word the Greek and Roman pagans would have used. They far more frequently used other common words for love: *phile* ("brotherly love") and *eros* ("romantic love" and "sexual passion"). The pagan gods of the First Century were lustful, sentimental, and shallow in their love. They only loved those who loved them. That is not the *agape* love of the God of the Bible!

3. The context within First John must also be remembered. Near the beginning of that letter John wrote "God is light" (1 John 1:5). This refers to God's holiness, God's truth, and God's splendor. When considering "God is love," you cannot forget that within the very same epistle the balance is provided: "God is light."

Having set all of this in context, it is so very amazing to see the portrayal of God's love in the Scriptures. His love caused Him to give His Son as a sacrifice for sin (John 3:16). His love was demonstrated toward sinners and enemies when Christ died in our behalf (Romans 5:6-10). His love is rich and great (Ephesians 2:4) and is in eternal contrast with our world of malice, envy, and hate (Titus 3:3-4).

Packer's words about the love of God are profound:

"It is staggering that God should love sinners; yet it is true. God loves creatures who have become unlovely and (one would have thought) unlovable. There was nothing whatever in the objects of

His love to call it forth; nothing in man could attract or prompt it. Love among men is awakened by something in the beloved, but the love of God is free, spontaneous, unevoked, uncaused. God loves men because He has chosen to love them" (Knowing God, IVP, 1973, p. 112).

That is what Paul meant when he wrote about God's love to those who had been dead in their sins, who lived by the devil's standards as displayed in the world and in full gratification of their sinful desires. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6).

RESULTS OF GOD'S LOVE

For those who come to experience it rightly, the love of God is eternally life-changing! We who are so corrupted and twisted by sin, self-absorbed and arrogant by nature, undergo a total and complete transformation. God pours His love into our hearts (i.e. those who are truly born again) and by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the love of God lavishly overflows out of our hearts and lives (Romans 5:5).

Genuine faith will inevitably be shown by love, a God-given love not easily counterfeited because of the supernatural extent of this love:

- **love for God (1 Cor. 16:22)**
- **love for God's Word (Ps. 119:97)**
- **love for the brethren (1 Jn. 3:14)**
- **love for righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18)**
- **love for our enemies (Mt. 5:44)**

God's transforming love is nothing like the romance of the world which involves a near-helpless sensation of desire that is selfish. It is not a mere feeling or emotion that ebbs and flows. It is not an uncontrollable passion, a blind emotion.

God's love arises from His deliberate choice. And in the greatest description of love ever written, we see the volitional and deliberate nature of God's love which should be similarly seen in the lives of his people:

"Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

CONCLUSION

Philosophers have written of the "silence of God" (Sartre) and the "absence of God" (Jaspers). Theologians have spoken of the "eclipse of God" (Buber) and even the "death of God" (Hamilton). But the Bible victoriously proclaims the love of God. And we celebrate His love for without it, our lives would be as empty and tragic as Marilyn Monroe's.

The heart of one of Paul's most significant New Testament prayers involved the knowledge of God's love: "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father...that He would grant you...to be able

to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" (Ephesians 3:14, 16, 18-19).

May we in some measure comprehend the love of God, and may it be seen in every aspect of our lives.

Oh, Give Me that Book **Deepening a Desire for the Word** Todd Kinde

I had many interests growing up that kept my mind and hands active. I enjoyed various hobbies delving into history, technology, cars and sports. After high school graduation, however, having been so diverse in my pursuits and not really mastering any of them I could not clearly discern a calling to any specific career or trade. My motives were mixed with aspirations for financial advancement which could support my multiple hobbies and pursuits.

During those teen years my mother and I enjoyed talking openly about my latest dream or interest. She patiently listened to my musings and ponderings of what to do with life. In one of our probing conversations Mom, being ever conscious of the Lord's return, simply asked me what I would want to be found doing when Christ returned. My answer was surprisingly immediate and revealing to me. At that moment it dawned upon me that I wanted to be studying the Bible when Christ returned.

I still did not know what God's call upon my life would be as it related to a career or trade but I knew that I wanted to study the Bible. I needed to learn how to study the Bible and so I enrolled in a Biblical Studies program at a local Christian liberal arts college. There was still work to do with my values and priorities but there was emerging a deepening desire for the Word of God. The words of John Wesley expressed my wakening passion, "Oh, give me that book! At any price give me the book of God! Let me be a man of one book."[1](#)

The psalmist declares, "I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your Word" (Psalm 119.16). This delight for the Holy Scriptures is the joy of a disciple who loves the Lord. One who loves the Lord will love the written Word through which He has chosen to reveal Himself. Similarly, if we are to love one another we will love the Word of God. John writes in his first epistle, "This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out His commands" (1 John 5.2). The Scriptures are the means by which we delight in God and find expression for the love of His people. With this truth in mind we now ponder a few dimensions of God's Word and how we can deepen our delight in it.

Dimensions of Delight in the Word of God

The Word is Life Giving

One delight of God's Word is its life-giving nature. Hebrews writes that the Word of God is itself living and active (Hebrews 4.12). It is the Word of the Creator that has been revealed to us. God spoke the world into existence with a Word. We tend to value objects that are hand crafted placing a higher price on them or holding a greater sentiment for them. We are not, however, merely hand made. We are Word made. God formed us out of the dust of the earth with His Word. We were shaped by the Word of God into His image and likeness.

God continues His work by His Word. As we were created in body by His Word so we are recreated in spirit by His Word. God gives us faith and new life in Christ through the Word and is

continuing to shape and form us into the likeness of His Son through that same Word. "He chose to give us birth through the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all He created" (James 1:18).

The Word is Authoritative

A second delight of God's Word is its power and authority. "The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic" (Psalm 29:4). The centurion of Matthew 8 came to Jesus with trust in the authority of the Word and stated, "Just say the Word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority" (Matthew 8:8-9). The power of God's creative Word is an authoritative Word reigning over all things.

The psalmist vows, "I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your Name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your Name and your Word" (Psalm 138:2). As we delight in the Scriptures we are humbled by its weight and authority. It bends us into a position of submission to the Lord. Having an authority in our lives is not a servile thing. Rather, we are free from the fear of having to trust ourselves and are given the confidence of trusting God who has revealed His good, pleasing and perfect will in the Word (Romans 12:2).

The Word is Personal

A third delight of God's Word is its intimacy. The Word of God is personal. Over 100 times the "Word of the Lord comes to" a prophet in the Old Testament. We see that the Lord comes personally in His Word often calling His prophets and servants by name. In the New Testament parable of the rich man and Lazarus, we know Lazarus by name who is with the Lord in Heaven but we do not know the name of the rich man who is separated from the Lord (Luke 16:19). When the Lord raised another Lazarus from the tomb He cried out to him by name, "Lazarus, come forth!" (Luke 11:43). Jesus appeared to Mary as she wept at the empty tomb and gently spoke to her, "Mary" (John 20:16). Jesus sent for the disciples and specifically Peter calling him by name to restore him into His presence with the Word (Mark 16:7).

God deals personally with you through His Word calling you to intimacy and obedience. In the above examples the voice of God came to particular people in history past. We do not expect to audibly hear the voice of God calling us by name this side of eternity. But His written Word to us is just as personal and intimate. God knows who you are, He knows your background, and He knows your every concern. God has revealed Himself to you in His written Word. Delight in His presence. Delight in His Word.

Deepening Our Delight in the Word of God

How then can we go deeper in these and other delightful dimensions of God's Word? Peter exhorts us to "crave the pure milk of the Word" (I Peter 2:2). The psalmist exclaims, "How sweet are your Words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103). Yet we are all too easily content with crusty bread. We forget that we do "not live on bread alone but on every Word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3). We deepen our craving for the delights of the Word by enjoying it often and in larger portions.

When teaching a Bible survey course at a local university, I required the students to read through the entire Old Testament. The reading record sheets returned to me were insightful. Many had read a percentage of the Scripture, which would ensure that a certain grade was received. Once the percentage was attained some students stopped reading their Bibles. I had not intended the Word to be merely another textbook for required reading. I wanted the Word to be their delight as the revelation of God and as a source of spiritual nourishment. Their experience was, however, the mechanistic plight we all face in rigidly reading our Bibles out of a sense of duty. Our

experience should be like that of the prophet, "When your Words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty" (Jeremiah 15:16).

A man who overcame the rigidity of dutiful Bible reading and experienced the prophet's joy was George Mueller. He is noted for his faithfulness in prayer and trust in God to provide for the ministry. His life story is filled with God's interventions to provide for the orphans under his care in England during the 1800's. He was indeed a man of prayer but he was first a man of the Word and found great delight in it. His personal testimony of deepening that delight is immensely helpful and refreshingly practical.

"I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it...The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God; searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word; not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul...Now what is food for the inner man: not prayer, but the Word of God; and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts..."²

Deepening our delight in the Word is of first importance for in it we find food for our souls. That food is God Himself revealed in Christ. Delight is deepened when we linger in the green pastures of the Scriptures and slowly savor its portions. As we delight in the Word we will soon be satisfied with nothing less. The Word transforms our priorities, passions, and pursuits. We will read other books but they will not satisfy our sense of delight as the one Book.

Many years have passed since that afternoon conversation with Mom. The journey has at times been wandering and circuitous but my many interests have galvanized into a singular passion for the Word of God. "I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your Word" (Psalm 119:16). God grant that we might be a people of the Word being shaped and formed by it into the image of His Son, Christ Jesus.

Todd Kinde is Senior Pastor of Grace Bible Church in Grandville, MI (an IFCA member church for 56 years).

1 John Wesley, "The Sermons Preface: An Introductory Comment." The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley. ed. Albert Cook Outler (Nashville, Abingdon Press. 1984), Section 5.

2 George Mueller, Autobiography of George Mueller. comp. Fred Bergen (London, J. Nisbet Co., 1906), 152-154; quoted in John Piper, Desiring God (Portland, Multnomah Press, 1986), 127-129, n. 6.

Love for Sinners

Spencer DeBurgh

There goes Jesus, the friend of sinners," the people who saw Him on the street would say. We in the IFCA who proclaim that we want to be like Him, must consider the question. Would people say that of us? Does our love for Jesus compel us to be the friend of sinners as He was?

Luke 15 is the Parable of the Prodigal. Or is it? Aren't there two sons? If we place the parable in its context, it is actually the parable of the older brother. Jesus spoke this parable to an audience of Pharisees who had the attitude of the older brother (vv. 1-3).

From this interpretive starting point, the symbolism is easily revealed. The father is God, or Jesus; the prodigal represents the sinners and tax collectors whom Jesus welcomed (vv. 1-2); and the older brother represents the Pharisee. The parable is told because the Pharisees complained and grumbled (v. 2). We hear this grumbling from the mouth of the older brother in the parable (vv. 28-30).

The lowest put-down becomes the highest praise

The Pharisees' grumbling put down, ironically, becomes high praise. They sneer out a low charge, "This man welcomes sinners," meaning "Jesus must be a corrupt teacher, a wicked man himself." But the truth behind their reproach against Him becomes a statement of honor to Him and good news to all men.

How wonderful that this declaration of Jesus' mercy and grace comes from the mouths of the most ungracious, judgmental legalists. These cold-hearted men here make the statement of God's warm-hearted acceptance. In this tiny phrase the gospel of salvation for sinners is declared by the ones who would oppose the Savior throughout His earthly ministry.

Why does He welcome sinners?

Why did sinners gather around Him? Our text answers this question with great specificity. Verse 1 answers this question with an infinitive of purpose. Jesus welcomed the sinners because they drew near Him "in order to hear Him." Many drew near to Jesus for a healing, or a free meal, but these came because they wanted to hear His teaching. Jesus spoke the truth, so certainly Jesus, in that teaching, would reprove their sins. He told them of the righteous kingdom of Heaven and of their need to repent. He spoke the truth--which cut across their lifestyle--and they listened. They stood with His teaching even though His teaching identified them as sinners. They took sides with Jesus against themselves. They did not draw near Jesus to make excuses, or to continue their sinful lifestyles. They were drawn by His teaching which promised regeneration and a new life

These are the sinners Jesus welcomes; the ones who, admitting their lostness, gather in to hear the way of salvation. This is the key that unlocks the meaning of the three parables in Luke 15. How does the shepherd receive the lost sheep? How does the woman receive the lost coin? How does the father receive his prodigal son? This is how Jesus receives repentant sinners!

The prodigal welcomed with a surprise party

Read the narrative of the prodigal son's return (vv. 17-24) and consider the son's reasoning in light of the father's reasoning. The son, as sinner, did not expect to be welcomed. The boy has blown it and he knows it. What he says in verses 18 and 19 is absolutely, fundamentally correct. His reasoning is morally flawless, he had received all that was due his as a son and he has squandered it. The prodigal knew that he had sinned and had punishment coming. He committed

the crime and he knew he ought to suffer the time. So what he said here was right, as far as he could see. But what did he not see?

He was making his correct calculation based on the power of his sin but not on the power of His father's love. The indispensable element that he did not see was his father's love. In his accounting of the situation he did not leave room in the equation for mercy. All he could see was his sin and the father's justice. Those were two very real components. But the beauty of the story, the wonder of salvation, the heart of its message is that the Father welcomes repentant sinners. The prodigal ran off to a far country (v. 13). Yet his father's love was such that while his boy was still long way off (v. 20) the father ran to be near to him with an embrace of forgiving love. How great a manner of love has been given to us. Here we see a glimpse into the depth of the love of God.

The Pharisees did not believe this, and on his way home, the prodigal did not believe this either. The welcome party hit them as a total surprise! What must the son have felt? How his heart must have thumped in his chest. He is keyed up for a confrontation and rehearsing the words, "I am unworthy, please just make me a servant." Yet, when he arrives, his father runs to him, embraces him, kisses him (vv. 20-24). The prodigal's wildest hope was to be thrown in as a slave and at least survive. But here the father is welcoming him with redeeming love. What the son did not expect of the father is what the Pharisees did not expect of Jesus. They would have sided with the prodigal's expectations, "Make him a slave. The dirty sinner! Serves him right!" They could not comprehend how the father could strike up the band for a welcoming party (vv. 24-25) or how Jesus could welcome repentant sinners (v. 2). This attitude is about to be personified in the older brother (vv. 25-28).

Two brothers compared and contrasted

When the party starts, we see the older brother refusing to go in (v. 28); just like the Pharisees would have refused to go in when Jesus welcomed sinners (v. 2). Both stayed on the outside. What is it that separated the older brother from the younger?

The younger brother was incapable of thinking that he is worthy to be a son anymore (v. 19). He cannot conceive of his father loving him or accepting him as a son because of his sin. What about the older brother? In verse 29 he says to his father, "I am worthy to be your son and you have treated me as your slave." He cannot conceive of his father loving his younger brother because of his own righteousness ("I never transgressed your commandment at any time"). Interesting to see the younger overwhelmed by his own sin and the older overwhelmed by his own self-righteousness. Exactly the heart condition of the sinners in verse 1 and the Pharisees in verse 2.

There is a sense in which these two brothers - though opposite - share one profound point in common. They are both mistaken about the father's love. The prodigal thinks he is too bad to receive it. The older brother thinks he is too good to need it. Neither of them was capable of grasping the profound love of the father.

Does the older brother live in my church?

Consider our opening question. Could I be called the friend of sinners? Position the question in the parable this way: am I like the father or like the older brother? Consider the older brother. He was obedient to his father's law, and faithful to do his duty. Many of us here in the IFCA would commend these qualities. But stop and consider what's lacking. He had no understanding of his father's heart! His father had the joy of forgiveness and love and this older brother could only stand outside and stew because he had no share in his father's heart. Could it be that some of our churches are faithfully obeying God's Word but we have no understanding of this compassionate, forgiving, outreaching heart? Are our churches so clean that we don't even speak with sinners? Is

there any of the older brother's spirit in our churches? If we see the spirit of the older brother, let our hearts be melted and molded by the heart of the father!

Are you like Jesus or like a religious person?

Am I like Jesus or like the Pharisee? Jesus attracted sinners while the Pharisees repelled sinners. Jesus ate with them and shared the message with them while the religious leaders turned away from them. Jesus taught them and spoke with them while Pharisees ignored them and spoke against them.

The claim to fame of the Pharisees was their separation from sin and sinners.

They were famous for keeping their distance. They could not comprehend the fact that godliness consists in a desire to draw sinners to salvation. They thought God wanted them to keep distant from sinners, but here is God incarnate drawing near to sinners. It is no wonder they criticized Jesus, and no wonder the older brother criticized the father. The loving heart of God expressed in evangelism exploded the self-righteous religious notions of the day. What about today?

Do we speak to sinners about God or do we merely speak about sinners to our fellow religious people? We must be compelled by the heart of God to be ambassadors of His love to sinners. Yes, we speak against sin in the church and maintain our holy witness. But we must be in the world enough to win the world while not letting the world get in us enough to stain our lives with unholiness. This is the line that the church walks. Let us not stay so far over to one side that we are not the friend of sinners. We do not want to be isolated, always on defense and never playing offense. We want to move forward and reach people with the redeeming love of Christ.

There is joy in heaven (v. 7) when we reach sinners with His love. Jesus is saying to the Pharisees, "While you grumble, heaven glories. You reject what makes heaven rejoice." Let the challenge of this chapter push us toward more effective evangelism. Don't miss out on the joy of reaching sinners as our Savior did.

Spencer DeBurgh is the Senior Pastor of Racine (WI) Bible Church, a historic IFCA International church planted by Billy McCarrell and where John Walvoord came to know the Lord.

Love for the Flock

Darrell Bendorf

Christ and the Flock

Christ loved the church, and He gave Himself for the church. This He did in order to sanctify and cleanse the church. Since those in the church are members of His body (this is a great mystery!), Christ nourishes and cherishes the church. When He presents the church to Himself it will be glorious and holy. The church will have no spots, wrinkles, or blemishes. This synopsis of Ephesians 5:25-33 shows that Christ creates the church, Christ prepares the church, Christ presents the church to Himself, and Christ receives the church.

The New Testament is laced with images that highlight the relationship between Christ and the church. The church is a body, Christ is the head. The church is a temple, Christ is the cornerstone. This subordinate/superior pattern continues with virgin/beloved, bride/bridegroom, people/owner, household/firstborn, new man/creator, elect race/founder, royal priesthood/High Priest, and inheritance/heir. The most endearing image was introduced by Jesus Himself: "They will become one flock with one shepherd" (John 10:16). The church is that flock, and He is that Shepherd.

The love of the Great Shepherd for His flock is our motivation to love the flock. The church possesses a majestic head, an exalted position, and a glorious future and is therefore worthy of our love.

Paul and the Flock

The Apostle Paul provides both instruction and example in loving the flock. He proposes an impressive "To Do List" from the imperatives and expressions with imperative force in Acts 20:17-38. Serve the Lord with humility and tears even in trials; teach what is profitable publicly and privately; preach repentance to God and faith in Christ; do not place a higher value on your own life than you place on the ministry of preaching the gospel of God's grace; proclaim the whole counsel of God; guard the flock; shepherd the flock; be alert; admonish everyone with tears; do not covet others' money and possessions; work with your hands to support yourself and others; help the weak; aim to give, not to receive. When we add to this the content of Paul's letters dedicated to ministry instruction (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) and portions of his other epistles, we have his comprehensive view of the ministry. Paul loved the flock by fulfilling this God-given ministry.

Did Paul's practice match his directives? Though we commonly characterize Paul as an itinerant missionary, he spent considerable time pastoring churches in Ephesus (three years) and Corinth (eighteen months). The Corinthian church was anything but easy to pastor. First Corinthians, written after Paul's eighteen month stay, shows that the church was marked by divisions, immaturity, rejection of Paul's apostolic office, gross immorality, prideful refusal to practice church discipline, publicly staged member vs. member lawsuits, unstable marriages, flaunting of spiritual liberty, disorderly conduct in worship services, disagreement over the role and conduct of women, confusion over spiritual gifts, erroneous teaching about the resurrection, and lack of organization in church finances. With gentle authority Paul systematically responded to each issue. Contact with the church continued. There were at least two more visits and two more letters, the last of which is Second Corinthians (the other letter is not part of the New Testament canon).

As we turn our focus to Second Corinthians, we see a letter that can be described as the heart of Paul. Early in the letter Paul assured the church that he loves them: "I wrote to you...that you might know the love which I have especially for you" (2 Cor. 2:4). But this man of unflinching character turns out to be human, susceptible to discouragement and capable of being hurt.

Out of this complex letter an amazing picture of a loving pastor emerges. To begin with, Paul had been having tough times. "In Asia we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves..." (2 Cor. 1:9-10). He entered Macedonia with a heavy heart, having failed to make connections with Titus in Troas (2 Cor. 2:12-13). The burdens followed him to Macedonia. "We were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within" (2 Cor. 2:5). He experienced no relief until Titus caught up with him (2 Cor. 2:6-7). Do you feel Paul's stress and fatigue? "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8-9).

Next, Paul was uncertain that the issues raised in First Corinthians had been resolved. He wrote, "For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish: perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances. I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced (2 Cor. 12:20-21).

Furthermore, Paul was certain that one heartbreaking matter had not been put to rest. Some prominent Corinthians still denied his apostolic authority. He was misrepresented by these adversaries who were not beneath leveling personal attacks (2 Cor. 10:10). Paul regarded them as unsaved (2 Cor. 11:12-15), and was grieved at the potential damage to the flock (2 Cor. 11:3-4). Apparently even his love for the church was openly challenged (2 Cor. 12:16).

Despite the powerful opposition in Corinth and tension in his ongoing work, Paul plainly declared that he loves the church, claiming God as his witness (2 Cor. 11:11). He wanted the church to regard him as their bond-servant (2 Cor. 4:5), and he asserted that his actions were for their benefit (2 Cor. 4:15). Paul did indeed respond to the attacks, noting that he was the first to preach the gospel in Corinth (2 Cor. 11:2), possessed impeccable credentials (2 Cor. 11:21-29), and was authenticated by apostolic signs (2 Cor. 12:12). But this defense was not self-serving. As for himself, Paul testified that God comforts him in his afflictions so that it will be possible for him to comfort others in their afflictions, and he assured the church that he was not losing heart (2 Cor. 1:4; 4:16).

What can we conclude from this? Paul loved the flock more than he loved himself. He demonstrated his love by enduring trials and fulfilling his God-given ministry. Strong opponents did not stop him from joyful ministry to the church at large. The closing lines of Second Corinthians are from a bitter-free, loving pastor. "Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you" (2 Cor. 13:11-13).

You and the Flock

Shepherds must love the flock. Paul fulfilled his ministry, and he exhorted Timothy to do the same: "But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). Today's pastors who would love their flocks need only fulfill their ministry. In the course of doing ministry, every pastor must give attention to his own heart. "Therefore take heed to yourselves..." (Acts 20:28). Life-style and doctrine must match. The eldership qualifications of First Timothy and Titus must be kept current. Personal practice must be in harmony with public preaching. Spiritual graces must be dominant. Pastors are exposed to greater temptation than others. When they sin the effects travel far, since many eyes are watching. Loving the flock requires that spiritual leaders keep their desires, thoughts, words and actions in check.

Sheep must love the flock. Every believer has been gifted for service, and love for the flock is expressed through those gifts. A woman told her pastor that every member of a household had simultaneously gotten ill. Compelled by compassion, she had gone to the home of her friends, laundered the clothes, washed the dishes, scrubbed the floors, and cleaned the bathrooms...all without speaking a word to the beleaguered family. Later in the conversation with the pastor she spoke of her admiration of those in the church who were gifted to minister, and she bemoaned the fact that she had no spiritual gifts! The pastor explained that those loving deeds were the gifts of mercy (Rom. 12:8) and helps (1 Cor. 12:28) in action. When you see a need, roll up your sleeves and get to work. It's God's way for you to love the flock.

Christ loved and gave Himself for the flock. So must we.

Darrell Bendorf is the pastor of Harvard Bible Church, Harvard, Illinois, where he has ministered for 16 years. He and his wife, Charlotte, have 2 adult children.

Receiving Love from God's People

Dorothy Baker

Pain ripped through the muscles of my back, nearly continuous and almost unbearable. The combination of narcotics and muscle relaxant left me with little appetite, much weariness and with some of my hair falling out. After the loss of 25 pounds, I spent a few days in the hospital which did little to relieve my misery. I had been diagnosed with polymyalgia, giant cell arteritis and a fractured vertebra from osteoporosis. Nearly a year passed and then gradually the symptoms disappeared. The thoughtful care of our Christian doctor and the healing touch of our wonderful Lord brought about a recovery that I rejoice in daily and that I thought would be impossible at the time. I was fitted with a small back brace and with a walker for any distance walking. Otherwise I am back to "normal".

This story, however, is not about what happened to me. It was only an introduction to tell you about the loving care of a family. Without their care I would not have made it. Although my husband helped in so many ways, still there were things that needed to be done that he could not do. This "family" was our local church. I had not realized until then the number of ways that this "family" would display their love and concern for me during this needy time.

A family loaned me a wheelchair for as long as I needed it. A woman in the church paid for a month of "Meals on Wheels" and then the church continued this for three more months. Other meals were provided by many when needed and my waning appetite was once again tantalized by all the delicious smells and the tempting sights.

A beautician came and did my hair. A carpenter built a ramp to the outside so I would not have to negotiate the two steps in my wheelchair. Another woman cleaned my house every two weeks. Someone else picked up my wrinkled laundry for me and ironed it. There were cards, visits and phone calls. Every deed done was so appreciated.

The most important ministry of the church was, of course, prayer. I was put on the prayer chain here and in several other churches. Six years later a few people still stop me on the street and ask how I am doing. Then they tell me that their church was praying for me!

The Gaithers have written a song entitled "The Family of God" and these words certainly apply to my church--my family at Bark River Bible Church.

Dorothy is married to retired IFCA pastor William Baker. They live in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan with the people they served in Bark River.

Loving Your Pastor

Bud Haskell

What do you mean, certain people do not like their pastor? Are they really upset with his ministry and his preaching? Are they really leaving the church because they think his sermons do not feed them?"

These questions are representative of my thoughts when as a child I realized that some men and women do not love their pastor. It was quite a difficult revelation for my innocent mind to comprehend that some people had such ideas about my Dad. He always made every effort to protect his children from the darker side of the pastoral ministry. However, it is impossible to keep the tone of angry conversations away from the ears of inquisitive children. In my ignorance, I

thought everyone appreciated all the long hours he spent studying, counseling, and leading church business meetings. Even though this may be called naïve thinking, the fact is some people have difficulty showing God's love to their pastor. Throughout the years I have heard many stories about the difficult relations between pastors and their congregations. It appears that there is a need for reminding church members of their responsibility to have some affection for the shepherd of their church.

Now, do not miss my point. Every congregation that I know expresses their corporate appreciation for their pastor regularly. (By the way, our church is very good at this.) This is often accomplished by following the example of Focus on the Family's Pastor Appreciation Month, which is celebrated during the month of October of each year. Other churches remember their pastor and his family at Christmas time with presents or that vacation bonus. Countless other ways are used to honor pastors. All of these methods do greatly encourage pastors. It is normal for churches to obey Paul's exhortation found in 1 Timothy 5:17-18, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages.'" Pastors are given much honor by their flock. However, as already stated there is a lot of heartache found in our churches. The source of the problem is not corporately but individually. Therefore, our focus will be on each person's responses towards God, their pastor, and their church.

In order to have a healthy understanding of the role of a pastor, the Biblical shepherd metaphor ought to be discussed. Shepherds are found in many places in the Scriptures caring for their sheep. He found them shade for resting, cool water for drinking, and ample feed for eating. He protected them from lions, bears, and other predators. He would bring them to the sheepfold at night for added protection. The good shepherd would bind up their wounds, guide them, and search for them when they wandered off. He would bring back the lost ones. Just like the literal shepherd so a pastor cares for his congregation/flock.

In fact the New Testament develops the theme of the pastor. One of the spiritual gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11-12 is the pastor-teacher. The office of elder/bishop or overseer/pastor or shepherd are taken together in Acts 20:17, 28, "From Miletus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church... Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Also, 1 Peter 5:1-4 combines elder/overseer/pastor, "The elders among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." Notice that these passages the plurality of elders. For this article I am referring to the elder "who labors in word and doctrine," and many call him the pastor. All elders especially the pastor-teacher is responsible for the spiritual care and feeding of the flock.

So, what can the typical believer do to express his appreciation and affection for his pastor? First of all, we must seek to please God as we express our love for our pastor. He is the man God appointed to teach and care for you spiritually. His position is a calling from God and a ministry not just a job. He is being obedient to God as he serves in your assembly. He was given the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher. This is the Holy Spirit directed ability to shepherd your congregation. He has the special God-given capacity to teach God's Word. At this given moment he is God's man for your local church. Let him be the man God wants. Do not put your image of the ideal pastor upon him. Your pastor is not perfect nor is he God. Each shepherd is unique and must be allowed to use his spiritual gifts as God intended. Please do not feel obligated to compliment him for every sermon he preaches. Instead of the repetitive "good sermon", you

might want to give God praise for a particular point that really blessed you or caused you to change your thinking. Remember the message comes from the Bible. Ultimately God ought to receive the glory. Always speak the truth in love to him as you would anyone else. If you have a question about what has been taught, please ask it. He ought to welcome constructive discussion of his sermon. Do not love and obey him blindly.

Even though you trust him fully, you ought to continue to use your mind and spirit, because he might be mistaken about a certain doctrine. Loving believers can help him see his error in his presentation. If he is in sin, follow the instruction in 1 Timothy 5:19-20, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear."

If you really want to please God and your pastor, constantly work on your personal walk with God. You do not have to laugh at his jokes, but be faithful in your attendance at the services, in giving your tithes and offerings, by regularly reading your Bible, and by obeying God's Word. Be on time for the services, bring your Bible, and use it. Use your spiritual gifts and volunteer to serve the Lord in your local church. Praise God for your pastor publicly and privately. Show honor and respect for his position. Obey the command found in Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Can you imagine his reaction if many of his congregation were actively telling others the Gospel and inviting them to church?

There is a phenomenon that is prevalent today. Many people are not loyal to their church, their pastor, or the leadership. The common attitude among believers is seeking what the church can do for me. If their preconceived needs are not met, they run to the next church. They are shopping for the best deal and are not searching for the place God has called them to serve. There are three good reasons for leaving your church: 1) your death, 2) your move out of town, or 3) there is real apostasy in your church. Every church needs loyal members who defuse rumors, seek to stop factions developing, do not listen to petty complaints, and promote unity. Always give your pastor and elders the benefit of the doubt since you want others to do that for you. The Golden Rule does apply for pastors too.

Another way to encourage your pastor and protect the unity of your church is to always be a peacemaker. Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." We are to seek reconciliation. Always swiftly deal with any bitterness that you may be harboring. We are to forgive one another as Christ has also forgiven us. If another person in the church has wronged you, go to them directly. Do not wait for them to acknowledge their sin. Matthew 18:15 says, "Moreover if your brother sons against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." This does not mean to gossip and complain to all who will listen about your transgressor. It is to be one-on-one. Do not let others fight your battles. We need to genuinely listen to each other. Gaining your brother is the goal. As you prepare to go to him following Matthew 7:1-5, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Of course, if your brother does not listen to you, Matthew 18:16-17 gives more steps to follow. Every church needs many peacemakers. Please join that crowd. Your church will be better for your efforts.

Lastly, regularly pray for your pastor, his family, and his ministry; also show them your genuine love and concern. It is important to remember your pastor's family time. His wife and children

need his attention, love, and time. However, if you have a real need, please contact him through the established church channels. He does not want to bring pastoral care to you in time of crisis. Let him decide how to handle the situation. It can be distressing to him if you needed him but did not let him know about your situation. Please do not put unreal expectations on his wife or children. They need normal lives too. Do not assume automatically that they are invited to every event on the church calendar. A personal invitation expresses your love for them. They may not be able to attend, but you have shown they are important to you.

A wonderful, caring church family is the best place a believer can be. Encouragement, love, and support are found there. The world can be a lonely place. However, the local church can express God's love daily to all who enter into it. It is my prayer that you are not a problem sheep but a believer who loves his pastor, is loyal to the local assembly, and ministers in his congregation. The concept of loving your pastor ought to be a life-long pursuit. May God give you the grace to do so.

Merton (Bud) Haskell, Jr. is Pastor at Grace Bible Church in Hanford, California. He is also the President of the Northern California Regional. His father, Merton Haskell, Sr. is also an IFCA pastor.

Editor's Note: Over the past several years the Executive Committee of IFCA International has become burdened to help increase the evangelistic zeal of our churches, since that was one of the stated goals in our Mission and Vision Statement. At the Mid-Year Meeting held in November, the Executive Committee interviewed Larry Moyer and found him to be passionately committed to expository preaching, evangelism, and the IFCA doctrinal position. Therefore, the EC appointed him as a consultant to IFCA International in evangelism; and determined to utilize EvanTell as a recommended training resource in evangelism for IFCA International. It is our sincere prayer that this partnership between IFCA International and EvanTell will enable us to fulfill the goal of our churches becoming more evangelistic. This article is the beginning of a series that Larry will write for Voice over the next number of issues.

Five Common Mistakes in Sharing Your Faith

R. Larry Moyer

I don't know when I have felt any more embarrassed. As I backed my car into our garage, I stopped just before entering and opened my door to look at something lying on the driveway. Then, looking over my right shoulder, I continued backing up. I was startled by the sound of steel hitting steel. I gasped in horror. I had driven the open door into the bumper of our other car! The body shop repairman lifted my spirits (until he gave me the bill) when he remarked, "That's a common mistake--it makes you feel stupid, but it happens all the time."

Similarly, there are mistakes in evangelism which happen all the time. By correcting them our effectiveness in evangelism may be enhanced.

Let's review five of the most common mistakes with the goal of sharpening our skills when speaking to others about the Savior.

Mistake #1 - Starting with the Wrong Question

Someone wrote to me, "How do you witness to someone who has been in church for 50 years and would be offended if you asked, 'Are you a Christian?'" My answer was: don't ask him! Most churchgoers will answer "yes." If you pursue the issue, it appears as though you are disputing their word.

A more revealing question is, "Has anybody ever taken a Bible and shown you how you can know you are going to heaven?" That puts the emphasis where the Bible puts it--on eternal life. Many who label themselves "Christian" admit that they do not know for certain that they are going to heaven. This admission gives you the opportunity to explain how the Bible says you can know you are going to heaven and to give a clear presentation of the gospel.

Mistake #2 - Sharing the Whole Bible, Not the Gospel

Who seems to be the most enthusiastic about evangelism? New believers! They often know little about the Bible, but are eager to explain the message--"Jesus died for me."

As many believers grow, they forget that simple message. Instead, when trying to explain saving faith, they share the whole Bible--from Genesis to Revelation.

God uses four verbs to define the Gospel: "Christ died for our sins...He was buried...He was raised...He was seen" (1 Corinthians 15:3-5). Since His burial is proof that He died and the fact that He was seen is proof that He arose, the Gospel in its simplicity can be defined in ten words, "Christ died for my sins and rose from the dead."

Mistake #3 - Not Clearly Defining What the Bible Means By Believe

Explaining how to get to heaven is not difficult yet we make it so because of confusing terminology. A businessman sought the counsel of his pastor. His words reflected his confusion when he remarked, "One person says, 'Invite Christ into your heart;' another says 'Come to God'. Another says, 'Give your life to Jesus'. Would you please tell me, what must I do to be saved?"

The Gospel of John uses the word "believe" 98 times. This book was written so that readers will believe and reflects this purpose in stating, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). It means to trust in Jesus Christ alone as our only way to heaven.

As a speaker, I fly routinely. When you fly you understand that you are depending on a pilot, a person, to get you to your destination. Similarly, God is asking non-Christians to trust in Christ alone as their only way to heaven. Why make confusing what God makes clear?

Mistake #4 - Assuming Someone's Salvation

The man sitting next to me on the plane appeared to be friendly, so I decided I'd try something. I opened my briefcase, allowing him to see my Bible. He soon asked, "Are you a preacher?" I said, "Yes, why do you ask?" He answered, "I came to God several months ago. My life has surely changed." I replied, "That's exciting. Let me ask you something. Do you know for certain that if you died today you'd go to heaven?" He answered, "Oh, no. In fact, I'm sure I wouldn't." After visiting about the truth of the gospel for about half an hour, I had the privilege of seeing him trust Christ. As he stepped off the plane with tears in his eyes, he put his arm around me and said, "Thanks for talking to me. I knew something was missing. I just didn't know what."

Be careful not to assume anyone's salvation. When George Barna took a survey in the early '90s, one-third of those who called themselves "born again" Christians felt they would get to heaven as a result of their good works, rather than God's grace through Jesus Christ. That tells me those one-third did not know the Savior. Jesus' words are clear, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Mistake #5 - Equating a Lack of Response in Evangelism with Failure

The Bible doesn't teach that God wants me to bring my friends to Christ. In fact, John 6:44 says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." Instead, God expects me to bring Christ to my friends. He has to bring them to Christ.

As we present Christ, we find people in different stages of receptivity. Jesus addressed this when He said, "One sows and another reaps" (John 4:37). God wants us to concentrate on being faithful and let Him make us fruitful. God holds us responsible for contact, not conversion. After presenting the Gospel clearly, if someone doesn't trust Christ, you have been as faithful as the person who may eventually lead him to the Savior.

We will make mistakes in evangelism. After all, that is typically part of any learning process. As we learn from those mistakes, we enhance our skills in evangelism. The rewards are eternal. Someone once said, "When I stand in that heavenly city and saints around me appear, I hope someone comes up to me and says, 'You're the one who invited me here.'" What could be more rewarding?

Adapted from one of EvanTell's series of bulletin inserts, available for purchase at www.evantell.org or by calling 1-800-947-7359.

Canvassing for Christ

During the months of August, September and October, the folks of Portage Community Bible Church in Portage, IN, went throughout the community handing out flyers and tracts. This was done on a Saturday in each of these months.

They began with a Friday night "kick-off" fellowship that included a pizza party, fellowship and then an orientation of what they were going to do. The orientation included instructions about what to do and say when a person answers the door. They made up packets that included a flyer about the church and their ministries, a flyer about AWANA and a Gospel tract. They used EvanTell's booklet, "May I Ask You a Question?" This information was put in a plastic bag made to hang on a doorknob so that if no one was home, they could hang it on the door. They averaged about 24 individuals each time out and handed out 1000 packets on each Saturday for a total of 3,000 packets.

This is a great idea for all our IFCA churches and the people at Portage Community Bible Church would like to encourage you to do the same in your community.

Macedonia or Montana, What's the Difference?

Jim Miller

Montana is a long way from Macedonia. I think of that exotic place where Paul roamed and preached, how different from Montana. But is it really? Macedonia is much smaller, probably doesn't get much snow, but the folks there are farmers who raise wheat and barley, they tend to sheep goats & cattle, much like farmers do here in Montana. Probably the greatest similarity is that both are filled with lost people!

Paul was on his second missionary journey when the Lord sent him a vision for the lost people of Macedonia who needed to hear the gospel. John Mark had departed from him and he and Silas were traveling through Syria. (Acts 15:41) "And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming

the churches." Paul went to the established churches and helped to strengthen them further. If there were already churches there, why confirm them? Because the foundation needed shored up. They needed the ministry of Paul and Silas. The result of that ministry....(Acts 16:5) "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." Fruit! The churches needed help and God sent Paul and Silas to minister to them.

Then Paul received a Vision from God. (Acts 16:9) "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Macedonia needed the gospel. There were all manner lost souls there, farmers, businessmen, government officials, all sorts of people who needed to hear the wonderful good news of Salvation. Paul's response to this Vision: (Acts 16:10) "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." He was burdened for those folks. His heart was touched and he couldn't stay away. So the gospel went with Paul to Macedonia and the church at Berea among others was born.

Macedonia and Montana, what's the difference? 2000 years and 6,000 miles but in God's view nothing. We have folks here in need of the gospel just like Macedonia of old. We have churches here in need of "confirming", in need of strengthening so they can be established in faith and increase in numbers. Right now in Montana our greatest need is for pastors. Numerous are the flocks with out shepherds. How tragic if these churches were to wither and die for lack of a shepherd's care.

Certainly it isn't easy to pastor in Montana. We have harsh winters with cold winds. Our agri-based economy is hurting. Montana is a land of culture clashes and often closed communities. Who would want to minister there? Someone like Paul, called of God to a people who need Christ. In reality it isn't easy to pastor anywhere! All areas have their unique challenges and Montana has plenty, but Montana also has some unique blessings! Hearty winters that mean skating, skiing, snowmobiling! Close knit communities that once they get to know you, love you as their own. Who wouldn't want to pastor there! Those who aren't called to minister in Montana. God didn't send everyone to Macedonia, just a choice few. The ministry in Montana is about the calling of God and a heart for people here in this Macedonia of the west.

So I am issuing a call, "Come over into Montana and help us". Certainly it would have been easier and far more cost effective for Paul to have stayed in Antioch but God had bigger things for him! God gave him a vision for the lost in a far away place. Our prayer is that God might give a vision and a burden to Godly men who would come and help us fulfill the great commission here in Montana. Won't you pray with me for this place. Pray for preachers who preach the gospel and teach the precious Word of God. Pray for church planters who are willing to labor in a godless community with the compassion of God. There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Macedonia or Montana, what's the difference?

Jim Miller is Montana Director for Northwest Independent Church Extension and may be reached at 406-563-7006 or millerjk2@aol.com

Looking for a Few Good Chaplains

LT Mike Foskett, CHC, USNR

The following description of a Navy Chaplain ministering to Marines is by Chaplain Mike Foskett, who is serving at the Marine Corps Air/Ground Combat Center, 29 Palms, California. His account serves as a call to men who want to serve the Lord in a fertile missionary field of opportunity - the military Chaplaincy - whether on active duty or in the Reserve or National Guard. You can learn more about these opportunities by contacting me as noted at the end of this article. [Chaplain Warren Dane, Director of Chaplaincy]

Imagine doing this as a pastor . . .

- Walking 8 miles with a 45 pound back-pack through the rocky "hills" of a Southern California desert with 120 of your "congregation;"
- Voluntarily entering a chamber hazy with tear gas, and then being asked to remove your gas mask in order to make sure that it "works;"
- Counseling a distraught young Marine on how to save his marriage before he leaves for a six-month deployment to Japan;
- Weight-lifting with a muscle-bound Marine who pours out his heart about the difficulties of his work and the joys of his love life;
- Participating in a contemporary worship service where the Word is preached;
- Leading a Bible study at the break of dawn in "the field"

If this seems like unusual activities for a pastor, welcome to the Chaplain Corps! The above highlight some of the many activities I had just last week. I am a recent graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and have been ministering to 900 Marines and sailors in California's Mojave Desert for the past six months. As you can imagine, my ministry is many things, but it is never boring.

What is it like being a pastor to Marines and Sailors? It is patiently looking past the vulgar language of a typical Marine or sailor and helping him fan the flame of his desire to seek God. It is empathizing with the distraught sailor in a counseling session and helping him to see how God can save his marriage. It is playing basketball or lifting weights with a Marine and talking to him about how God views relationships with the opposite sex. It is conducting a Sunday worship service on Tuesday on the side of a grassy hill to a group of Marines that haven't taken a shower for a week. It is teaching a class on Spouse Abuse prevention to a full auditorium, and a Bible study to a small group. It is the license to talk to tattooed, dangerous-looking warriors about the God who created them and who loves them. It is feeling close to God as I sleep on the ground under a starry canopy that He created. It is co-teaching and co-counseling with my wife. It is many things.

What is it not? It is not routine - every day is an adventure! It is not compromising on my faith. I have had more opportunities to share the Gospel in the past six months than I have ever had in any other ministry setting. For example, I was recently given the opportunity to conduct a memorial service for one of my sailors who died in a car accident. This gave me the chance to talk to over 500 Marines and sailors about sin and the need for salvation. Most of them were not saved.

It is not easy. I have already spent over 50 days away from my wife, and I am scheduled to leave for Okinawa, Japan for six months. Yet our marriage has never been stronger, since we view time

apart as a sacrifice God has called us to make. My wife, Aundrea, is already having a vibrant ministry with the wives of my Marines and sailors - something she feels very called to do for the Lord. She has also discovered that she is not alone when I am away - she has a network of women whose husbands are also gone.

It is not a Christian environment. While I may speak freely of Christ, I find that much of what I say is pre-evangelistic. After all, I must get them to understand the essence of the Gospel before they can accept it. Meanwhile, I frequently deal with the devastation brought by sinful choices. In those moments I am more of a friend and confidant than anything else.

Since September 11, the seriousness of our ministry has dramatically increased. The result is an increased operation tempo, and many are taking a look at the deeper questions of life. Pray that God would irresistibly draw servicemen and their family members into a relationship with Him, and that He would use us as a catalyst for conversion.

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As you are entering a new year of ministry would you prayerfully consider if the military Chaplaincy, active duty, Reserve or National Guard is for you? If your answer is yes, or you are interested and want to know more, you can contact our Director of Chaplaincy as noted below.

There are also Chaplaincy opportunities in the civilian world with police or fire departments, prisons and with hospitals.

Rev. Warren Dane,
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I Love to Sing

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Yes, I love to sing...and even though I've never been able to carry a tune, it really doesn't matter. In fact, I'm like my father-in-law who was told while singing in the choir in Bible College, "Harry, you're a half note off." He replied, "O, thank you; I've never been that close before!" The apostle Paul told the Ephesians that their expression of love to the Lord was to be a melody of the heart. I can do that!

At times when washing dishes, or cleaning the house, or riding in the car, and even at night I'll start singing. Sometimes it's just a few lines, and often just the "one-liners." One of the songs I've sung over and over is ...

"I'll praise the Lord in the morning, I'll praise the Lord at noon,

I'll praise the Lord in the even time, Which ends my praises too soon.

I'll praise the Lord every moment, 'Til life is over and then,

I'll enter the gates of glory, And begin all over again."

What is it about music that speaks to the heart? Music has always been an important tool in setting the atmosphere and mood of our home, and has also been used in directing the hearts and minds of our children to the Lord and to the truths of the Word of God. They would play their favorites songs over and over, even wearing out the tapes--and nearly wearing out Mom and Dad in the process, but we're grateful for the impact that some of those songs had on our kids.

I recently shared with the women at an IFCA Ladies' Retreat that songs 1) Bring glory to God; 2) Bring peace to our hearts; and 3) Bring joy to others. Here's what God's Word teaches us:

Songs bring GLORY to God

Psalm 69:30, "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving."

Psalm 100:2, "Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing." Isaiah 42:10, "Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth...."

Songs bring PEACE to our hearts

Job 35:10, "God my maker who giveth songs in the night"

Psalm 42:8, "The LORD will command his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me"

2 Chronicles 29:27, "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also..."

Isaiah 12:2, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

Songs bring JOY to others

Isaiah 51:11, "Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

Ephesians 5:19, "speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord."

Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Psalm 40:3, "He has put a new song in my mouth--praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD."

So, I'll just keep on singing and making a joyful noise. May the song of the Lord fill your heart; may His joy be your strength!

Elvia Sprague serves as Women's President for IFCA International.