



*An Independent Church Journal
July-August 2003*

IN THIS ISSUE...

Fruitful and Flourishing

● [Fruitful and Flourishing](#)

...a luxuriant tree in the desert region is quite a sight, and a most fitting picture of the godly man. That kind of tree is not planted by itself...

Les Lofquist

IFCA International

Executive Director

● [Lessons from the Desert](#)

Have you ever become so weary and discouraged in your service for Christ that you seriously considered leaving your place of ministry or even the ministry entirely? I have been there and know that it is a very unpleasant experience in which to find oneself. I hit the lowest point in my ministry three years ago...

Charlie Paine

● [The Smiles of Satan](#)

I figured that because my father had lost one leg in a war he never talked about, we did more reading and listening in my house than most other people. I always thought he had more reason than a lot of people to be mad and bitter, losing a lot of chances to play and all...but he never saw it that way. He said he was still a soldier in an even greater war...

Jeff Plank

● [A Better Way to Handle Abuse](#)

Sexual abuse in the church does not have to end in broken lives, agonizing lawsuits, and divided congregations. When people follow God's ways and words, these sinful (and terrible) incidents can result in healing, justice, and healthier churches...

Ken Sande

● [Rediscovering Hospitality](#)

The Scriptures are clear in their emphasis on practicing hospitality. And the practical implications for the building up of the Body of Christ are significant....

Tim Swan

● [Being a Pastor's Kid](#)

I was recently fixing myself a bagel at work, when my manager sneezed. I gave a perfunctory "bless you." I wasn't quite sure how to take his response. He said, "You know, you're pretty well adjusted for a preachers' kid." I said thank you, but I wasn't quite sure what to make of that....

Andy Bauer

● [*Borrow to Build? One Church's Answer*](#)

It was a beautiful day, seemingly, as one of our trustees was walking around the perimeter of our church building. Looking down, he noticed a chunk of mortar that was lying on the ground. As he continued walking along the side of the building, he found that there had been quite a lot of mortar that had managed to find its way onto the ground below. Jeff was a civil engineer, so he knew something was wrong....

Dave Greiner

● [*Assimilating New Believers*](#)

How do you encourage those who are excited about Christ to be excited about church? Once they enter the front door how do you keep them from going out the back door? How do you assimilate new believers into the life and activity of the local church?...

R. Larry Moyer

FEATURES...

CHAPLAIN'S DIARY

The Missionary Ministry of Chaplaincy

● [*News From Operation Iraqi Freedom*](#)

Your chaplains ministering in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps in the Middle East during Operation Iraqi Freedom are occasionally able to share via email how God is blessing in lives. Following are excerpts from their reports on ministry sent me via email.

IFCA International Chaplains Alan Lenz, James Richey, Dale Parker & Matt Kreider

WOMEN'S VOICE

● [*Take Time to Teach What is Good*](#)

Heading down the elevator to my first IFCA International Annual Convention I reflected on how drastically life had changed in the previous six weeks. I had gone from being a full-time schoolteacher to a full-time new mom and a new pastor's wife. Just a week prior we had moved over two thousand miles away from friends and family to a new church where my husband began as a Pastoral Intern. Life had a few transitions for me and I wasn't prepared for the drastic emotional drain on my system...

Kristin Williams

CHURCH EXTENSION

● [*Why Plant Churches?*](#)

We had recently moved to Central Oregon with the goal of planting a church from which we could minister throughout the area. I was talking to a leader of the church I had previously pastored. His reply was typical of what I have heard so many times....

Earl Brubaker

Fruitful & Flourishing

Rev. Les Lofquist
Executive Director

Summertime in the Midwest is different than in the West.

I grew up in the Midwest and have lived here all my life, except for ten years of my life in Utah. I served there as a church planter in my first ministry after graduation.

We arrived in Utah filled with excitement, anticipating God's blessings. We were not disappointed. Our life in Utah was everything a new pastor and wife could ever hope for, and I look back on that decade with profound appreciation. But there was one big difference between the Midwest and Utah that became immediately evident to me. It was the desert.

Utah is a desert state with a beautiful spine of mountains running north and south through the middle of the state. The mountains are spectacular, but the arid regions dominate the state's topography. That is what most particularly distinguishes the two regions in which I've lived: dry desert landscape as opposed to lush green foliage. Rocks, dust, and sand. Grass, trees, and lakes. The contrasts are quite stark.

Perhaps that is one of the reasons why I am so drawn to the imagery in Psalm 1:

The man who does not walk, stand, nor sit with those who actively oppose God's holy will is a blessed man (Hebrew: "completely happy and satisfied within because of the fullness of blessing"). According to the tense of these three verbs in Hebrew, this man has a fixed and determined habit of life in being separated from unrighteousness. His preoccupation is with the Word of God: he loves it and meditates upon it. And this kind of man is like a fruitful, flourishing tree.

The comparison of the godly man with a tree is all the more significant when you consider that the Psalmist lived in a desert climate quite similar to Utah. At least that is my opinion after visiting the Middle East on several occasions. The land of the Bible reminds me of the terrain of Utah. The Mormons even call their state Zion!

Having lived out there, I can say that a luxuriant tree in the desert region is quite a sight, and a most fitting picture of the godly man. That kind of tree is not planted by itself; and the Hebrew verb used in Psalm 1:3 is literally "transplanted" (as in God's transplanting by His sovereign work). A tree transplanted in the desert is one that will thrive because it was placed deliberately. It flourishes. It is fruitful.

How can a tree in the desert thrive? Because it was transplanted next to a water supply that nourishes it and provides life, its root system able to find a life-source. Such a tree prospers, despite being in the desert, undisturbed by harsh weather. It does not wither. It even bears fruit, like a palm tree in a desert oasis.

What an image of the godly person: separated from a habitually sinful way of life; preoccupied with God's Word; appropriating the abundant resources of the life-giving God; prospering despite harsh circumstances. All because of God's transplanting, sovereign work!

Trees in the Midwest are abundant and beautiful. But I am more impressed by trees in the desert, for they reflect the same characteristics that I desire. It is my prayer that God will cause that kind of tenacious growth in my life.

Lessons from the Desert

Charlie Paine

Have you ever become so weary and discouraged in your service for Christ that you seriously considered leaving your place of ministry or even the ministry entirely? I have been there and know that it is a very unpleasant experience in which to find oneself.

I hit the lowest point in my ministry three years ago. After pastoring the same church for twenty years, in my estimation my ministry had reached a level of extreme frustration and fruitlessness. I believed that my days at the church were numbered. The church was not growing, but declining in numbers. There was very little evangelistic activity, and visitors to our services were scarce. We were keeping very busy, but it seemed like we were spinning our wheels. I began to fall into the trap of comparing our church to "successful" churches which were thriving. I had developed a

critical spirit. My heart was very heavy. I was ready to give up. I was planning to search for greener pastures.

Out of the depths of my despair I began to search the Scriptures to find the comfort and strength that I so desperately needed. Out of my study of key Bible passages came a series of messages which I entitled, "Lessons From the Desert." My motive in developing and preaching these messages was self-directed. I knew that I needed to hear them even more than the church did. This article is a synopsis of one of the messages in that series.

In my discouragement my attention was directed to the concept of "fainting" in the Word of God. Each of us who are involved in Christian service will at one time or another experience these periods of fainting. Charles Spurgeon in his Lectures To My Students referred to these times as "The Minister's Fainting Fits." The discouragement may be momentary and fleeting, but at times it may last for days, weeks, and months.

The term for "faint" (egkakeo) is used six times in the New Testament (Luke 18:1; 2 Cor. 4:1, 16; Gal. 6:9, Eph. 3:13; 2 Thess. 3:13). It is translated in the King James as "faint" and "be weary" and in more recent translations as "lose heart," "grow weary," "give up," "be discouraged," and "tire." The verb as used in the New Testament means "to lose one's motivation in continuing a desirable pattern of conduct or activity, lose enthusiasm, be discouraged" (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, revised and edited by F.W. Danker, p. 272). It includes the elements of discouragement, weariness, and giving up. The Lord Jesus used egkakeo once and Paul five times:

And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint (Luke 18:1).

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not (2 Corinthians 4:1).

For which cause we faint not; but though our inward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9).

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory (Ephesians 3:13).

But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing (2 Thessalonians 3:13).

As I researched the usages of "faint" in the context of these six verses, three key aspects began to surface.

WHEN WE ARE TEMPTED TO FAINT

We are tempted to faint when:

There is no response from God (Luke 18:1-8).

In the parable of the unjust judge the helpless widow continually appealed to the judge to execute justice on her behalf. God is not like the unjust judge, but we should be like the widow in refusing to give up in our appeals. Too often, though, we faint instead of persevering because God is not immediately answering our prayers. We give up hope that the answer will come.

There is no relief from trials (2 Cor. 4:8-18; Eph. 3:13).

It is commonly mentioned that two things are inevitable in our lives: death and taxes. Add another: trials. Affliction and suffering are daily realities of life. We can face our trials victoriously, as the apostle Paul did, or we can become discouraged and defeated in the midst of them. In his trying experiences Paul expresses his determination not to faint (2 Cor. 4:16). But we do not always respond to our suffering in this manner. When no relief is on the horizon, we sometimes give in to discouragement and despair.

There are no results in our service (Gal. 6:7-10).

We can become weary in our service for Christ and others when we are faithful in sowing, but we are not presently rewarded with reaping (Gal. 6:9). The visible results of ministry are lacking. We preach the Word faithfully but see little or no outward change in the lives of the hearers. We invest our time in the lives of people, only to see them falter and prove unfaithful. We seek to lead the church in the direction of God's apparent leading, but no one seems to be following.

WHERE WE TEND TO FAINT

We tend to faint in the following areas:

Prayer (Luke 18:1-8)

As we have already seen, we are tempted to faint when there is no response from God to our prayers. When the answer to prayer is not forthcoming, we will either persevere until the prayer is answered or we will become discouraged and stop praying about the particular need. The persistent widow becomes an example for all of us to persevere in prayer rather than to faint.

Ministry (2 Cor. 4:1-7)

Fainting can also occur in our ministry. We can become discouraged in our ministry when we transfer our focus from Christ to the results of our ministry, the expectations of people, and our own inadequacies. Paul characterizes his ministry as handling the Word accurately (2 Cor. 4:2), proclaiming Christ boldly (4:3-6), and displaying God's power clearly (4:7). Paul was determined not to faint in his service (4:1) nor in his suffering (4:16).

Well-Doing (Gal. 6:9-10)

Discouragement can also strike us in the area of doing good. We know that we are not saved by our good works, but that we are saved to perform good works that will honor and glorify the Lord (Eph. 2:8-10). But it is possible for any of us to lose heart and become discouraged because we do not see any reaping from our sowing (Gal. 6:9). Once again we faint because our focus is on the results rather than glorifying God and trusting Him for the results.

HOW TO KEEP FROM FAINTING

No believer desires to faint in his ministry for Christ. How can we avoid those times of discouragement and despair? The answer can be found in each of the six scripture passages in which the verb "faint" is found.

A continual perseverance in prayer (Luke 18:1-8)

The Lord Jesus used the parable of the unjust judge to illustrate the importance of persevering in prayer. Luke introduces the parable by declaring its purpose: that men ought always to pray and not to faint (Luke 18:1). As was earlier observed, the temptation to faint comes when God is not immediately responding to our prayers. We need to persevere in prayer at all times and for specific needs instead of becoming discouraged and giving up. We need to follow the example of the helpless widow who continued to plead with the unjust judge for justice until she received it.

Our appeal is not to an unjust judge, but to a loving heavenly Father who delights in meeting our needs.

The compassionate pity of God (2 Cor. 4:1-7)

When we are tempted to faint in our service for Christ, let's consider the mercy and pity which God has abundantly displayed toward us. In spite of obstacles Paul refused to faint because God in His mercy had given him a ministry to fulfill (2 Cor. 4:1). It was a ministry superior to that of the ministry of death and condemnation under the Mosaic law (2 Cor. 3:6-18). The Lord had shown His abundant mercy to Paul in saving him and giving him this ministry (cp. 1 Tim. 1:12-13). Instead of fainting Paul remained faithful in his motives, methods and message (2 Cor. 4:2-7). When we are ready to give up, we need to focus again on that mercy which God has showered on us in saving us and calling us into His ministry.

A correct perspective on suffering (2 Cor. 4:8-18; Eph. 3:13)

The natural response to our suffering, especially prolonged periods of suffering, is to become discouraged and even surrender to despair. This results from viewing our suffering from an incorrect perspective. The Apostle Paul described the extent of the suffering which he endured as a result of his ministry (2 Cor. 4:8-12; Eph. 3:13), yet he was not defeated by his trials. He knew that this affliction was designed by God for the benefit of himself and others, and most of all for the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:13-15). That is why he could say, "For which cause we faint not..." (4:16). To avoid fainting we too must look at our suffering from God's perspective.

The confident prospect of reaping (Gal. 6:7-10)

Many times believers become weary in their service for the Lord. It has been said that it is better to become weary in the work rather than weary of the work. Sometimes there is a fine line between the two and either can lead us to fainting. Paul exhorts us, "Let us not be weary [or faint] in well doing..." (Gal. 6:9). We tend to become weary in well doing when we fail to see the harvest from our sowing. We work hard, even to the point of exhaustion, but do not see the results that we desired. We must realize at such times that the results rest in God's hands, not ours. God will bring the reaping in His time, and until then we must continue to remain faithful in sowing.

The consistent pattern of others (2 Thess. 3:6-15)

We are tempted to faint in our ministry when we focus on difficult circumstances and unfaithful people. As Paul closed his second letter to the Thessalonians he exhorted these faithful believers to discipline those in their ranks who were walking disorderly. These unfaithful believers refused to work and had become idle gossips. In contrast to the lazy, Paul exhorts, "But ye, brethren, be not weary [or faint] in well doing" (II Thess. 3:13). We can become discouraged and even duplicate such ungodly examples. Paul presents himself and those serving with him as godly examples to follow (3:7-9). They had patterned godly character by laboring hard and remaining diligent. It is as if Paul is saying, "Imitate us, not them." Following the consistent pattern of others can keep us from fainting.

Are you tempted to faint? Remember the following...

- Satan will tempt you to faint in your service for God.
- God wants you to stay faithful instead of fainting.
- God has provided all that you need to keep you from fainting. Don't faint--stay faithful!

Charlie Paine has been Pastor of Blue River Bible Church in Kansas City, Missouri since June 1980. He has a bachelor's and a master's degree from Calvary Bible College. He is also a member of the

Board of Trustees of Calvary Bible College. He has been a member of IFCA International since 2000, and the church became a member in March 2003.

The Smiles of Satan

Jeff Plank

It was a simpler time; a steady, predictable cadence we marched to. A life more right than wrong, and easier to live, with sharper boundaries more clearly understood.

My mom and dad were good, God-fearing and protective parents. Dad was a disabled veteran. We lived in a post-war, pre-fab neighborhood of sameness, where gray shingles covered both walls and roofs. A place where the color of shutters and a Chevy or a Ford in the drive defined the identity of those inside...it was a sameness we embraced, maybe just for comfort.

I figured that because my father had lost one leg in a war he never talked about, we did more reading and listening in my house than most other people. I always thought he had more reason than a lot of people to be mad and bitter, losing a lot of chances to play and all...but he never saw it that way. He said he was still a soldier in an even greater war. I think my dad was the first really great man I ever knew.

"If you are not a servant of God, then you are a friend of the Devil...And you don't want to make Satan smile." The last time I remember hearing it, Dad was standing just outside my sandbox staring down at me. "The world in which we live is the sandbox of Satan...You will be either God's servant or Satan's ally."

All of it was too specific, too cutting, too absolute. It just couldn't be that simple. "God's servant or Satan's ally." My dad was condemning a world I had barely entered. It couldn't be that coldly defined. There must be something in between. Was he right? Could it really be true?

As I think back now, my dad's world view may have been tainted by the polarity of war which was still, for him, a fresh reality. Yet in his own uncompromising way, his message was protective in intent, warning me of that invisible war most take all too lightly, but which can draft us all.

Perhaps it is a stretch to suggest that man and Satan are allies. Yet it is no exaggeration to conclude that Satan and man, independently, command the same malignant pride that separates both from God. Satan uses men against men and against godly purpose. Man, with his own pride and vanity, aids in the concealment of Satan and his intent. To this degree, what I believed to be my dad's all too narrow and over-simplified warnings about two basic sides, has merit. Even though there is natural separation between Satan, fallen man, and God, when the first two of the three share and display a like nature, the appearance of the sides is obvious.

Life for me, anyway, was to become an endless number of sober self-examinations through which I would find myself either pleasing God or making Satan smile. These are two realities from which even the best of Christians are not exempt. In compiling a list of things valued by Satan, those things that make him smile, will be an endless undertaking, yet nonetheless an exercise of great "revealing value." It has provided me with clarity and evidence for greater boldness in representing God, exposing Satan, and sharing the only answer. Satan too often is ignored as the true author of current events, just as man proclaims the need for God on an all too selective basis.

Not often enough are we confronted with our man-made and concealing rationalizations which, in fact, fuel the engines of Satan. Far too often we allow the source of evil to be explained in worldly

ways. To leave Satan unnamed and unexposed in this world is to strengthen his influence in the war we choose not to see...a war with no middle ground.

We prefer to hide Satan, for to expose him is to expose ourselves, even though a way of escape was prepared so long ago; even though we have all the promises of God and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, when we aid and abet the enemy by affording him anonymity through our fear of ridicule or the comforts of neutrality, when we in effect hide our own faith as well...Satan smiles.

When we perceive of worldly success as God's endorsement, a reward or divine approval...Satan smiles. Not that success can't be these things if God so wills; yet it may be better to consider all successes as tests; for just as sufferings can breed great testimonies, both afford us opportunity to glorify God.

When scientific and technological advancements which defy imagination are used as new means of promoting evil ...Satan smiles.

When our current claimed "enlightenment" and the advancement of "civilized" man are also accompanied by a rise in violence, discontent, and the erosion of a respect for life...Satan smiles.

Whenever a church ceases to be a place of compassionate, spiritual conviction supported with the regular presentation of the plan of salvation and evolves into an appending and soothing spiritual spa...Satan smiles.

When we find ourselves bitterly enslaved by thoughts of what we could have been, what is owed us, what others have, and what we deserve...we can be of great use to Satan...and, of course, he smiles.

Man will deny a desire to sit upon the throne of God, yet his words and deeds often betray him...and Satan smiles.

When we sit with open Bible in a house of worship and search, pew by pew, for spiritual hypocrisy and failings...Satan smiles.

I'm not so sure the "invisible war" is so invisible. It would appear that Satan's influence is highly visible, bold, and well-represented nearly everywhere. Yet when we fail to see it and name it...Satan smiles.

When the music of a church is more important than the message ... Satan smiles.

The "old-fashioned" Bible-believing church without an "open heart" is little different than the more comfortable "new-fashioned" church without an "open Bible"...both make Satan smile.

When a believer's testimony is heard only by other believers, it can be encouraging yet the mission of God may not be propelled...but the mission of Satan can be. God loves a testimony shared in church... Satan smiles when it stays there.

We afford Satan refuge in our own weaknesses...our own fear of ridicule, and our own passion for acceptance...in so doing, we deny the realities of Christ and the promises of God...and Satan smiles.

The power of prayer and the Word of God are not influenced by anything of this world. It is those of simple and pure faith that hold the keys to heaven's gate. Whenever a man falls prey to the perils of scholarship and the independence it breeds...Satan smiles.

When from many a pulpit we hear only of God's universal love, our need for community, and His acceptance of all...Satan smiles. This is not a portrayal of the sovereign, omnipotent, holy judge of all who authored the clear boundaries for living and prepared a straight path to glory. When we dilute the completeness of God ...Satan smiles.

Redemption, while suiting us with a supernatural armor through the Holy Spirit and His Word, does not erase Satan's battle plan...if anything, it improves his aim. It is the man who claims exemption from evil after redemption, whether by word or deed, which will be the first to fall...much to the pleasure of Satan.

It would appear that "modern man" is starved for both time and memory. The size of Satan's smile will vary with the extent to which these self-imposed deprivations keep us from prayer, the Word, and God's use.

We spend much time focusing on "how" to share Christ. Perhaps we should attribute equal time to a focus on why it is so hard for many of us to share the "Good News" in the first place: acting as if it's not worth sharing ...and pleasing to Satan. The gift of salvation opens our eyes...of pleasure to Satan is then shutting our mouth.

This list, of course, is not complete, and will not be until Satan is defeated and in the Lake of Fire. But enough to provide you with a portrait of some spiritual challenges all Christians face.

I choose to side with my dad. For me, it is better to see things as either/or...to live life as if the "invisible war" was made visible. Yes, I know that the will of man is distinct from the will of Satan. Yet, if both would be God, where is the difference, absent the redeeming blood of Christ Jesus?

Even as our Lord Jesus saw Satan in the actions and reactions of men, and called him by name, so too must we at the very least not permit Satan to hide in our "worldly" causes and explanations. No, I am not suggesting we should be pointing fingers and calling folks all manner of names in some Satan-sighting pursuit. Again, I would return to the actions of Jesus, who used each encounter to promote righteousness and the glory of God. Although men cannot muster the boldness and obedience of the Lord Jesus, we are to strive for nothing less.

I know of few men who owe God more than I. For in truth, I was nothing less than a friend of Satan, combining both the power and influence of this world with that which no man should pursue; manipulations which warrant only destruction at the hands of a Holy God.

What I know of God I have learned the hard, yet most meaningful and wonderful of ways. Deserving nothing, I have been the recipient of everything. Christ's death is very real to me. Forgiveness, love, and grace take on great meaning when you are their undeserving object.

And yet for many years, I have remained restless and convicted. How do you repay the grace of God? How do you repay the forgiveness of those you caused great pain?

It was my wife, the precious, strong-willed gift who means the world to me, who has repeated the answer in so many ways and on so many occasions. "God has revealed Himself to you in so many wonderful ways...He has sheltered you and all of us with His grace and love and mercy. Yet He wants no repayment. He wants only you...in prayer, in His Word, and in His use."

Not so many years ago, and out of sight of worldly eyes, I returned to that place that meant so much to me. The sandbox, the house, the neighborhood...all of it was gone. No tribute to anything from my old world...somehow all of it had been washed clean.

But it seemed like Dad's words were still hanging around. "God's servant or Satan's ally."

As I walked away, I remember thanking my earthly and heavenly fathers, and with a bit of a smile on my face, I whispered in gratitude..."You're right."

This article contains excerpts from a larger essay written by Jeff Plank to his three adult sons. The complete essay is available upon request through the IFCA International Home Office.

A Better Way to Handle Abuse

Ken Sande

Sexual abuse in the church does not have to end in broken lives, agonizing lawsuits, and divided congregations. When people follow God's ways and words, these sinful (and terrible) incidents can result in healing, justice, and healthier churches.

When victims of abuse first come forward, I have found that most of them are seeking four reasonable responses. First, they are looking for understanding, compassion, and emotional support. Second, they want the church to admit that the abuse occurred and to acknowledge that it was wrong. Third, they want people to take steps to protect others from similar harm. And fourth, they expect compensation for the expense of needed counseling.

As national headlines reveal, many churches have unwisely ignored these legitimate needs. Instead, like many other institutions, they have blindly followed their lawyers' and insurance adjusters' textbook strategy to avoid legal liability. They try to cover up the offense and deny responsibility. All too often they distance themselves from the victims and their families, leaving them feeling betrayed and abandoned.

Many frustrated victims eventually talk to a lawyer who tells them they could win a million-dollar damages award. Soon everyone is locked in an adversarial process that reopens wounds and generates even more pain and anger. Whatever the verdict, both sides lose, since money alone can never heal the wounds of abuse.

There is a better way.

God is a redeemer and a problem-solver. He has designed a powerful peacemaking strategy for dealing with offenses between people, including sexual abuse. When churches follow it, as I will show later, the cycle of abuse is broken and restoration can begin.

Compassion

If there is one place that victims of abuse should find understanding, compassion, and support, it is among people whom God commands to respond to suffering with tenderness and selfless love: "Be kind and compassionate to one another...Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit...Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others" (Eph. 4:31; Phil. 2:3-4). Instead of pulling away from victims, churches should draw closer to them, listening to their stories, mourning with and praying for them, and bearing their burdens. Responding with love and compassion is one of the best ways to show that the church abhors abuse and is committed to serving those who are suffering.

Confession

Attorneys instinctively instruct their clients to "make no admissions." Hundreds of churches have followed this shortsighted counsel in recent years, prolonging the agony of abuse victims, infuriating juries, and triggering multimillion-dollar punitive damages awards. In contrast, everyone benefits when people trust God's promise that "He who conceals his sins does not

prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Prov. 28:13). When abuse has occurred, a church should express sorrow and acknowledge its contribution to the situation. It should also counsel the abuser to confess his sin, take responsibility for his actions, and seek needed counseling. These steps can prevent a court battle and speed healing for victim and offender alike. (Since an impulsive admission could allow an insurer to cancel coverage, church leaders should consult with their insurer, lawyer, and a Christian conciliator to plan their words carefully.)

Compensation for Counseling

The Bible places a strong emphasis on requiring a wrongdoer to repair any damage he has caused to another person. "Pay the injured man for the loss of his time and see that he is completely healed" (Ex. 21:19). Therefore, churches should be earnest to do whatever they can to bring wholeness to victims of abuse. As soon as abuse is revealed, the church should immediately come to the aid of the victim and his family, holding forth the redeeming power of Jesus and offering to provide or pay for needed counseling.

Change

When abuse takes place, statements of regret are not enough. Genuine repentance is demonstrated by making changes to protect others from similar harm. "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance...Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (Luke 3:8; Ps. 82:4). This requires removing the abuser from his position and implementing screening and supervision procedures to prevent other abusive people from being in counseling or child-care positions. Such actions not only protect others from harm but also relieve abuse victims, who are deeply concerned that others not be treated as they were.

Conciliation

It may be difficult for a church to implement these steps if a victim's family is already threatening legal action or an insurer refuses to support personal contacts. These situations can still be resolved without a legal battle, however, by submitting the matter to biblical mediation or arbitration. "If you have disputes, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church" (1 Cor. 6:4). Christian conciliation by outside neutrals can provide a constructive forum to deal with both the spiritual and legal issues related to abuse. This legally enforceable process provides appropriate confidentiality and promotes confession and restitution, which help to bring about justice and reconciliation.

These five steps are not theoretical. I have seen many churches follow this process, usually with great success. In one case, a pastor discovered that a man had abused several children in the church, including the pastor's daughter. In the midst of his own personal anguish, the pastor prayed to respond to the situation in a way that would reflect the love of Jesus. After consulting with a Christian conciliator and the church's insurer, the pastor and his elders set out to minister to everyone who had been hurt by this dreadful sin.

They persuaded the abuser to confess his sin to the families of the children and to turn himself in to the police. He willingly accepted his prison sentence, and was even grateful that his destructive behavior had finally been stopped.

The leaders spent many hours with the families themselves, grieving and praying with them, and making sure they received needed support and counseling. In addition, the leaders improved their screening and supervision policies to guard against similar incidents in the future.

They also reached out to the abuser's wife and children, who were so ashamed that they planned to leave the church. But the leaders understood what being a shepherd is all about. They ministered to this broken family, reassured them of God's love, and kept them in the fold.

Instead of being dragged through an excruciating lawsuit, the victims and their families, the abuser and his family, and the entire congregation experienced the redeeming power of God. This remarkable process culminated months later during a Christmas Eve service. As the church prepared to sing "Silent Night," two young girls came forward to light the candles. One of them had been abused. The other was the daughter of the abuser. As they finished their task and smiled at each other, the congregation saw tangible evidence of God's love and grace.

Abuse in the church does not have to end with catastrophe. When a church follows its Lord, even this great tragedy can result in healing and restoration.

*Ken Sande is an attorney, the author of **The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict** and President of Peacemaker® Ministries, an international ministry committed to equipping and assisting Christians and their churches to respond to conflict biblically. Copyright © 2002 Peacemaker® Ministries, www.HisPeace.org.*

Reprinted with permission.

Rediscovering Hospitality

Tim Swan

Our American society has become what may be called a "culture of privacy". Our home has become our castle with fences to protect us from unwelcome eyes and visitors. We drive our "chariots" home and cross the driveway, opening the garage door with an automatic remote opener and closing it behind us. Even the floor plan of modern homes reveals the value we place on privacy in our modern lifestyle. Few homes have formal dining rooms anymore, because entertaining is such a low (or non-existent) priority. Even in homes that have a formal dining room, it is often the least used room in the house; a kind of monument to our retreat from the world. Instead new homes attract buyers with large private master suites or even "master retreats" where the king and queen of the castle can hide away behind the closed door of their inner sanctum, complete with a luxury private bath, fireplace, sitting room and television. Kent Hughes summarizes this thought when he says, "Today's homes reflect our modern values of individualism, isolation, and privatization".

This kind of lifestyle has become the socially acceptable norm. Even the members of the church have accepted this mentality. I issue a challenge to the church to rethink this matter in light of the biblical teaching concerning hospitality. The Scriptures are clear in their emphasis on practicing hospitality. And the practical implications for the building up of the Body of Christ are significant.

The word commonly used for hospitality in the New Testament is the combination of two words that mean love of strangers. Philoxenia (love of strangers), is used in Rom. 12:13 and Heb. 13:2. The adjectival form of the word, meaning hospitable, occurs in 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8 and 1 Pet. 4:9. Another word used in 1 Tim. 5:10 is also translated "shown hospitality to strangers" in the NASB.

Hospitality was a very important practice in Bible times. In the early church it was particularly vital. Due to the persecution that characterized those days, many believers were displaced from their homes. As they traveled it was necessary for them to have lodging and food. It was the injunction to the early church leaders to provide that kind of care for strangers. The Apostle John

commends the early church, too, for helping traveling evangelists with their food and lodging needs (3 John 5-8).

In modern times hospitality is manifested generally in opening our home and sharing our resources to minister to practical needs and provide fellowship opportunities for members of the Body of Christ. This is the case whether they be total strangers (i.e. members of a music group on tour) or other members of the church where we attend. We can always get to know others better. We should remember that, as believers in Jesus, we are all strangers and aliens in this world. Thus it is important for us to care for one another as we make our way in this journey of life.

Biblically Speaking

There are several principles that can be gleaned from the Scriptures to help guide us in our understanding of the ministry of hospitality. First, we should contemplate the fact that hospitality should be modeled by the leadership of the church. This is vitally important and cannot be overstated. In the two key passages describing the qualifications of spiritual leaders in the church (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8) being hospitable is listed as a specific qualification for a man who will be a spiritual leader in the church. Note well that this is not a duty or role of an elder, but it is a characteristic of a man that is necessary for him to be an elder in the church. The ministry of hospitality is so important to the ministry of the church that it must be modeled by the leadership of the church. That is the best way to communicate to the body its importance.

A second principle from 1 Tim. 5:10 is that practicing hospitality is one of the important ways for widows to demonstrate their faithfulness to God and His church. The church is responsible to meet the needs of widows and orphans (James. 1:27), however widows are not without responsibility. Widows in New Testament times and today are often in a wonderful position to fulfill the ministry of hospitality. As long as they remain healthy and able bodied they can and should initiate the practice of hospitality. Rather than waiting for others in the church to invite them for a meal, they can be greatly used of God by inviting younger families and new people in the church to their home for a meal and an opportunity to get acquainted and fellowship together. It is not a stretch to apply this principle to singles as well.

The third principle is that practicing hospitality is one of the many ways that we all perform the functions of the Body of Christ. In Rom. 12:9-21 Paul mentions many specific ways that the Body of Christ functions as the body. Hospitality is listed as something that we all should do as a fulfillment of our role as a part of the church. This broadens the sphere of the ministry of hospitality from the realm of church leaders and widows to all members of the Body of Christ

Fourth, showing hospitality also may provide unknown honors. The writer of Hebrews (Heb. 13:2) tells us that by showing hospitality some had the honor and privilege of entertaining angels without even knowing it This is a wonderful truth that we must be careful not to understate or overstate. The word for "angels" is the word that is also translated "messenger". So whether we entertain literal angels, or if we have the privilege of ministering to a special messenger of God, it is evident that sometimes providing hospitality rewards the host with a special honor of being used in a special way by God.

A fifth principle guiding our practice of hospitality concerns our attitude. We should not complain about the command to be hospitable (1 Pet. 4:9). Practicing hospitality without complaint requires the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1-11) wherewith we consider the needs of others to be more important than our own needs. It costs us time and resources. We must invite people into our private space. It may prevent us from doing something that we want to do. Having a new family in the church over for Sunday dinner may mean that I miss the game, or that I have to forfeit my afternoon nap. But I am willing to give up those things to minister to the needs of others.

Having reviewed the principles guiding our use of hospitality I think it is fair to say that its practice is just as vital in the church today as it was in the first century church. Sharing a meal informally with others in our home enables us to get to know them and they to know us in a deeper way than is usually possible in the scope of the formal church ministry. Hospitality should play a vital role in our efforts to reach the lost and help believers to grow in their understanding of Christ and thus to build up the Body of Christ.

Not only does hospitality help us to get acquainted with others who are part of the church; it also helps us to get acquainted with new visitors or those on the fringes of the ministry of the church. It helps us to help them to make connections with others in the church and in that way feel they are a part of the family. Practically speaking I have seen this borne out repeatedly in many people's lives. People have told us that they were planning to leave the church until they were invited to our home for a time of hospitality and fellowship where they made connections with other people in the church and began to feel that they belonged.

A common problem in our churches today is the assimilation of visitors and retention of members. Church growth "experts" talk about the need to "close the back door" and prevent people from falling through the cracks. Hospitality is a wonderful, practical, biblically mandated way for us to do that.

Practically Speaking

Understanding the biblical mandate and the potential effectiveness of practicing hospitality, let us now consider some practical matters that will help us to use this important tool. I offer the following practical suggestions not necessarily in any specific order of priority.

Don't obsess; meatloaf and potatoes will do; keep it simple (or not). Some people have the idea that entertaining must be after the style of Martha Stewart. But "entertaining" in biblical terms means simply making yourself and your home available for fellowship and hospitality. If your wife doesn't cook well or you don't, or don't like to, stop at Kentucky Fried Chicken or order a pizza. Or even make it a potluck and simply open your home. On the other hand feel free to be as creative as you like. Everyone has their own style.

Demonstrate humanity. Things don't have to be perfect. Don't be embarrassed if the house isn't spotless. We are human. Most people will not notice if you haven't dusted or vacuumed recently. What people will notice is that you opened your home and your life to them, that you cared for their needs, that you invited them to get to know you and others, that you helped them to connect.

Share your stewardship. This is the key to effective hospitality. Recognize that all that you have is a stewardship entrusted to you by God. Your home, your table, your food, your stereo, your car (if they need a ride to your home), your time, your energy--they all are given you as a stewardship by God, to be used for the building up of the Body of Christ for His glory. And a ministry of hospitality is a great opportunity to share your stewardship.

Make it a family ministry. It may be the lady of the house who does the cooking, or it may be the man of the house who puts the burgers on the grill. Whatever the case, try to involve the whole family. Remember the meal is only part of the ministry of hospitality. The conversation around the table is significant too. And you may choose to play a game after dinner (if that will minister to the people). As much as possible get everyone in the family involved. If you are single or a widow, you could team up with someone and multiply the fellowship. And why don't we broaden our thinking about "family", especially for singles and widows, to include the family of God.

Build bridges. Help people make connections with others, not just with you. Early in our ministry we learned the value of inviting more than one family unit. That gives more people the

opportunity to get aquatinted and build bridges. And it increases the likelihood that connections will be made. You may find that one family you may invite may not have much in common with you, but they have a lot in common with the other family that you invited. This should always be given prayerful thought. Try to invite people who don't already know each other well, and who may have some things in common. It is often fruitful to invite a well established family and a relatively new family. Providing a context for the development of relationships is the important factor.

Model a pattern of hospitality. This is a quality that ought to characterize the church. It ought to be modeled first by the leaders of the church, and by the widows of the church. But it is also the responsibility of each member of the Body of Christ. We all ought to model it.

So far my challenge has been addressed to the provider of the hospitality. It is important finally to speak to the proposed recipient of the hospitality of others. It is a statement of the obvious to say that for hospitality to be most effective, we must be willing to accept the invitation. Sometimes it is inconvenient for us to go to another's home for a meal with people we may not know. It can be threatening. We must make ourselves vulnerable. People will get to know us and they may learn something about us that we don't necessarily want them to know. But obedience to God's Word requires that we not only provide the ministry of hospitality, but that we avail ourselves of the ministry when it is offered to us.

Our churches can be made stronger as lives touch other lives. The lost around us will learn that we know and love each other, and them, in practical ways when we invite them to share in a ministry of hospitality

Tim Swan, an IFCA International member, is formerly a church planter in Denver. Due to extended health concerns, he had to return to Michigan where he currently lives with his wife and daughter.

Being a Pastor's Kid

Andy Bauer

I was recently fixing myself a bagel at work, when my manager sneezed. I gave a perfunctory "bless you." I wasn't quite sure how to take his response. He said, "You know, you're pretty well adjusted for a preachers' kid." I said thank you, but I wasn't quite sure what to make of that. It wasn't the first time I'd been told something of that nature. I realize that over the years pastors' kids (or PKs as we are often called) have gotten somewhat of a reputation...and not a good one. This was never much of a problem for me. Oh, I had my moments of rebellion. But, and you can check with my parents on this, for the most part I stayed out of trouble. I learned early on that being in trouble was not fun.

But more than that, because of the way my parents raised me and the way they taught me right from wrong, I didn't become a stereotype. They taught me why we do or don't do certain things; because we want to honor God and His commands. As Jesus says in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (NIV). The reason I think a lot of PKs are rebellious is that they are taught right from wrong from a legalistic point of view. They know what is right and what is wrong, but they aren't clearly taught why. It becomes just a list of dos and don'ts. This is in no way to mean that every troubled PK has not been properly instructed in God's laws. Far from it. The majority of PKs that I know are very fine Christians. Many have followed in the footsteps of their fathers and gone into vocational ministry. I have known PKs whose parents I know were godly men and women and taught their children what

it means to follow Jesus and to love and obey His commands, yet they rebelled. One other reason, perhaps, is hypocrisy. As a PK, you get to see the pastor "behind the scenes." The congregation sees the pastor only once a week; up on the stage, preaching from the Word, looking very spiritual indeed. But what happens when he goes home? If he isn't walking his own talk the rest of the week, what does that tell his family? Why should his children strive to live a holy life, when the one who tells them to do just that on Sunday, can't, or won't, do it himself on Monday? Again, I think this is the exception rather than the rule. The bottom line is that every individual makes their own decision on whether they do what is right or what is wrong. Unfortunately for us who are PKs, it's a case of the few making it tough on the many.

I praise the Lord for the godly pastoral examples that He has blessed me with in my own family...and there are plenty. My father is a pastor, my grandfather is a pastor, my uncle is a pastor, my great uncle is a pastor, and I even have a second cousin who is a pastor. All of them have been tremendous examples of godly men, on Sunday and every other day of the week. They all practice what they preach and have always encouraged me to live a holy life. My great grandfather was also a pastor. Although he died before I was born, the stories that are told about him are great lessons in godly living. As you can see, I come not only from a family with a great pastoral heritage, but also a long line of PKs. My mother was a PK and she knows what the expectations are like and can relate to things that my sisters and I might go through. My uncles and aunts that are PKs are great examples of what a PK should be. I'm sure they all had their moments of teenage angst and rebellion, but because of the testimony and solid biblical foundation laid down by my grandparents, they are all now either in the ministry or very active in their local churches. With all these good examples surrounding me growing up, it would have taken more effort to not do the right thing.

There can be tremendous pressure when your father is the leader of a church. Your actions are more scrutinized. If you get out of line, people might say, "Oh, look at the pastor's kid. He's in trouble again." I never wanted people to look at my father and think ill of him because of something I did. I knew how important his ministry was. I knew that he was, and still is, a godly man who loved to do the Lord's work, and it was unthinkable for me to do anything that would harm his ministry. It is important for all Christians to live exemplary lives that give a good testimony to the world. But for those in the ministry and their families it is even more imperative. If, as an authority figure, or a family member of an authority figure, in any discipline, you cannot present a favorable representation of your order, you risk causing severe damage to your association's credibility. How much more, as Christians, do we need to conduct ourselves so as not to look like hypocrites to an already suspicious world? The Bible says in I Peter 2:9 that we are "...a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (NIV). How can we "...declare the praises of Him..." unless we are living according to His Word on a daily basis? We need to live in a way that honors God and makes people want to know what it is that makes us live that way. As a PK, this can be an even more pressurized task. However, when I did get into trouble, I never once heard my father say, "Don't you know what this is going to do to my ministry? Don't you know that my reputation is on the line?" It was never about keeping up appearances or making the family look bad. It was always about doing the right thing. It was about doing what Jesus would have me do. It was always about honoring God first. That is the reason we are on this planet, to bring honor and glory to Him by obeying His commands and declaring the praises of Him.

As I wrote earlier, I have many pastors in my family. I have been fortunate to be able to spend a lot of time with most of them. For many years my father, grandfather, uncle and great uncle all lived in my hometown. It is such a blessing to have this rich pastoral heritage so readily available. Every Sunday I have the opportunity to hear solid Bible teaching from men who I know believe whole heartedly in what they are preaching. Even more extraordinary is the opportunity to spend

time talking one-on-one with them. For the congregation it is not always easy to get this chance. Pastors often have a large flock to shepherd in addition to seeing to their church administrative duties. This can make it tough to get a sit-down with him. Being a member of the family, I had that opportunity pretty much any time I needed. What a blessing it is to be able to pick the brain of a pastor anytime I want. The different types of relationships I have with each of them has been very constructive. To be able to get godly advice from not only a pastor, but also a father, a grandfather, an uncle, and a friend is truly unique.

My whole life people have asked me what it's like to be a preacher's kid. Until not too long ago, I wasn't really sure how to answer them. I've never asked anybody what it's like to be a baker's son or the daughter of a fireman. I would usually answer that it was normal. I didn't know anything different so I didn't have anything to compare it to. But the more I have thought about it the more I realize that it is much different from being the son of an engineer or computer programmer. I have had, my entire life, complete access to a wealth of biblical knowledge that most people don't have. I have a living Bible commentary. I have never resented or disliked the fact that my father was a pastor, but not until fairly recently have I really appreciated the opportunity afforded to me. I praise God for my pastoral family heritage and although I am not a pastor, I know that my children will have at their fingertips examples of godly leadership and a treasure trove of biblical answers to life's tough questions.

Of course, when you are a pastor's kid, there are some inevitabilities you have to put up with. You will be a sermon illustration. I cannot number the times I have been embarrassed by my father, and my grandfather, when being used as a sermon illustration. I don't mind so much now that I'm grown, but those tender Junior High years were a little different story. Sometimes they will try to tell a story without using the name, but it always seems to slip out. When you get engaged, your father will make you and your fiancé stand up during a service so the entire congregation can stare at you. It took a little time for my wife to adjust to these kinds of things, but she's used to it now. Pastors love to sing. Fortunately for me, the ones in my family can actually carry a tune, so this doesn't really become too much of a problem. When you get married and your father officiates the wedding, there will be tears...and plenty of them.

But despite all these little things, and the big ones, the benefits greatly outweigh the cost. I have learned so much about the Bible and how to find God's will for my life without even leaving the house. I am so thankful that I happened to be born to a family of pastors.

Andy Bauer works in the telecommunications industry and has been married for three years to Jen, a Christian School teacher. He is actively involved in the Santa Rosa (CA) Bible Church as a S.S. teacher in the adult department and with the church's worship media technology. His dad is Pastor Chris Bauer.

Borrow to Build? One Church's Answer

Dave Greiner

It was a beautiful day, seemingly, as one of our trustees was walking around the perimeter of our church building. Looking down, he noticed a chunk of mortar that was lying on the ground. As he continued walking along the side of the building, he found that there had been quite a lot of mortar that had managed to find its way onto the ground below. Jeff was a civil engineer, so he knew something was wrong. Upon closer inspection of four supporting poles on the inside of the sanctuary, he found that they were no longer standing straight, but had begun to lean. After consulting with other engineers, it was discovered that a faulty architectural design was

responsible for our problems. The weight of our roof was beginning to push the external brick walls out, since there evidently hadn't been enough interior steel used in the construction of the building 25 years earlier. Thankfully this was discovered before the building crashed onto any worshippers below! The city of Hazelwood immediately condemned our church building in May, 1990.

Fortunately, we had a gymnasium where we could begin holding our worship services, though we had to rent classroom space for our Sunday school classes from a elementary school nearby. We were right in the middle of a building project, expanding our facility with six new classrooms and offices, but wouldn't be ready for six months. The Senior Pastor at the time was forced to share

his office with the nursery, while I, as the new Associate Pastor, was asked to keep my office in my home until the new construction was complete. Over the next 11 years, we continued holding our worship services in the gym, along with its olive green tiles (complete with an AWANA circle), olive green walls (1974 style), and old fashioned gymnasium lighting (along with drooping insulation), and steel folding chairs. But it was a place to meet to worship our Lord together. Our regular attendees accepted all of these things as a part of God's sovereign working in our midst, and we adapted. But to be honest, it was very difficult keeping newcomers here. You could see it on their faces as they entered the gym! You could sense the discomfort while sitting in our metal chairs through our hour and a half long services, or in the frustration being unable to hear anything when rain fell upon our sheet metal roof.

Our condemned building sat empty for four years, since we weren't sure what we should do with this "albatross hanging around our necks." Should we tear it down, and start over? Should we somehow try to salvage the building? We were barely reaching our budget each month, and just hadn't been able to grow. We finally raised over \$100,000 to bring our condemned building up to code, basically building a new building inside the building, and redesigned it for classroom space. We couldn't imagine how we'd ever be able to construct a new worship center without going deeply into debt, since we were a church of about 100 families. Our growth had become stagnant for a decade, and we were stuck at the 200 plateau.

In the fall of 1997, a realtor contacted us and asked if we'd be interested in selling the back acre of our property for \$95,000. Our leadership, as well as congregation thought this would be a good idea, since the land was unusable for building or parking, and by the following April, we'd received the first seed money for a new worship center!

We considered a number of options in building plans, as well as approaches in how we'd be able to finance such an undertaking. "Should we borrow to build?" seemed presumptuous of the future, and we weren't sure. So, we asked our people to begin giving liberally to a building fund every month (over and above their regular giving to our general fund), so we could track how much we might be able to expect would be available to pay on a mortgage payment if we did borrow. We would base our mortgage payment on the pattern of our people's giving. After a year, we saw an average of \$3500 per month come in above the regular amount; so we determined that we'd be able to afford a mortgage payment of \$3500 per month. As our people continued to give generously, we were able to come up with a \$350,000 down payment. After much prayer and research, we believed we could afford to borrow \$400,000 with a mortgage payment of \$3500 per month.

We had formed a committee of people who would contact different builders and provide different options for building styles. After much research it was decided that we would build a worship center that seated 550. However, the design builder's original bid came to \$1.2 million. That was more than we felt we could commit to --we felt it would be honoring to the Lord that we not exceed what our people's giving had indicated we could afford. We went back to the builder and

asked him to down-size. We reduced the size of the worship center to be able to seat 450 instead of 550, and asked him to remove the new office space. His next bid came to \$750,000. We proceeded on with the plan, and the ground breaking ceremony was held in June, 2000. One year later the building was complete, and we moved in on Father's Day, 2001.

We ended up borrowing \$400,000 over a 20 year period, and encouraged our congregation to continue giving liberally, so we could pay the principal down as quickly as possible. As of this past February, we've been able to reduce that balance to \$300,000. We've also been able to lower our interest rate twice, and we're continuing to pay quickly so our loan can be repaid well before the 20 year note. We've been in our building for two years now. There are new faces every Sunday morning, and now we're actually seeing newcomers return Sunday after Sunday. We've seen the church attendance grow about 20%.

When I was asked to become the church's Senior Pastor in 1995, I told the church that I personally didn't want to be involved in any kind of building program. If the church chose to do so, they'd have to find a gifted leader of that committee, and that I didn't want to take time away from my other ministry responsibilities to even sit on the committee. By God's grace, He did provide a great "Nehemiah" from our elder board to give oversight to the building committee. Every meeting began with prayer, and a devotional thought, reminding the committee that the "process" was just as important, if not more important than the product. We are so thankful that the entire process was done by faith, in the Spirit, for the glory of God. None of our families left the church throughout this period, though some would have liked to borrow more money, while others didn't think we should borrow at all. We listened to the concerns of all, valuing their opinions, though not necessarily agreeing with all of them.

God kept His body unified throughout the whole process, and we continue to give Him praise! He is using us as a light to our community. Thousands of cars drive by our building every day, since we are located on one of the busiest streets in our part of the county. I always ask our newcomers how they heard about our fellowship, and frequently they tell me that they are "drive-bys". Can God use bricks and mortar for His glory? Of course He can!

One of the passages of Scripture that meant the most to me throughout the entire process was from the Old Testament. The people of God were struggling with a building project. They had seen the precious temple destroyed in years past, and now the exiles, upon their return to the Land of Promise, had to be stirred somehow. Haggai, Zerubbabel and Zechariah make quite a trio as they preach to the downhearted people, but my favorite exhortation is found in Zech. 4--

"This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts. 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"' Also the word of the LORD came to me saying, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you" (Zech. 4:6-9).

The people of Chatham know that the Lord has worked throughout these 13 years, and we stand amazed at His grace!

Dave Greiner joined the church staff at Chatham Bible Church in Hazelwood, MO. (a suburb of St. Louis) in 1990, first of all as Youth Pastor, and later as Senior Pastor in 1995. He'd previously been on missionary staff with Worldteam Missions and International Students, Inc. He and his wife, Maureen, have two married children and three grandchildren.

Assimilating New Believers

R. Larry Moyer

How do you encourage those who are excited about Christ to be excited about church? Once they enter the front door how do you keep them from going out the back door? How do you assimilate new believers into the life and activity of the local church?

Too quickly we lay Scripture aside and attempt to come up with an answer on our own. The Scriptures don't tell us everything that might be considered helpful in incorporating believers into the life and activity of the church, but they do give much needed guidance.

Here is what is of utmost importance. To miss this is to miss the most important element. That is, the New Testament does not tell us how to assimilate believers into the local fellowship. It tells us how to get close to new believers. Once we get close to new Christians, we will have the relationship needed to encourage their active involvement.

Examine the pointed language Paul uses regarding his relationship with new believers. He reminds them in 1 Corinthians 4:15, "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." In Paul's mind, they were not just God's children. They were his children. He tells the new believers of Thessalonica, "But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7).

I find no place in the New Testament where the primary emphasis toward a new believer is "Now come to church." Instead, it's that of the believer drawing close to the new convert. That relationship allows for much needed flexibility. That flexibility is reflected in Paul's words, "As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:11).

Does such personal attention involve time and hard work? Most certainly. In the New Testament nearly forty people were associated with Paul in missions of follow-up. Should a significant number come to Christ, it is far more than one believer or a few believers can handle. Paul alludes to that hard work when he testifies in Colossians 1:29, "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." Labor typifies work that can sometimes be exhausting. One can lead a person to Christ in five minutes, but it may take close to five years to see him actively growing.

With that as a basis, what are some biblical and practical ideas for assimilating new believers into the life and activity of the local church?

Disciple them once a week for eight weeks. Remember that your first concern is not to get them close to the church but instead to get another believer close to them. A person came to Christ in one of our outreaches and is now a leader in his church once said, "To this day I don't remember one thing that those who disciplined me covered. I just remember they were at my door once a week for eight weeks." Paul's emphasis "as a nursing mother cherishes her own children" and "as a father does his own," consistently demonstrated over several weeks makes the difference. Can you continue beyond eight weeks? Sure, but remember, he or she is a new convert, not used to close relationships with other believers. It's less threatening to suggest getting with them once a week for eight weeks than to suggest once a week for eight months.

As you meet one-on-one, what do you talk about during that eight-week period? It is important to discuss five subjects: 1) Don't assume his salvation. Go over the basic elements of the gospel to make sure he understands it. Assure him of his salvation through a study of John 5:24 and 1 John 5:11-13. 2) Approach communication with God through Bible Study and prayer. Bible Study is

when God speaks to him. Prayer is when he talks to God. Recommend he start with the book of Philippians, the simplest book of the Bible and one that talks about daily Christian living. Suggest he read a chapter a day and stay in that book for a month. 3) Emphasize baptism using passages such as Acts 2:41. Explain that baptism has no saving value but is the first step of discipleship. It is a biblical way to tell others "I belong to Christ and intend to walk in obedience to Him." 4) Stress fellowship with those in a local church. Using Hebrews 10:24-25, remind him that he needs other believers and they need him. His testimony and enthusiasm can have a dynamic impact upon others. Don't merely suggest he go to church. Ask him to come with you. 5) Help him evangelize. The first thing Christ taught His disciples was, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Teach him a simple method of sharing the gospel. Pray with him about lost acquaintances he would like to see come to Christ and encourage him to share the gospel with them.

Pray for them. Paul's concept of discipling new believers reveals that prayer was an essential part of his follow-up. His prayer for the new converts of Ephesus was that they would pursue the course they had begun and grow in their knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 1: 15 -23). His prayer for the new converts of Colosse was that they would have wisdom and understanding, both spiritually given, that would allow them to comprehend God's desire for their lives (Colossians 1:9-14). Pray for each convert by name and pray specifically - the same way you would have desired people to pray for you. Speak to God about their growth, adjustment to their new life, victory over temptation, and their witness to lost acquaintances.

Involve them in appropriate tasks in the local church. 1 Timothy 3:6 warns us not to make new converts leaders in the church. They need to grow before they lead. Use them in areas where they are capable, not areas where they will be capable a year from now. One church in Ohio asked a contractor who was a new believer to help build a pavilion in the church picnic area. That task was used of the Lord to encourage him to be a growing, active member of the church.

Does the above work? Most definitely and for one reason - it's based on biblical teaching. One man with whom the above approach was used said to me, "It seems rather strange. Before I came to Christ, I wouldn't have even entered a church. Now I can't get enough of it." Years later, the pastor referred to him as "one of our best leaders."

Draw close to new believers and allow God to use you to draw them close to your church.

Larry Moyer is President of EvanTell and Evangelist Consultant for IFCA International.

CHAPLAINS DIARY

News from Operation Iraqi Freedom

IFCA International Chaplains Alan Lenz, James Richey, Dale Parker & Matt Kreider

Your chaplains ministering in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps in the Middle East during Operation Iraqi Freedom are occasionally able to share via email how God is blessing in lives. Following are excerpts from their reports on ministry sent me via email. [Warren Dane, Director of Chaplaincy]

LT Alan Lenz (CHC, USNR) is your Navy chaplain ministering to the Marines of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (IMEF).

I'm writing from northern Kuwait where I've been serving for the last two months along with the rest of my unit from Camp Pendleton. I only recently got access to email so I thought I would take advantage of it and give you an update.

Ministry is going well. I have been given the opportunity to minister very broadly. While most of the troops here in our camp are Marines, there are also a number of Sailors as well as Soldiers. There are active duty personnel as well as Reservists from both the Marines and the Army who have been called up and sent here. I can't talk about overall troop strength because of security concerns. But the group is both large and diverse so the challenges are great.

Most of my time is spent counseling and handling a wide range of personal issues. Until recently our unit had access to some satellite telephones that our Commanding Officer designated for the purpose of "morale calls"--one five-minute phone call per person each week. The calls were coordinated out of my office. That in itself kept us pretty busy. We made calls for 12-14 hours a day 6 days a week. For the most part, the calls were a great boost to troop morale.

Because the troops were regularly in touch with families at home, I was doing a lot of family counseling. I often spoke with family members back home helping them to sort out specific issues. Since the start of the war, security concerns and operational commitments have preempted the morale calls. So counseling issues have tended to focus more on personal issues. I have had many opportunities to talk to Marines, Soldiers, and Sailors about a Biblical perspective of warfare and the moral rightness of what we (as a nation) are doing here.

There have been some excellent opportunities to share the Gospel and address the deeper spiritual needs of creatures created for the glory of God. Several have made professions of faith for the first time. But thus far I've seen only one Marine begin to bear what looks like the fruit of conversion. It's hard to do effective follow-up amidst all of the various demands on the troops' time. We'll see how things go as time moves along.

I wanted to tell you about one particular situation that is a particular encouragement to me. Shortly after we arrived in country, I met a young Marine Reservist who is very interested in attending The Master's Seminary. His father was greatly impacted by John MacArthur's ministry in the past and continues to closely follow his ministry. This young Marine is finishing up his senior year at a university in Texas. As we've spent time together it seems to me that he is being called to the ministry. We are making plans for him to visit the seminary sometime after we get back home. I'm sure that we've begun a long-term relationship. That's a great encouragement because, as you know, there are very few long-term relationships that develop as a result of this kind of ministry.

Here's an overview of my other ministry activities. I preach two services here in my camp each Sunday. Total attendance has ranged from about 40 to as many as 120 or so - depending on the operational commitments of our unit. I have also had a few opportunities to preach at other camps that don't have their own chaplain. It is a great blessing to be preaching on a weekly basis again.

Our service is about an hour long. I'm preaching for 35-40 minutes. The believers seem to be greatly benefiting from the sermons and for that I am grateful to our gracious Lord. On Wednesday evenings we have a Bible study. I started with a series of topical studies that I thought would be of interest to the general population here. The first two weeks we looked at the Bible and Warfare and what it means to be a Christian and be in the military. After that we spent two weeks on Understanding and Overcoming Fear. We are currently in a longer series studying the Sanctification of the Believer.

Brooke and the children seem to be doing well in my absence. It is a blessing to me to know that her parents are close by and that she and the kids are able to spend more time with them. Brooke

is going on a retreat with the women of our church this weekend. I'm praying that it will be a particularly significant time of encouragement and relationship- building.

Well, that's about it for now. Thanks for your prayers and for your ministry.

Yours in Christ,
Alan

Chaplain, Capt. James Richey is with the 485th Air Expeditionary Wing out of Langley AFB, VA. He is based in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. James' report on ministry blessings follows...

It's been an interesting day--I was awakened at 0130 this morning by a Msgt from Security Forces. He came to get me to talk to one of his troops who he thought was mentally unstable. They had taken his gun away for a few days. Had a good two hour talk with him...he is doing okay...Got back to sleep at somewhere around 0400. I should see him again later today and try to work on issues for his wife back at Pope AFB.

This evening an Airman came to me for counseling. His wife was having an affair with a mutual friend and asked for a divorce by e-mail. They have a 2-year-old little boy. This Airman has no faith background, his wife has a nominal church association. I encouraged him to call on the Lord for help, no man could repair what sin had destroyed, only the LORD could deliver him, and only the Lord could salvage his marriage. He really wants his wife back and her love. H really needs salvation--he has a lot to think about.

I am preaching through the book of Jonah on Sunday Mornings, teaching a Bible Study on the book of Habakkuk on Tuesday nights, have Choir practice on Wednesday night, and a Christian Fellowship Night right after Choir practice from 2000 to 2300. We are starting a Gospel Night Service on Friday nights.

For the first few days of the war I was meeting with all the F15 pilots during their briefings to pray for them. Most of them appreciated it very much, some did not like it at all. The Wing Commander thought the prayer I prayed for his flight was the best he had ever heard.

I met with a young Airman who is married to a Muslim in America. The Saudis have been trying to convert him to ISLAM. He came to me to make a complaint about his supervisor not allowing him to receive gifts from the Saudis. He was to be given a prayer book and a prayer rug--without which, he could not say his prayers. I explained to him that receiving gifts (he is a security forces troop) from the nationals was not a good idea--it could compromise him at the gate, and it was a violation of the directive that the security forces commander had issued.

I asked him why he wanted to convert. He said that ISLAM was a lot like Christianity, that they too believed in Jesus. I showed Him in the Bible that Jesus would not allow anyone to put him into the role of a mere prophet--just one among many, and somewhere under Mohammed. I shared that Jesus claimed that He IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE--AND THAT NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH JESUS. If Jesus is telling the truth--he is much greater than Mohammed--if he is not telling the truth--he is no prophet--either way--ISLAM is wrong.

I then told him that there are only two "religions" in the world, the religion of self (works, effort, human merit, trying to do enough to earn God's favor) and true Christianity--faith in Jesus Christ alone, where salvation is a free gift based upon the finished work of Christ on the cross (tree). I gave him a New Testament and challenged him to read the Gospel of John and answer the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" He left and promised me he would. I saw him again last night at

0300 when I was doing visitation with the cops--he told me with a smile that he was going to come see me. So I pray for him that God would open his eyes.

Easter (Resurrection Sunday)

Our day began with 210 people attending an 0545 outdoor Christian service in the Radical Muslim country of Saudi Arabia--such a thing does not happen very often. At 1030 we met in our Chapel Tent and had 188 attend Resurrection Morning Service, about 20 of those had to stand outside the door. The Gospel was presented clearly both times. I do not know if any came to the Lord, but I suspect some did. God seemed to be working in the hearts of people today. I know that a couple of folks came to Christ Friday night at our Gospel Night Service.

Had a good Lord's day--3 people prayed to receive Christ--hope to follow them up this week. After the service two young Airmen from Dyess AFB were baptized publically before about 100 people. God is working in our midst - and the believers are very encouraged. It was a good Lord's Day, and God's people seemed to be encouraged by having gathered together in the name of the Lord.

I miss my wife and family very much, they are so precious to me. It has been the most difficult period of my life being separated from the wife of my heart, yet God has used me and is using me in ways that astound me.

James

Email from CAPT Dale Parker (CHC, USN), with the U.S. Navy, deployed to Bahrain. Dale is your senior Navy Chaplain in charge of the ministry at the Naval Support Center in Bahrain...

I am still ministering pastorally in the same manner as always. Preaching, teaching and counseling at work and at home. Attendance is good in all the services and home Bible studies are very meaningful. Friday nights are special in that it is a time of much prayer and open praise. Pray for men and women who have strayed from their roots in faith and are seeking their way back. This is a unique ministry that I have tried to key in on. I love those folks and want earnestly for the Lord to strengthen them in faith to believe they can make this step after being away from the Lord for a long time. He did that for my Commanding Officer who is growing in knowledge and faith and is a blessing to us all. We don't know from day to day what will happen here. Just focusing on the Kingdom of God and His Great Commission.

Two days later Dale emailed regarding fellowship with another of your chaplains...

I was able to assist Matt Kreider and had a brief time of fellowship with a fellow IFCA Chaplain!! It was a blessing. We had never before met and we were well into our military situation when I asked him his faith group background. What a joy when he said IFCA International. Blessings in our Lord.

Dale

Your Army Chaplain Matt Kreider, is deployed to Saudi Arabia and ministers to his Army unit spread throughout Kuwait, Iraq and Bahrain. He shares with us just one example of God's blessing in lives through the missionary ministry of Chaplaincy.

Please pray for Ray B, our Task Force BMO. After two and a half hours today in my office, he is very close to accepting the free gift of salvation offered him by God's perfect provision through the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have been meeting with him once a week for about the last six weeks. He is a native of El Salvador.

He came to my office today all shook up about a dream he had. In his dream he was taken captive by terrorists and they were going to execute him. He woke up sweating and his heart pounding because he has not been to confession for several years. He was not prepared to die. What an opportunity to share with him how to be at peace with God, not afraid to die, knowing beyond a shadow of doubt that the grave is but a doorway into the presence of the Lord!

Two weeks ago I gave him a Bible in Spanish (his first ever) and since then he has read all of the Book of John and half of Acts.

The old saying is true, "There are no atheists in foxholes."

Follow-up Email...

You may recall a couple of weeks ago I asked for prayer concerning one of our Warrant Officers, Ray B, from El Salvador. Two weeks ago I asked him how sure of his salvation he was. His answer was, "Well, nobody knows for sure until you die, right?" This led to a wonderful discussion about the Gospel and the assurance of salvation one can have once they have placed their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. I met with him again this past Friday afternoon. I asked him the same question about his salvation. He answered with confidence, "If I die today I will go to heaven!!" When I asked him why he was so confident, he replied, "Because I believe!! Just like in the book of John. I believe that Jesus died for my sins." Praise the Lord! I spent the next two and a half hours reinforcing through the Word of God the assurance of salvation we have in Christ. This deployment opened Ray's eyes to his own mortality and God used it to draw Him to Himself. Please continue to pray for growth in Ray's spiritual walk as I meet with him weekly.

I praise God for the opportunity to serve Him in the military. It is certainly not easy being away from my family, but God is good to us and He gives us the strength to persevere.

**Thanks again,
Matt
For God & Country!**

Take Time to Teach What is Good

Kristin Williams

Heading down the elevator to my first IFCA International Annual Convention I reflected on how drastically life had changed in the previous six weeks. I had gone from being a full-time schoolteacher to a full-time new mom and a new pastor's wife. Just a week prior we had moved over two thousand miles away from friends and family to a new church where my husband began as a Pastoral Intern. Life had a few transitions for me and I wasn't prepared for the drastic emotional drain on my system.

Here we were at convention and I was trying to figure out how I could attend all the sessions and still take care of the feeding schedule of my newborn. I was exhausted, overwhelmed and depressed. I needed a woman to take me by the heart and guide me back into a biblical view of life. At my lowest God took compassion on me. First, God brought Pat to my aid. She simply said I didn't have to go to every session--what a relief for me to hear! She gave me a knowing hug and told me to hang in there. Then God brought Patti who put her arm around me and said, "This too shall pass." What a soothing balm those two were to my weary heart. I immediately thanked the Lord that things would not always be so difficult.

That time in my life taught me the importance for younger women to have an older, more experienced woman come alongside them to encourage, admonish and teach them. God graciously provided me with a precious mentoring relationship between the

Senior Pastor's wife and me for the three years we served as a Pastoral Intern. She left an indelible mark on my walk with the Lord. Her example in taking the time to disciple me made such a huge impact--especially seeing how little spare time she had. Titus 2:3-5 says, "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored." Notice it does not say that older women--who are experts in their field should train the younger women. It simply says older women are "to teach what is good, so that they might encourage the younger women...". In order to teach someone good things you need to be an example yourself. However, so many older women I see are good examples in these things yet they hold so tightly to their own life's schedule and don't make room to teach what is good to others. Others incorrectly think they have done the job of raising their own children so now their time is their own. However, now is the time to teach what you have learned! We have to make the time to be mentors to the younger women. This is not a suggestion from God's Word. It is a command.

No matter what phase of life you are in as a believer, God has given you wisdom to handle life's circumstances. No matter how old you are there is always someone younger than you in the faith and in experience. None of us have an excuse. A 10-year-old girl who watches my girls every Wednesday night at church has taken it upon herself to come up with a Bible lesson, a verse and a game to teach them each week. She has no set curriculum but a heart that longs to teach what is good and makes that time profitable for all of them. That is the kind of heart God loves to see. A heart that takes every opportunity to teach what is good.

So how do we do this? Start with your family using Deuteronomy 6:7. If you have children at home you are responsible before the Lord to teach them. Use these years to ground them solidly in the Word. Then look around at the ladies in your church. Do you see a pained face or someone needing a hug? Begin encouraging her and soon God will provide you with an opportunity to play a vital role in her life as her friend and mentor. Get involved. You will find it to be one of the most rewarding times in your life as you watch others grow and see God work in lives.

Kristin Williams is the wife of Jonathan Williams, Associate Pastor at Trinity Bible Church in Gilroy, CA. She is the mother of two girls and a newborn son.

Why Plant Churches?

Earl W. Brubaker

"Your brother lives in Madras? I've only been there a couple of times, and have never stopped. We passed through there on our way to Portland a few weeks ago. I've heard there is at least one good church in Madras."

We had recently moved to Central Oregon with the goal of planting a church from which we could minister throughout the area. I was talking to a leader of the church I had previously pastored. His reply was typical of what I have heard so many times.

"There are several good churches there," he said. "I think the town has all the churches it needs." He went on to identify the church he felt was adequate. It is denominational, Arminian, and teaches entire sanctification.

Many of those saints in that church and of that persuasion are part of the body of Christ. As Paul said in Philippians 1:18, "Christ is preached, and in that I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." I respect their commitment and zeal. One day we shall all rejoice together before the throne of God. But I do not think that church adequately meets the needs of that community.

We Visited Several Churches

Having moved to Central Oregon, we visited various churches so that we would know firsthand about churches there. We found churches with busy programs, but little doctrine. We found churches proclaiming the gospel, but so far afield doctrinally that we could never be comfortable. We found churches whose focus is the gospel and a set of rules which, if followed, will make one a great evangelist. We found churches with large paid staffs, cheered on by the sacrificial giving of spectator church members. These members are constantly urged to "help us out--we can't do all the work ourselves." We found churches with pastors who spent many hours teaching saints already sated by hearing and not serving. We found a few churches where the saints were being carefully taught and encouraged to minister to one another and their community.

Why Plant Another Church?

With the gospel being preached in all these churches, why consider the possibility of planting an IFCA Bible Church there? Many of those churches, while having successful ministries, are endangering the next generation of gospel witness. At any point, any society is but one generation away from heathenism. If the church does not prepare for testimony to the next generation, it is not fulfilling its responsibility.

There are some basic New Testament principles which must be the standard of evaluation of the ministry of men and churches. Two of these concern doctrine and ministry. The Word of God must be taught with clarity and depth, and it must be taught in such a way as to prepare and motivate people to be involved in ministry. One or both of these things are lacking in most of the churches cited above.

The Biblical Pattern

In Ephesians 4:11, 12, Paul writes, "And he gave some,...pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ." Shepherding and teaching, the primary responsibility of the pastor, have the goal of maturity and ministry of the saints. Maturity must be more than outward conformity to a community of believers and their standards. It must be the maturity that comes from being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). That kind of maturity comes only with the knowledge of the Word of God. There is no alternative to the patient, systematic teaching of the Word of God. There is no short cut to maturity.

This teaching must also emphasize and motivate involvement in service, the accompanying goal of maturity. The saints are to become mature for the work of service. This is the same emphasis found in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The importance of the content of the teaching is indicated by the reference to many witnesses. The importance of ministry is indicated by the four generations referred to in the verse. Paul's goal was not merely evangelism and teaching, but also training for ministry to future generations.

It is this dual emphasis upon doctrine and ministry which makes it vitally important that we have Bible teaching, ministering churches. Many souls may be won by professional clergy or by evangelism without teaching. I rejoice in each soul saved, but it is vital for future generations that we establish Bible teaching, ministering churches. If Christians are not taught the Word of God today, the church of the next generation will be ignorant and doctrinally divergent. If saints are not taught to minister today, the next generation will be lost for lack of people to reach them with the gospel.

Can it really be that serious?

Consider some of the possibilities if present trends go unchecked. The emphasis upon experience in the Charismatic movement is already producing visions which direct lives and interpret the Word of God. In its present direction this movement will produce new revelation to add to the Bible. This is the basic error of many major cults of our day.

Many who preach the gospel do so with humanistic reasoning and sermons centered in philosophy and psychology. This move from a message with God at the center to a message with man at the center will lead to a weak or nonexistent doctrine of inspiration in future generations. Without inspiration humanism prevails with all its error.

Some evangelize, but do not teach. They espouse a set of rules on the basis of group conformity, not the Word of God. They place highest importance upon the techniques of evangelism. This movement may well result in Galatianism-saved by grace and made perfect by keeping a set of rules.

The over-emphasis upon large churches also has a danger. If churches become super corporations, run by professionals, for the good of the layman, who will win the next generation? If our laymen become spectators rather than ministers, there will never be enough workers to reach the growing world population. The challenge of the pastoral staff dare not be "help us," but "let us help you" do the work of the ministry.

Striving for sinless perfection through entire sanctification is frustrating. The sinful person must reason away the sinfulness of sin-call it a mistake-in order to have peace of mind and heart. The only alternative is despair. This rationalizing leads to an insensitivity to the things of God. It breeds a callous and secular attitude. Others could be added, but these demonstrate the issue. The real question is: Is the church hopeless?

What can we do?

We must take the offensive. When Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). He was not placing the church on the defensive. He pictures the church attacking the gates of a fortified city. The church is on the offensive in an area which is Satan's domain. That domain of Satan cannot stand against the advance of the church. No, He does not say the church will conquer Satan and lead us into the millennium. Neither does He picture the church as a small cluster of saints embattled by Satan and holding on in spite of the opposition. The church is moving and growing, and the fortifications of hell cannot stop it.

How do we take the offensive?

We must evangelize our own community and plant new churches in other communities. Though we should and do stand against error, we will not change the church picture in America by denouncing its errors.

We must establish teaching, ministering churches in every community where there are none.

We must help struggling churches, IFCA or not, do a better job of teaching and ministering. A community needs new churches not only because there is nobody preaching the gospel, but because there are not enough churches emphasizing the importance of well taught, ministering saints to reach this generation and the next.

We must believe God to use us to reach the people of every ethnic background whom He has brought near to where we live.

Throughout America there are peoples of every language, culture, tribe and nation for whom Christ died. God has sent these people to us. His Great Commission is ours to obey.

We Dare Not Die!

A pastor in Sacramento once said to me, "I'm convinced that any denomination, association, or church that is not planting new churches is dying." But there is something worse than the death of the IFCA as an association. What if our grandchildren stray from the truth and live in a pagan society because we failed to use our resources to establish teaching, ministering churches?

Earl Brubaker is a veteran church planting missionary in the NW United States. He now is General Director of Northwest Independent Church Extension located in Tacoma.

Adapted from Voice (Jan/Feb 1982)