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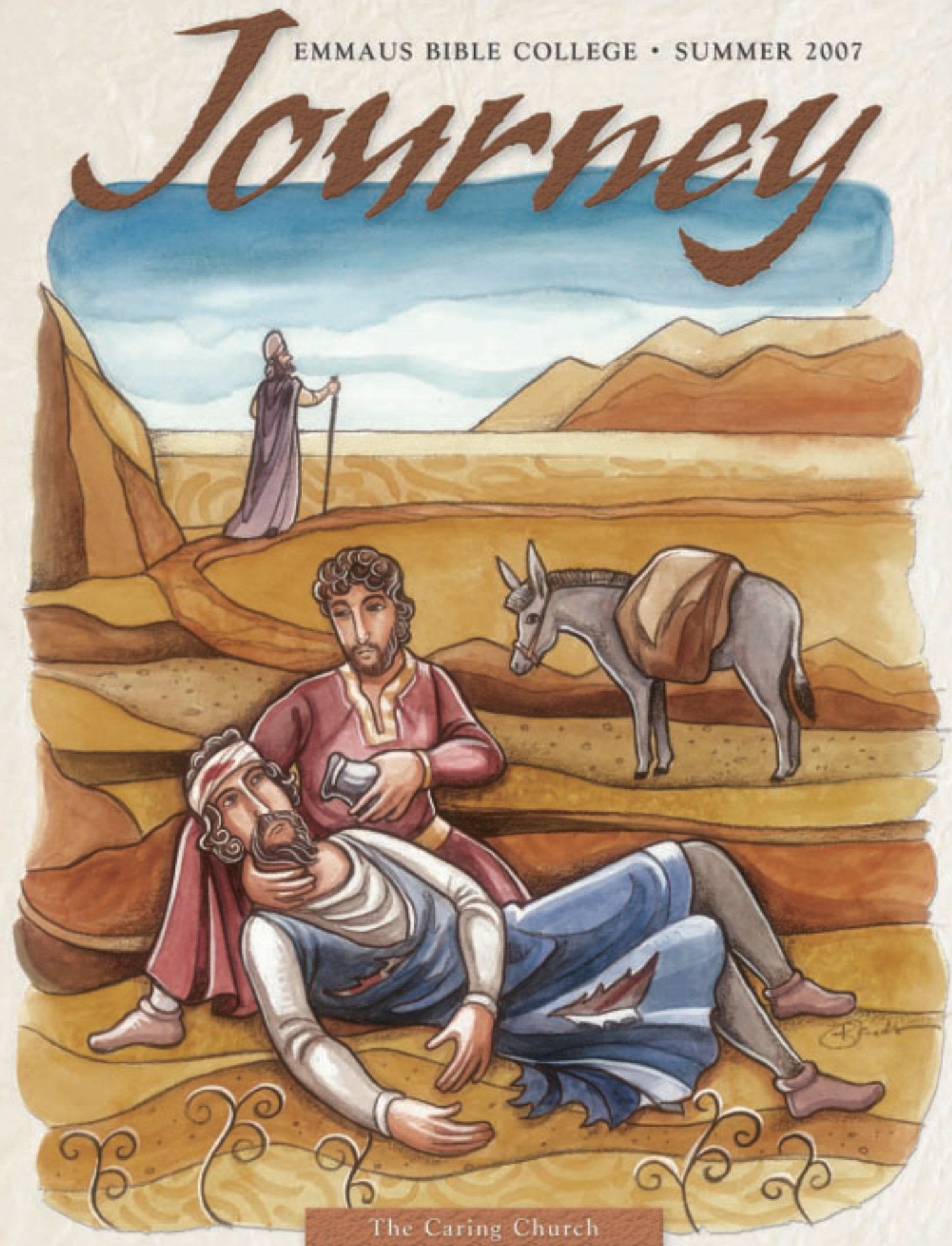
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2570 Asbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001



Dispelling Rumors

I received a phone call this week from a friend and alumnus who was recommending Emmaus to some families in his assembly who have children considering college. They were concerned because they had heard rumors that Emmaus had left behind its theology of New Testament eldership and was now teaching young men to become ordained as clergy and become senior pastors in their churches. I assured him that this was not true, and that Emmaus' theology and teaching have not changed. Where do these rumors come from? How do they grow and spread?

In one sense I feel complimented that people believe Emmaus will have such an influence on a student that we will shape him for the rest of his life. That's true. Many alumni report that Emmaus changed their lives, and they spent some of the best years of their lives here. On the other hand I'm appalled at how little truth is contained in these stories that circulate around the country. The majority of our students are from the assemblies and continue to faithfully serve in assembly leadership for the rest of their lives. A minority of our students come from other evangelical backgrounds such as independent Bible churches; some go on to seminary and end up serving as pastors of Bible churches. Is that the source of the rumor? Actually, 20% of those from other backgrounds who come to Emmaus for just one year are now with the assemblies. And 80% of those from the assemblies who attend Emmaus for the one year Bible certificate are still with the assemblies ten years later. That's a great track record. We have also been criticized for regularly inviting a nationally known advocate for biblical eldership to our yearly conference. The criticism is that in his book on deacons he admits that he doesn't always correct folks who call him "pastor" in error, even though he does not accept that title. Our theology is incorrectly judged on the basis of this minor comment! The truth is that Emmaus' theology and teaching have remained faithful through the years. You can trust Emmaus.

A few months ago I visited an assembly on the east coast that had some concerns about rumors they had heard about Emmaus. I met with one of their elders for the afternoon, and then that evening with half of the assembly that had turned out to ask me questions. At the close of the breaking of bread the next morning an elder stood and endorsed Emmaus as their college that they could trust because it teaches what their assembly believes. That was a heart—warming experience.

Emmaus recently participated in a nation—wide survey of student satisfaction with their college experience. We were gratified that Emmaus' students were significantly more satisfied than students in other four-year private colleges. And it was not just because Bible college students are kinder in their evaluations than secular students. In comparison to other Bible colleges, our students were more satisfied in every category. Emmaus offers a quality education that has received accolades from all three of our accrediting associations. It's an education you can trust.

If you have any questions, feel free to write me directly at kdaughters@emmaus.edu.

Kenneth Alan Daughters
President,
Emmaus Bible College



Features/Departments

6 Barriers to a Caring Church

Dr. William McRae

In this convicting article, Dr. McRae describes seven barriers to a caring Church – a spirit of partiality, distorted vision, misplaced values, complacency, busyness, unforgiveness, and lack of prayer. This description resonates with reality! Perhaps identifying the problem is the first step to a solution. Read and respond with the heart and with action!

12 Cultivating a Culture of Care

Alex Strauch

In his usual way of linking scripture with practice, Alex Strauch gives several suggestions for developing a caring church – caring for the sick, visiting the elderly and shut-ins, providing for the poor and needy, reaching out to new people, and service for the deacons. Full of specific applications, this article will serve as a guide for creating a culture of care for your local church.

30 The Characteristics of Leadership: A Biblical Perspective

Dr. Steven Witter

In the era of transitioning leadership in Church life, it is imperative to be able to recognize the characteristics of leadership. Dr. Witter addresses this important issue in this article with insight and direction that will aid all who are involved in this critical generational transition

50 News from Emmaus Bible College

Emmaus is making great progress in our programs. New areas of study include Nursing and Business Administration programs which are in place for the current school year. Read and be encouraged by the blessing of God!

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Journey Magazine, volume 5, issue 2, Summer 2007

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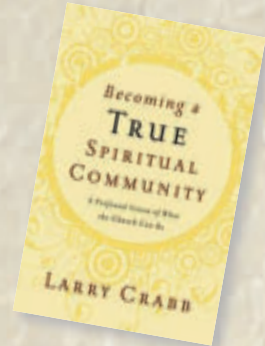
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Travel Guides



Becoming a True Spiritual Community: A Profound Vision of What the Church Can Be

Larry Crabb
Thomas Nelson, 2007

In today's frenetic society, people rarely develop intimate friendships. Instead, they spend their lives essentially disconnected from others, rushing through life content with brief visits and casual conversations. But what if one were to develop a community, a spiritual community, of people who walked with and supported each other through life's journey? A community of real friends who listened to each other's personal tragedies without merely trying to fix the problems, who encouraged and nurtured each other's strengths, and who accepted people for who they really are, instead of the image they try to portray. Larry Crabb explores such a place, where God can heal disconnected people and allow them to reconnect with each other and, ultimately, with Him.



Encouragement: The Key to Caring

Larry Crabb and Dr. Dan Allender
Zondervan, 1990

"Extraordinary writing...will revolutionize individual lives and revive churches who will follow this unique God-given ministry of encouragement"...Christian Bookseller



The Hospitality Commands

Alex Strauch
Lewis & Roth, 1993

Hospitality plays crucial roles in encouraging unity, evangelism, and many spiritual gifts in the local church. Strauch shows the Scripture's teaching along with practical hints that he and his wife have learned over the years.



Your Home a Lighthouse

Bob and Betty Jacks with Ron Wormser
Navpress, 1987

This practical guidebook on how to host Bible studies in one's own home grew out of the Jacks' years of experience with evangelistic studies.



Spiritual Care: A Guide for Caregivers

Judith Allen Shelly
InterVarsity, 2000

Judith Allen Shelly offers guidance on caring for a patient's soul in this revised and expanded guide for anyone who provides care to those who are suffering.

101 Great Ideas to Create a Caring Group

Thom Corrigan
Navpress, 1997

Small group leader and trainer Thom Corrigan presents the best of what he's learned about caring for others from over twenty years in the ministry.

The Caring Church: A Guide for Lay Pastoral Care

Howard W. Stone
Augsburg, 2000

The Last Christian Generation

Josh McDowell
Green Key Books, 2006

The Last Christian Generation documents the urgency of the crisis but also provides a fresh revelation of the heart of God through seven lifelong response of a true follower of Christ. Josh makes a ground breaking case for the need to move our ministries from program-driven to process-driven. It is essential that we reintroduce the real and relevant Christ to our young people. Only then might we hope to ignite the spiritual revolution necessary to reclaim this and future generations for Christ.

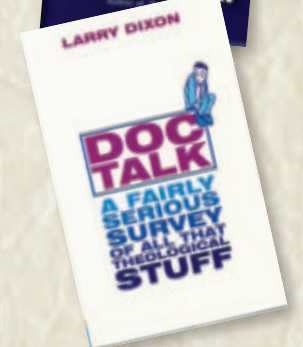
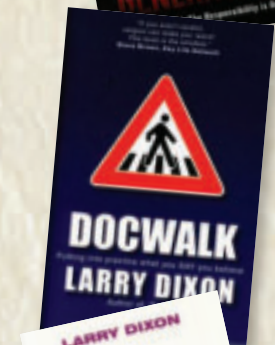
DocWalk: Putting Into Practice What You Say You Believe

Larry Dixon
GreenLight, 2005

DocTalk: A Fairly Serious Survey of All That Theological Stuff

Larry Dixon
Christian Focus Publications, 2002

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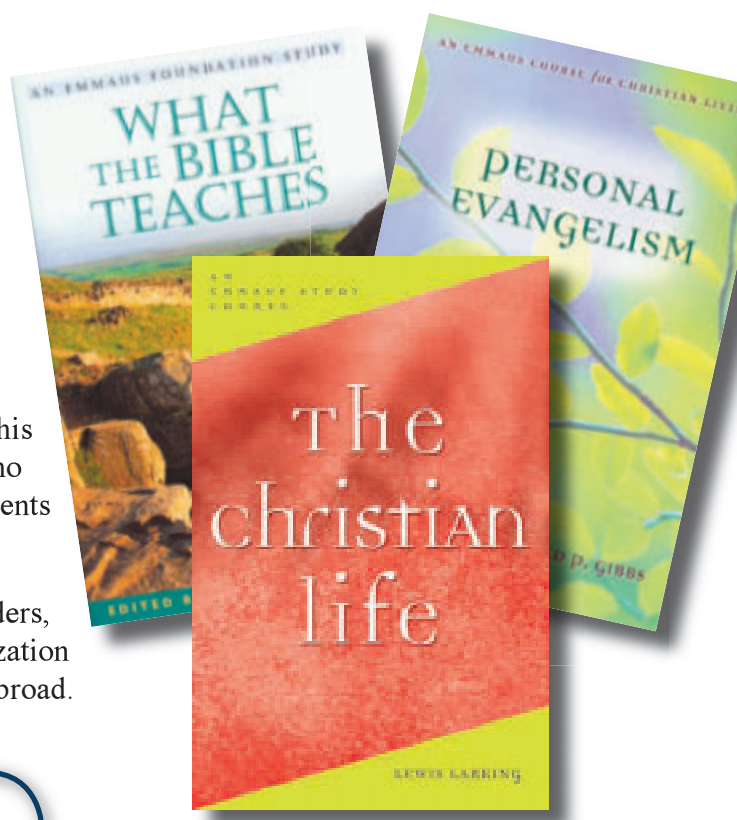


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Dave Glock
Editor

One Another

Matthew 25

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when...?’ ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”

The cover art represents the story of the Good Samaritan — a story that causes us to evaluate our personal degree of caring. This issue of Journey addresses the components of a caring church. The most recent *Iron Sharpens Iron* annual conference at Emmaus Bible College was devoted to building a culture of caring in each of our local assemblies. Please interact with segments from ISI presentations that will assist in becoming churches that care.

- Barriers to a Caring Church
- Creating a Culture of Care

At ISI a series of seminars treated the “one another” passages in the New Testament. Would you do a personal study on these verses that describe biblical care for one another? (See pgs. 26-27.) The Bible is always a safe guide – even in teaching us how we should care.

Barriers to a Caring Church

Editors Note: This article is an edited transcription of a message delivered by Dr. McRae at the the 2007 "Iron Sharpens Iron" conference held on the campus of Emmaus Bible College.

Everybody Welcome? Let me begin by telling you I just don't believe it any more. I am ready to be shown, but I am not going to believe it until I am shown. I refer, of course, to the sign in front of your chapel. It says, "Everybody Welcome." And I just don't believe it anymore. Everybody welcome? Really?

Barrier #1: A Spirit of Partiality

One of the barriers to caring is what the Scriptures call, "a spirit of partiality." It is not a new thing. As a matter of fact, in the days of the New Testament it was a serious problem. Take the church in Rome, for example. There was a problem there. The Jews didn't care much for the Gentiles, and the Gentiles didn't care much for the Jews. The Jews could not understand how Gentiles were getting such blessing, and the Gentiles could not believe why Jews should be so favored. There was a spirit of

partiality, which meant a lack of caring. The apostle Paul came along and addressed the issue theologically in Romans 1-11, and then beginning in Romans 12, he challenged the believers with several "one another" commands. It is in those "one anothers" that we have a picture of what was happening in the church of Rome. He tells them to receive one another. He challenges them to honor one another. He exhorts them to care for one another. The problem in the church of Rome was a spirit of partiality. And when that spirit creeps into a church, or when it creeps into an individual's life, it becomes a barrier to caring.

James addressed a spirit of partiality regarding believers who cared for the rich people who came into the assembly, but did not care much for the poor people.

There was a spirit of partiality when a new convert with a criminal past by the name of Saul appeared at the front door of the church and was not welcome. It surfaced a little later when the apostle Peter was called to give an account of himself for entering the home of a Gentile. He shared the gospel with a Gentile, and he had to answer to the elders in Jerusalem. There was a spirit of partiality. It is as old as the Christian church and tragically, it is still very much alive!

It is said that Mahatma

Ghandi left India and traveled through Europe on one occasion to explore Christianity because he was looking for a system of faith that would help to break down the caste system in India that was destroying the nation. From what he had heard, he thought Christianity was the best option. So he came to Europe to explore it. One Sunday morning he and his entourage of people approached a little country church. They were stopped at the front door and the head usher declared to them that this church was for Europeans only. He turned around and went back to India and spent the rest of his life promoting Hinduism!

Preferring People like Us

When you have a spirit of partiality it seriously affects this business of caring. A number of years ago, Gerhard Lenski published a book entitled *The Religious Factor*. The book examined the nature of interpersonal relationships in the protestant churches of Detroit. His conclusion was this: Christians in protestant churches prefer people like themselves in taste and income. We can tolerate people who are a little bit above us, but not those that are beneath us. That is a disturbing conclusion to reach. That's the spirit of partiality. Of course, we have become skilled at hiding that spirit of partiality. Dr. Lenski, in his report, says this is

how Christians do it now: they just ignore those who are under them, or those who are way above them. They prefer people like themselves. So we wouldn't close the door, we wouldn't cause a fight; we just ignore people. In another term, we just don't care about them.

Lord of All

Part of the antidote to the spirit of partiality comes from Acts 10:36. In Peter's sermon at Cornelius' house, he says this:

"This is the message God sent to the people of Israel telling the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all."

I have underlined that little

phrase at the end of the verse. Some versions put the phrase in parentheses. But this was at the heart of the enormous truth Peter discovered: Jesus is Lord of ALL! He is Lord of Jews and Gentiles. He is Lord of the wealthy and the poor. He is Lord of the high and the low. He's Lord of all!

It is serious thing when Christians have an attitude that contradicts this theological tenet. When Peter was called to give an account in Jerusalem for his actions, he concluded by saying:

"So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" (Acts 11:17)

That is the problem with the spirit of partiality: it is to oppose God. You are taking God on when you harbor that kind of discrimination. You are taking God on when you show favoritism and care only about people who are like you. That spirit of partiality becomes a destructive barrier to caring for the family of God, to caring for your neighbor, to caring

That is the problem with the spirit of partiality: it is to oppose God. You are taking God on when you harbor that kind of discrimination. You are taking God on when you show favoritism and care only about people who are like you.

for that person who is different.

When I find that spirit creeping up in my mind and affecting my attitudes, I want to take hold of Acts 10:36 and say, "He's Lord of All. He's Lord over this person. He's Lord of that situation. He's Lord of All!" I want to recognize His Lordship, and not oppose it so that I just ignore people that I don't like. If I ignore them, what I am

actually doing is opposing God.

So do a little checkup. Do you ever struggle with a spirit of partiality? Perhaps you choose not to go over and sit with a person. Or you choose not to make a phone call, or you invite a particular family to lunch. You are a very unusual person if you have never dealt with it. But deal with it we must.



Barrier #2: The Distorted Vision

When a church or an individual has a distorted vision, then it is very difficult to care. Carson Pue, director of Arrow Leadership in Canada, has written an interesting book called *Mentoring Leaders*. In that book, Pue describes a vision as "a compelling picture of the future that is based on God's desired purposes." Some of our churches are serious about "vision casting." You may have it up on a poster board in the foyer. You may have it on the bulletin cover of your church. "This is our vision for our chapel. This is where we want to be. This is where we're heading." The problem is that the vision can be distorted.

Don't Forget Community!

Pue suggests there are four elements that always need to be included in a compelling vision that is based on God's desires:

1. A focus on intimacy with God.
2. A focus on ministry and service to others.
3. A focus on the development of Christ-like character.
4. A focus on the local church as a community.

The problem is that sometimes our vision statement omits number four—the element of community. We can easily take one or two of

those components and magnify them to the exclusion of the others. What happens when the element of the local church as a community of believers is omitted from the

If community is not part of your vision, then it will undermine the whole caring process and you will not build a caring church.

vision? Simply stated, it affects caring. You do not have a vision for the family of God meeting together, loving one another, reaching out to one another and serving one another. If community is not part of your vision, then it will undermine the whole caring process and you will not build a caring church.

Take a careful look at your vision for your church, and to make it more personal, your vision for your contribution to the church. Does your vision involve the cultivation of community? Because if it does not, you will not be an assembly that is noted as a caring church.



Barrier #3: Misplaced Values

Programs vs. People

The major conflict when it comes to values in Christian ministry is between programs and people. Watch out for type-A personalities. These people have a tendency to use others to fulfill their purposes, their goals, and their ministries. In order to achieve their goal in ministry, they need people. As long as a given person is contributing to their plan and to their goal, that person is of value, and they care about the person. But as soon as the person is no longer contributing to their program, then that person becomes expendable. What we do is simply

ignore them. Suddenly, we no longer have time for them.

One of the reasons we have trouble caring for people is because they are not in step with us. They are not part of our ministry. They are not assisting us in achieving our goals and getting where we want to go. So we ignore them. Or if they are on board, we will use them—and we will wear them right out! We are not concerned about their marriage at home; we

Instead of valuing people because they are God's children and our brothers and sisters in Christ, we value programs and we use people.

are not really concerned about the time with their children; we are not really aware of their health circumstances. We will get every ounce of flesh out of them that we can, so that they get worn out, exhausted, and ultimately turned off to Christian ministry. Sadly, that is another way of disposing of them—unintentionally of course—but that is what we have done. It is a case of misplaced values. Instead of valuing people because they are God's children and our brothers and sisters in Christ, we value programs and we use people.

How do you deal with that kind of thing? There are two key principles I have found helpful.

Do Not Be Masters

First, I remind myself from 1 Peter 5:3 that Christian workers and leaders are not to be masters. We are not to "lord it over" people or use them as our slaves. We are not to view people as those who are here to make us successful and to make our programs go. That is what masters do. But not so with Christian leaders, Christian elders, and Christian women in various ministries. We are not to treat people as slaves.

Be Fathers

Secondly, the verse I use to counter-balance this is 1 Thessalonians 2:11 which suggests we are to be like fathers. Now a father, of course, can be abusive. But the picture Paul gives us is that the father cares, the father works, the father brings along his children in order to see them maximize their potential. He works with the children so that they are cultivated and developed to be all that God intends them to be.

That is what we are to be like as we work with people. We care about them. We are concerned about them. We sometimes say, "You need to not be at that meeting next week. You need to spend some time with your children this week. You have been on the go..." We care about people. We give people leaves of absence from the Elders for six months because of a certain situation that is going on at work, or in their marriage, or with their health. We want to bring them along, maximize their giftedness, maximize their contribution, and cultivate their spiritual maturity. That is the kind of spirit that contributes to caring.



Barrier #4: The Curse of Complacency

A Complacent Church

Webster defines complacency as "being satisfied; self-satisfied; smug." That is the word I write over the church at Laodicea: "A Complacent Church." It is a congregation of people who have become satisfied. They say, "We're rich; we're increased with goods and we need nothing." They have become complacent.

When you become complacent it is a barrier to caring. Complacency erodes a caring attitude. Often I meet people who are

involved in ministries, and I will ask, "How are things going in your ministry? How are things at your chapel?" I am very interested in their response. More often than not, I get a one-word response: "Fine." I have grown to hate that word! When people say, "Fine," they mean: "Well, there are no scandals, there's no doctrinal problem that's going on here. There's no fight between the elders and deacons. There are no major problems and we are quite satisfied." That is complacency. It is a dangerous attitude to cultivate.

The problem I see when I come to the church at Laodicea is that apparently you can become wretched, poor, miserable, blind and naked—and not know it! That was Laodicea. If you asked them, "How are things at church?" They would say, "Fine." But the Lord says, "I was there last Sunday, and here's my report. You think you are rich, increased with goods and in need of nothing. But you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17). That is the problem with complacency.

The Tell-Tale Sign: Absence of Prayer

What is the indicator that you have become complacent? It is the absence of prayer. I speak in all kinds of churches and unfortunately I have to say that the assemblies are the worst when it comes to praying with me before the Sunday morning service. When I go into other churches there is generally a leader there and he will pray with me. But when I go into brethren assemblies, over and over again, the song leader will come up and say, "Well, it's time for us to start." And no one prays with me. That is a tell-tale sign that there is a little problem here. I am not sure that it is always the indicator of smugness — "We're fine" — but I think it can be.

If you want to do a little test on yourself in terms of complacency — in terms of raising your kids, in terms of the class you teach, in terms of outreach into the community — take a good look at your commitment to prayer with each of these.

Content but not Satisfied

How do you deal with it? The Puritan Jeremiah Burrows wrote a wonderful book entitled *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. In that book he makes an important distinction between being content and being satisfied. He argues never become satisfied. Contentment, yes. Contentment is a Christian virtue. It is learning to accept from God's hand what God sends. It is an obligation commanded to us in 1 Timothy 6:6-8, and commanded of us in Hebrews 13:5. We need to learn to be content. But not satisfied.

Being satisfied is what leads to complacency. In Philippians 4:11 Paul says, "I've learned the secret of being content in all things." Over a period of time Paul learned to accept from God's hand whatever circumstances God sent. But he was never satisfied. He was never satisfied with his ministry. Right to his very last day he had his eyes set on taking the gospel to Spain. He was never satisfied with

his spiritual life. In Philippians 3:12-14, he says, "I haven't attained what I've been called for. I'm still pressing toward the mark. I've still got ground to cover. I've still got heights to reach." He was never satisfied with his spiritual life. See, contentment is a virtue. Becoming satisfied is a curse.

I often say to my wife Marilyn, "I hope you never get satisfied with our marriage." It is a very dangerous thing for a husband to become satisfied with his marriage. I hope you never get satisfied with the ministry that you are involved in. Contented, yes. Absolutely. Grateful and thankful, sure. But never satisfied, because once you get satisfied the danger is becoming complacent. And when you become complacent, you don't care. It's not that you start fights and throw people out. You do it the Christian way, you just ignore them. And that is the problem with complacency.

So, time for a checkup. How are you doing in terms of that smugness that erodes caring?



Barrier #5: The Blight of Busyness

When Carson Pue began his ministry

someone said to him, "Carson, I want you to know that ministry for God can become the greatest enemy of devotion to God." The truth is many of us believe our busyness is our ministry. But you need to be careful about busyness. Very often busy people are too busy to listen. They are too busy to stop and visit. They are too busy to write a note. They are too busy to care. Of course, they are busy in their *ministry* — that is what makes it acceptable. Or does it?

Equipping Others for Ministry

Part of the solution for dealing with busyness is tied to adopting a biblical philosophy of ministry. The key text is Ephesians 4:11-12. Paul makes it very clear to me that I have been gifted in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry to the building up of the body of Christ. That is my calling. It is to equip saints. When we become a little egotistical, we start to think that our responsibility and calling is to do the ministry. So we get involved in this, and we get involved in that, because we think we are the best person to do it. But how much of your energy is spent in equipping others to do the ministry?

Someone has said, "Take a look over your life and identify the things other people could do about 80% as well as you." Now we all know no one could do it as well as you, right? But how many things are you involved in that other people could do about 80% as well as you?

They are the people to start investing your life in and equipping them for ministry. Are you still doing today what you were doing ten years ago? Shame on you! Your responsibility is to equip saints to take it over.

So, how are you

doing? It is checkup time again. The blight of busyness is going to wear you out and rob others of opportunities for ministry—other people who are gifted and available to do it if someone would just take the interest in building into their lives, developing and equipping them for that ministry.



Barrier #6: Unforgiveness

Neil Anderson, in his writing on spiritual warfare, says, "An unforgiving spirit is the number one

access route of Satan and the forces of darkness into the life of a Christian leader and a Christian church." An unforgiving spirit is a dangerous thing. Many of us have been involved in ministry long enough, and we have been hurt and offended and wronged and misrepresented enough, that it is very easy for us to accumulate a great deal of unforgiveness.

No doubt, you can identify someone right now. They have hurt you; they've injured you. You can't forgive them; you haven't forgiven them. My guess is I know why: you are waiting for them to apologize. You are waiting for them to ask for your forgiveness. What if they die and never ask for it? What if they move away? Maybe they have moved away and you have no idea where they are. Are you going to spend the rest of your life harboring an unforgiving spirit in a situation where the apology is not going to come?

That Root of Bitterness

For reconciliation to happen there needs to be repentance. But there does not need to be that repentance for forgiveness. You need to forgive them. Hebrews 12:15 says this:

"See to it that you do not fall short of the grace of God lest a root of bitterness springs up causing trouble and by it many are defiled."

When a person harbors an unforgiving spirit it can easily degenerate into a spirit of bitterness. That spirit of bitterness, says the text, causes trouble. It can cause emotional problems. It can cause relationship problems. It can cause physical problems. It can cause spiritual problems. That is what bitterness does. It causes trouble in the heart. But that is not where it ends. The text says it spills over so that many are defiled. Your relationship with your spouse is defiled. Your relationship with people at work is contaminated. Your relationship with the other elders in the church is seriously affected. And it is because you are harboring a bitter spirit that is, at root, an unforgiving spirit. It is a dangerous thing to harbor that unforgiving spirit. It is a barrier to caring.

So, how are you doing? Are you harboring a spirit of unforgiveness? Uproot that bitterness; that barrier to caring!



Barrier #7: Lack of Prayer

If You Care, You'll Pray!

Finally, let me put it simply: if you really care, you will pray. How many times have you said to someone, "I'll pray for you." If you really care, you'll pray! Prayer is one of the evidences that you really care.

But what if you don't care? Well, this is the twist. If you don't care, pray, and you will come to care. The older I get, I must confess, the less I understand about prayer. But there are a couple of things I have learned to understand. One of the things is that

when I start to pray really seriously about something, I begin to care. So start to pray seriously about a specific person, seriously about that group of elders, seriously about that situation and it is amazing how care is cultivated, how care comes along.

Break Down the Barriers

So, how are you doing? These are seven areas that I struggle with and have tried to deal with over the course of my forty-eight years of Christian ministry. My suspicion is that one or two of them may be in your life.

Let me encourage you to decide that you will do something about it. Certainly the first thing to do is to confess it to the Lord. Take the time to let the Lord search your heart, put His finger on the pulse, and break down the barriers. And pray that He would make you a caring person—a person committed to building a caring church. †



Bill McRae

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Cultivating a Culture of Care

Alexander Strauch
Edited by David J. MacLeod

“And I know of scarce any particular duty which is so much insisted upon, so pressed and urged upon us, both in the Old Testament and the New, as this duty of charity to the poor” (Jonathan Edwards).¹

Editor's Note: This article is an edited transcription of a message delivered by Alex Strauch at the 2007 “Iron Sharpens Iron” Conference held on the campus of Emmaus Bible College.

Introduction

It is evident from Scripture that our God is generous, just, merciful, loving, and kind (Deut. 10:18; Mark 10:45; 1 Tim. 6:17). It is just as evident that He expects His people to manifest these same characteristics (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 15:7-8, 10-11; Ps. 41:1; Prov. 14:31; Isa. 58:6-7; Mic. 6:8; Luke 12:15; John 13:34-35; Acts 20:34-35; Rom. 12:13; 1 Cor. 6:10; 1 Tim. 6:17-18; Heb. 13:16; 1 John 3:16-18). How do we implement the truths of these texts? How do we become “practitioners?” It’s very easy to be theorists, but God wants us to put truth into practice—to make it real in our local churches. Cultivating a culture of care begins with *teaching* all that the Bible says about contentment, giving, sharing, and generosity. A modeling of these truths must follow the teaching of them. We

must be generous—people with big hearts, and open hands who have an eye for the needy. We must spread this passion. People need to see it in the way we live: we need to develop a congregation that has eyes and hearts for needy brothers and sisters. Our goal as leaders is to encourage believers to have a passion to help others—to be a caring, loving, and merciful local church.

Caring for the Sick

There are several categories of needy people, and we need to be eminently practical about how we can minister to and help them. One of the great privileges of ministry is caring for the sick. Jesus said, “I was sick and you visited me” (Matt. 25:36). To visit the people of the Lord Jesus Christ when they are sick or dying is to visit the Lord Jesus Christ Himself because He is in them. This is the wonderful truth of the unity of the Body of Christ. The world we live in is a world full of physical pain, disease, suffering, and death. From prayer meetings to news reports on TV and in maga-

zines we can hear the cries of pain. For those of us who say we live to express the love of Christ, a concern for the sick and dying is essential.

Pray for Them

How do we care for them? The first thing we should do is pray. I do not say this in a sanctimonious way. We should never say to a sick person, “All I can do is pray for you,” and then apologize profusely as if prayer were a fruitless exercise. There’s nothing better for us to do for the sick than to pray for them. We demean prayer when we speak of it as a ritual of hopelessness. God says, “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16). Do we believe that? Prayer has great power while it is working. It is a powerful, healing reality. One of the most important things a believer can do is to consistently and regularly pray for those among us who are sick and dying. It not only provides hope for the body; prayer provides hope for



the spirit. A person who has been told that he or she is dying has no hope of living. Yet we can encourage them and lift them up within. In faith, therefore, we should regularly and consistently pray for the sick and dying, and we should call the congregation to be a praying congregation. At Littleton Bible Chapel the elders almost say this too much to our local congregation.

On Sunday morning after the Lord’s Supper we have a special time of prayer for the sick, and we say to the congregation, “We want to be a caring, praying church.” Yet as elders you must do this. You must keep repeating this until the people get

it. “We want our assembly to be a caring, loving, praying church.”

Visit Them and Touch Them

The sick not only need prayer; they need human contact. They need to see and feel compassion. Your presence and touch is healing, comforting, and encouraging. Your presence means something. Let me illustrate this from personal experience. Ten years ago my mother died, and the morning of the funeral I helped my Dad get dressed. (Dad died just this spring at age 95. He had been saved at 85 years of age). As we were

preparing to leave for the funeral I wondered if Dad could make it to the funeral home. He appeared so weak, and he couldn’t stop weeping. I helped him to get dressed, and I fed him some breakfast, but he was like a lost puppy dog. We did finally make it to the funeral home, and we walked to the casket to view Mom’s remains. He looked like a frail old man—older than his 85 years. I wondered how we were going to get through this day.

Then people began to arrive—my cousin (Dad’s nephew), some neighbors, and various friends. All of a sudden I watched the most amazing thing happen. As these people started to come toward the

casket and gather around Dad, he all of a sudden began to straight up. His usual sense of humor returned, and he began interacting with everyone. Within twenty minutes he had, as it were, come alive! And he stayed that way; he did not retreat into that crippling grief that had earlier engulfed him. I've often said to people, as I've ministered at funerals, "Your presence is important." And then, at Mom's funeral, I witnessed it. The presence of relatives, friends, and neighbors literally breathed life into Dad.

A Ministry and a Privilege

Your presence is important to a suffering, dying, or sick person. Sometimes we try to justify our careless attitudes. "Oh why do I even go to these funerals? Why do I go to these weddings? I'm so busy." You go because your presence means something; that's why! Many times you will not even have to say anything. You will just hug your brother or sister, and in doing so you will say, "I am here." I have seen the power of presence at the moment of need and crisis. To visit the sick and the dying is actually ministering God's love and God's comfort. It is an enormous privilege, and not just as another bothersome thing to add to your busy schedule. Remember as you go that you are a minister of God who is ministering the things of God.

The Example of Jesus Christ

I think of the Lord Jesus Christ—what an example He is! He touched

the untouchables (the lepers, those with blood disorders, and others who were ritually unclean), and the religious leaders hated him for it (Mark 1:40-45; 2:15-17; 5:25-34; Luke 7:34). He touched them, and they touched Him. He held the sick and needy, and people were shocked. He ministered to others with care and love. Now we live in a very busy world today; it is a hyper-maniac society. Everybody is going here and there and doing this and that. When you ask them to do something they say, "I'm so busy. I'm so busy." It has been said that any fool can be busy! The question is whether or not he is getting something done. Busyness is no excuse for not visiting the sick and the dying. When asked to just make a few phone calls to the sick, the response of many is the same, "I am too busy."

We all have time to do what we want to do, but we are "too busy" to do what we do not want to do.

Misplaced Priorities

There is something very revealing about people's behavior. They are so busy, but they think nothing of dropping 3 1/2 hours to watch a football game or two or three hours watching a video, or a Saturday morning playing a round of golf. Let's be honest. We all have time to do what we want to do, but we are too busy to do what we do not want to do. It's inconvenient to visit the

sick—to spend time in a hospital, or to travel to their homes. It interrupts our busy schedules, and it takes time.

It does take time; it is inconvenient, but Christian love is self-sacrificing. It is reaching out of yourself to others; it is a giving of yourself.

Self-Sacrificing Love, or Selfish, External Christianity

Noted counselor, Reuel Howe, wrote, "We are willing to love up to the point where it begins to be inconvenient to love any more. We like the image of ourselves as loved and loving people, but we would like the benefit without the responsibilities of the role. When the response to our love presents us with demands, we may begin to hold people off."² It does take time; it is inconvenient, but Christian love is self-sacrificing. It is reaching out of yourself to others; it is a giving of yourself. Sometimes we would rather give money than our time. Financial giving is important, but in the case of sick and dying people it is my personal presence and touch that is essential. Frankly, it's not fun to go to a nursing home and spend a little time with a person who is drooling from the mouth and hardly knows that you are there. We must admit this is something we often do not enjoy doing. Then why do it? Because Christ's love inside of you compels you to do it. You know you should do it.

Using Your Phone

We might not be able, of course, to visit everyone, or return again if we do visit, but we can call. The phone is a powerful tool for ministering to people, and I hope you use it. In fact, I believe that if you are a loving, caring, Christian person you're going to spend a lot of time on the phone. You're going to have this compulsion to call a particular person and ask, "How are you doing? How did the operation go?" Use the phone to touch people. People will appreciate your call. You will find that people are very forgiving about the method of reaching out as long as they know you care. They know you are busy because they are busy. They know that on a given day you cannot get to the hospital at six in the morning for their operation. They realize that your difficult schedule on that particular day will not allow you to drive to the hospital on the other side of town. But they will appreciate more than you realize hearing your voice on the phone saying, "I've been praying. How are you doing? Is there anything I can do? Is there anything the church needs to know about?" In short, use your phone effectively. If you find you are never on the phone calling a struggling, sick, or dying person, something is wrong with your claim to be a servant of Christ to others.

Cards, Letters, and Emails

There are many other things that we can do besides visiting and call-

ing. We can, for example, send cards, emails, or letters. If you have ever been seriously ill, you know how important these things are to people. There was a man in our church who, in the fifteen-year period before his death, had one life threatening disease after another. One might almost say that his dying process took fifteen years. He had melanoma and then developed another kind of cancer. Then he contracted diabetes. It was an awful thing—this long period of dying.

One day I went to visit him, and found that he had rearranged his entire living room. His big easy chair faced the wall from which he had removed all his photographs and artwork. The wall was covered with hundreds of cards from family and friends. It was the strangest thing! When I arrived, I looked around and said, "Pat, what are you doing, redesigning the house?" He replied, "You know, I sit in my chair, and I look at those cards. I have read every one of them five, six, or seven times. Every one of those cards is a person who loves me and is regularly praying for me." I realized all over again how important cards, letters, and emails are. Cards touch people, and they are even better when you add a verse of Scripture.

There was a young pastor in our area; he was a well-known and very able man. He was diagnosed with brain cancer and was told he only had about a year to live. I was try-

ing to think of a really good verse to send him. I found such a verse in the Psalms, and wrote it out for him and sent the card. I never heard anything again. After he died his wife sent out a letter he had written to the church and one he had written to friends. In the letter he said, "This verse has meant a lot to me," and it was the verse from the Psalms I had sent him. Before his death he had not responded to my card, and I would never have known how much that verse had meant to him had not his wife sent me his form letter to his friends.

After my father died, a very, very dear friend sent me a list of Psalms to read, and I went through those Psalms. They were very comforting. The Psalms are meant to comfort people; that's why they were written! You can use the Psalms effectively in ministering to people, so get to know them. I try to read a Psalm every day. I read recently that Billy Graham reads through the Psalter about four or five times a year! So learn to use your Psalter to minister comfort and hope to people. The little time you take to send that card pays big dividends in the ministry of care and comfort.

Helpful Gestures and Providing Information

Many other things can be done to help the sick and dying: organize meals, pick up their medications, clean their houses, provide rides to the doctor's office. These and other

helpful gestures will be appreciated. Information is also important—communication in the local assembly. Many churches are using emails to keep fellow believers informed about those who are sick and needy. With phone chains and emails you can get something out to everyone in the church very quickly. “This brother has just been run to the hospital.” “This sister has had an emergency operation.” “This situation has just arisen in the church.” We need to communicate that we’re really concerned about one another’s sicknesses.

Weekly Bulletin, Public Announcements

Using the church bulletin is also very important. Every week there should be a list of the sick, those who have special needs, and those who are dying. Use your public announcement times effectively. Announcements can be horribly boring, or they can be interesting and lively and minister to people. Too often we’ll mechanically say, “Let’s pray for our brother so-and-so who’s having a knee replacement tomorrow,” and then we’ll move on to the next lifeless announcement. A better approach would be to bring brother so-and-so up in front of the church. Unless such a person objects, we do this at Littleton Bible Chapel right after the Lord’s Supper. Have the person (or persons) come up and have one of the elders lead the congregation in

prayer for that person’s operation or physical need. Project the picture of the person up on the screen—some people in the congregation may not know who you are praying for. These things unite the congregation in prayer. That is our job as leaders—to unite the body in ministering to that member. To do this the congregation has to know what’s going on. Information is very important. Then, bring everyone up to date. How did the operation turn out? What is the present condition of that person? The people need to be informed. Perhaps this will become the job of the deacons in your assembly. Some group needs to keep that information flowing to the congregation through whatever means you have—and there are many kinds of means. Ministering love is great medicine. John Bunyan said this: “The soul of religion is the practical part.”³ It is so easy to be theoretical—to pride oneself on Bible knowledge. But remember, information in the Bible is to be transformational. We should be different as a result of the verses of Scripture we read. We should not just get a bigger head; we should get a bigger heart.

Caring for the Elderly and the Shut-Ins

Widows and Orphans

Over the years I have really grown to appreciate the Epistle of James. James was dealing with teachers and

*“Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world”
(James 1:27).*

knowledgeable people in the church—people who thought they were wise. They were very proud of themselves, but they were fighting all the time. They were not practicing what they were preaching, and James was a man who was very concerned that Christians practice what they preach. He wrote, “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (James 1:27). He counseled his readers to visit orphans and widows “in their distress.” Note these words carefully, “in their distress.” The ESV has, “in their affliction.” To be a widow, a widower, or an orphan is an affliction; it is distressful. It is not an easy thing to lose a spouse; it is one of the greatest crises that one can experience in life. Just as distressful, perhaps, is a young child’s loss of a parent. My family knows three children whose Mom and Dad were killed in a plane crash. They had to be given to relatives to be taken care of. It was a horrible crisis. James said that genuine religion was to visit such people and to be con-

cerned about them.

The apostle Paul addresses the same issue in 1 Timothy 5:3-16. He wrote, “Honor widows who are widows indeed” (v. 3). In verse 8 he made the astonishing remark that if a Christian does not take care of his own family—especially those like widows and widowers who are in need—that person “is worse than an unbeliever!” We see this kind of thing all the time. People want to dump their family on the church. We had a man who actually did that. He said, “I can’t deal with my mother any more. It’s so hard for me to see her this way. You take care of her.” It was only an excuse; he just couldn’t be bothered. “Honor widows who are truly widows,” the inspired apostle wrote. By “honoring” widows Paul did not simply mean to “tip your hat” to them. He meant that we are to keep them alive, feed them, clothe them, and provide them with money if they need it. And at the end of the section he wrote, “Let the church ... care for those who are really widows” (v. 16, ESV). In short, if there are no family members to care for this widow, the church is responsible.

The Elderly

A major challenge facing society today is the growing senior population. The entire world is graying. People over 85 will become the fastest growing segment of the population by the middle of this centu-

ry. This is true not just of America but of the world as a whole. Dr. Charles Ryrie met with a number of Dallas Seminary alumni who had graduated from seminary several years before and had now been in the ministry for about ten years. He asked them what kind of ministries they had in their local churches—these were men in their mid-thirties. After he had listened to his former students, he said, “You know, not a one of you has mentioned a ‘seniors’ ministry.’ That’s where the population’s going. That’s where your biggest ministry will be. You need to consider your seniors and your shut-ins in this huge population explosion.” Some have called these folks “senior orphans.” We had a senior orphan in our church, a lady who had never married, and she had no living relatives. Our church was her family. The Bible tells us to honor the widows and the elderly, that is, we are to care for them. We are to honor them, not kick them out.

Shut-Ins

Shut-ins are part of the “needy” category. A shut-in is a person who lives in his own home or in a nursing home, but he cannot get out. For one reason or another he lacks mobility. Shut-ins cannot leave their residences, and so they cannot come to the church. This is a group of people quickly forgotten and overlooked. “Out of sight, out of mind.” They are not there on

Sunday morning, and you soon forget them. You don’t even know they exist. Some are physically or mentally disabled; all suffer loneliness and isolation from friends and church. I visit many shut-ins and they all say the same thing. “Oh, I miss going to church.” We don’t often stop to think that when we don’t go to church on Sunday morning, our whole week gets disoriented. Imagine, then, a Christian who month after month and year after year cannot meet with other believers. (Someone, trying to be funny, might say, “Getting away from some of the Christians I know sounds nice!” But it isn’t nice!) Occasionally we might take a break for a week or two, but the other Christians will miss us, and we will miss them.

I was brought up in New Jersey, but I moved to Colorado in my college years. When I got married and my wife and I became parents, we would often go back to New Jersey with our children. We did this when they were small, and we did it when they were in their teens. This would be a vacation time for us, and we would visit the beautiful Jersey shore and parts of New York. While back east we always visited certain assemblies, and after the service we would go to the homes of Christians we knew—or Christians we had just met. My children would say, as we looked back at our vacations, “Dad, those were some of the most fun times, when we went to the homes

of those people, and we spent all afternoon laughing and having such a great time together. And we got to meet such wonderful people." A child of God should love to be with the Lord's people! Shut-ins, however, don't get to be with the Lord's people. This is an affliction; James was right! *Visit them in their affliction.* Let us not forget the shut-in. A lady told me this story: she said that her aunt had been placed in a nursing home for eleven years before she died. She claims that during that eleven-year period the Christians prayed for her aunt every Wednesday evening at prayer meeting. Yet in that 11-year period, only one person from the church visited her! James would not call that genuine religion!

What Can We Do?

There are many things we can do for the elderly and shut-ins. First, we can call them on the phone. Determine to place one call a week to that person, or one call a month! You can do that; I know you can. Just put it on your calendar; write it on the back of your hand. You can do it. It's an act of love, of concern. Second, we can send cards; shut-ins love cards. It's really special to get something in the mail—a verse of Scripture; perhaps a photo of your family. They would love that. Third, pay them a visit; they need visits. They need your presence and your touch. You have to get there. There's something about praying for

people far away; there's something different about praying when they're looking you right in the face, and you get the smells and the sounds. And if you visit, bring your children! They love to see children. When my children were small, I always brought them with me on visits. Older people they just go crazy when you bring children! It just brings joy to them. Fourth, bring them the church bulletin. They need to be in contact with their local family. They need the bulletins sent or brought every week. Fifth, bring them the tape or CD of the Sunday message so they are fed God's Word, and so they feel a part of the life of the assembly. Sixth, they need someone (preferably a small group) to bring the Lord's Supper to them. This is a wonderful ministry. Get other people involved in this. Have them go on a Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon or Sunday evening (maybe two couples, or even one couple) and have the communion with them.

There's a man (not from our church) whom I knew very well. He was an airplane pilot for more than 35 years. After retirement he fell on very hard times medically and financially. He and his wife endured many physical problems—heart attacks, back surgeries, and leg diseases. He lost all his money, his stocks, and even his medical insurance. He felt he was living the life of Job. One day we had lunch

together, and he said to me, "Alex, I haven't been to church in over a year, and hardly anyone from the church has called me." He went on, "I have learned something. When I was an active member, and I could be in the choir, and I could give money, and I could serve in various ways, I was very popular! I was their airplane pilot—their celebrity! But when you're not able to give and be there; well, there's no place for those who are not out there serving and giving. You are just forgotten." He said, "I've learned a real good lesson. The church needs to be awakened to those who cannot be with them every Sunday."

A Letter from Myra

Some time ago I received a letter from one of the sisters in our assembly. Her name is Myra Hollenbach, and she's a wonderful lady. Her husband Ernest died of Alzheimer's disease; it was a very long and grueling experience. Now she has fallen on hard times physically and she cannot come. Here's what she wrote to our congregation:

I often think of the "one-another's" in Scripture that believers are urged to practice in daily life. Life is just too busy for many these days, and we often forget little things that demonstrate Christian love and Christian thoughtfulness. I have never had to live alone, so these last few years have required extra effort to adjust. I miss fel-

lowship with other believers. Almost constant back pain has limited my being able to circulate socially. But the Lord is ever near and sustains me day by day. Words are inadequate to tell you how much your many gestures of thoughtfulness (visits, help with transportation, greeting cards, goodies, phone calls, and weekly sermon tapes and bulletins, etc.) are appreciated.

"Gestures of thoughtfulness" are appreciated by the shut-in. Let us not forget them.

Getting Young People Involved

Let me make another suggestion about shut-ins: get your youth involved. We usually think of this ministry as one for older people to serve other older people, and that is good. But we can also train our young people to love older people and to visit them in hospitals and nursing homes. It's really good for young people to become conscious of and to serve older folks.

Until he moved recently, we had a man in our church who taught the seniors. He is 99 years old, and we're going to have him back for a big celebration next year (his 100th birthday!). We've told him, "Brother Ed, please stay alive for one more year!" He's an amazing man—his mind is as sharp as a tack, he's physically fit, and he can teach the Bible. Some time ago this brother (Edward Ristow, Sr.) took a

trip to California. On Sunday morning he attended an assembly. When he walked in, high school age young people came up to him, looked him right in the eye, shook his hand, greeted him, and introduced themselves. He said to me later, "I almost had a heart attack!" He explained, "Young people don't usually do that to old people; they see old people, and they turn around and walk away. It's as if they fear they might get a disease—'old—peoples' disease!'"

Some of you at this conference are youth leaders. Start training your young people to minister to older people, to learn their names, to greet them at church, to go to their homes, to rake up their leaves in the fall, to see what they need done around the house. This is good for young people who are generally self-centered. At a certain stage of human development, namely the youth stage, people are self-centered and peer-conscious. Anyone who is more than two or three years older than they are is not even on their radar screen. You need to help them get out of themselves by ministering to other people. So, some of you older ones, take a young person with you when you visit the elderly and the shut-ins. If you are a youth leader, encourage your young people to start ministering to needy people. There's a bonus here. Not only will you be getting young people involved, you will be encouraging

those they serve. There is something about young people that makes older people feel young when they are around. They love children, and they love teens. Train your young people.

Encourage the Congregation to Use Their Gifts in Serving

We must remember that God gives spiritual gifts of mercy, helps and service. Paul wrote about believers who have a spiritual gift, that is, a God-given ability to do "acts of mercy." "[Let] the one who does acts of mercy [do them] with cheerfulness," that is, not grudgingly (Rom. 12:8; cf. Deut. 15:10). He also mentioned those who have the gift of giving money. "[Let] the one who contributes [money do so] with generosity" (v. 7). He also spoke of those with the gift of service. If someone has that gift he or she is to use it in serving (v. 7). We need to encourage, organize, and train those who have these gifts. Read books about how we are to use our gifts in caring, loving, and serving others. Pass these books around. Take tapes from conferences and identify people who need to hear them. Excite the local believers about becoming a caring, loving church. Stir their gifts up; inflame them, and get them going. Open up opportunities and structures for people to serve.

These and other New Testament texts make it clear that women have at the core of their ministry good deeds, charity, love and mercy. They also should be unleashed on the church, and their abilities and their giftedness should be prized and encouraged.

Encourage Women to Use Their Gifts in Serving

Women in the local church should be reminded that they have a special orientation to good works. Paul spoke of such a woman (a widow) in 1 Timothy 5:10 “And having a reputation for good works: she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.” When addressing the subject of feminine attire in the church, he wrote, “[They should adorn themselves with] good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness” (2:10). The Christian woman is to dress herself in a lifestyle of good deeds and charity. I can here only mention a few of the many women listed in the New Testament. Of Dorcas (or Tabitha) Luke wrote, “This woman was abounding in deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did” (Acts 9:36). Paul commended Phoebe whom he described as “a servant of the church which is in Cenchrea” (Rom. 16:1). In the same passage he greeted Mary, “who

has worked hard for you” (v. 6). These and other New Testament texts make it clear that women have at the core of their ministry good deeds, charity, love and mercy. They also should be unleashed on the church, and their abilities and their giftedness should be prized and encouraged.

Caring for the Poor and Needy

Jesus and the Poor

Jesus said, “For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked and you clothed Me” (Matt. 25:35-36). With these words our Lord expressed His concern for the poor. The Bible tells us that He gave alms to the poor (Matt. 6:2-3; 19:21). He preached the gospel to the poor (Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:18). He was poor! (2 Cor. 8:9). The first Christian congregation organized itself to care for its needy, poor widows (Acts 6:1-7). Jonathan Edwards said, “Love will dispose men to all acts of mercy toward their neighbors when they are under any affliction or calamity ... It will dispose men to give to the poor, to bear one another’s burdens, and to weep with those that weep.”⁴

The Poor and Homeless

We have heard the old adage, “The rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer.” Statistics show that this is actually a growing prob-

lem in the United States today. Recently, in our local Denver paper, I noticed two significant articles. The first is entitled, “Many Families Scraping By.” The author reports, “One in five Colorado families are barely getting by, often going without health care and other necessities, according to a major study released today.”⁵ The second is entitled, “Caught between Poverty, ‘Too Much’ Income.” The article describes a man who works 60 hours a week at two jobs. His wife attends school, and they have three children. They make enough money to make them ineligible for government assistance, but they’re not making enough to get any place!⁶

Nearly 42% of American children grow up in low-income families, and almost one child in four (23%) grows up in poverty. Someone with a low income is described today as making \$27,300 a year. An income of \$14,800 places a family below the poverty line.⁷

Families with children are currently the fastest growing group of the homeless population, making up approximately 40% of homeless people today. Imagine being homeless with your children! I can’t imagine a worse fear.

Then there are the working poor: people with full-time jobs but earning low-income wages. Some of these are the elderly, mentally and physically disabled people, and single parents with children.

Tim Keller has written, “The ‘working class’ job, which could support a family comfortably, is disappearing.”⁸ And this will affect the church.

Also alarming is poverty among children: Keller says this: “The statistics on poor children [in our country] reveal a nightmare [before us].”⁹ And then there are the new immigrants who come here only to swiftly fall into poverty. This will, if it hasn’t already, affect your church. Some at this conference are living in areas of the country where poverty is the norm in the neighborhood.

What Can We Do?

1. Organize a Benevolence Fund

The Scriptures tell us that we are to share with those in need (Ps. 41:1; Acts 4:34-35; Gal. 2:10; 1 Tim. 6:17-18; 1 John 3:16-18). Here are some ways we can help. First, organize a benevolence fund for your deacons and for your church. Caring for the poor and needy cannot be done in a willy-nilly fashion. If you’re going to meet needs in your local church—people in poverty, people facing disabilities, people overwhelmed by afflictions of a medical, financial, or relational nature—you’re going to have to get organized. It’s amazing when we put our money together what we can do! Organization is not bad! Luke notes that the early Christians would sell their possessions if they had to and give the money to the apostles who would distribute it to

those in need (Acts 4:34-35). This was an organized distribution of funds to needy people. In this way the distribution was fair and just. One person did not get much and another person get nothing. When a problem of unfairness did arise, the apostles further organized and put a specially selected group of men (proto-deacons) in charge of the distribution of food (Acts 6:1-7). So you need to organize this by establishing a benevolence fund (also called a help fund or mercy fund). Encourage people in the congregation to contribute to this fund. Then have qualified deacons officially distribute the funds to the needy—someone with a physical or mental disability, maybe a member out of work, facing physical disability, or mental disability. It will be the deacons’ responsibility to know of these situations. The fund can be part of the budget of the church.

2. Establish a Father Program

Many children in our churches today come without a father. If your church has such a need, establish a “father program” for boys and girls without fathers. Over the years my four daughters would bring children, mainly girls, from school to the table to eat with us. For many of these girls it was the first time they were at a table with the father present. They had seen it on television, but they had never witnessed a father in the home at a table. For some of us that’s hard to believe,

but for millions it is normal life! No father in the home! You could provide fathers for children through a program in your church.

3. Provide Language Training for New Immigrants

A new and wonderful ministry is exploding in front of us: TESL, “Teaching English as a Second Language.” We started a TESL program in our church. A number of our women had professional training and degrees in TESL, and they said we should do this. We were wondering, “Where are these people going to come from? We haven’t seen any immigrants in the neighborhood.” Nevertheless, we put up a

People love it when they come to your table for a meal. And the Lord Jesus instructs His people to invite certain kinds of people for a meal: “the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” (Luke 14:13).

sign reading, “English as a Second Language.” Within one day we filled the whole program; we had all we could take! We had no idea that there were all these immigrants around us looking for ways to learn English. TESL is a great program you can use to minister to your community and minister to needy people. And it’s a fantastic evangelistic outreach!

4. Provide Hospitality to Poor and Needy Members

People love it when they come to your table for a meal. And the Lord Jesus instructs His people to invite certain kinds of people for a meal: “the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” (Luke 14:13). We all like to invite our family and friends, and we like to invite charismatic, interesting people. We don’t usually like to invite blind people, deaf people, crippled people, or really poor people—or people like one man in our church who smelled so bad no one wanted to sit near him. These people are not normally invited into homes. But Jesus pointedly said, “Do not always be inviting your friends, siblings, relatives, and rich neighbors” (v. 12). Unlike our affluent friends and relatives, the poor and needy won’t be able to return our invitation, but Jesus assures us that there will be a wonderful payback—at the time of His return to earth (v. 14).

5. Provide the Poor with Cars, Furniture, and Household Goods

How about a program or a bulletin board where you can give away cars or furniture and household goods? How often we’re getting rid of a car, selling a car. Don’t sell it — give it to someone! Over the years we’ve given away cars. It’s not really a big sacrifice. About six years ago I gave away a Ford LTD Crown Victoria. It was a great car that had served our family well. I told the man, “I’ll give this car to you. It’s in great shape.

We have one requirement. When you’re through with it, you’ve got to pass it on.” So this fellow still drives our old Ford—now his old Ford. And when I see him I say, “Don’t forget, you’ve got to pass that on! It’s going to live forever.” He says, “I’m afraid so!” So don’t sell that old car; put up a notice on the bulletin board that you’d like to give it away to someone who needs it! How about furniture? You are redecorating and need some new furniture. Why not give your old furniture to a young and needy couple? So put up a bulletin board in your church and allow people to post notices on it about things they want to give away. You’d be surprised at the things you have that other people can use. Don’t just have a garage sale and spend all the money on another pizza. Give the stuff away!

6. Raise Awareness of Poverty Both Local and Global

Another practical thing we can do is raise awareness—awareness in our congregation to those in need. It’s so easy to shut our eyes and our hearts and not see. We often don’t want to see, but the needs are there. They are present in every congregation. Even if your assembly is middle class or upper middle class, there are bound to be people who are suffering financially. But you must have your eyes opened to see it. So as leaders we need to raise the awareness and the concern and the love of saints and sensitivity to one

We are global Christians—world Christians, or international Christians—if we’re Christians at all. At the very least we need to let our people know what’s going on in the world we live in.

another.

I want to expand this awareness to include not only your own local assembly but also the whole world. Christianity is a global religion; in fact it is the one true global religion. Other religions are local and/or cultural. Jesus’ “Great Commission” to His followers (Matt. 28:19-20) included the entire world—every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Rev. 5:9). As Jesus’ followers we are under a commission to go and tell everyone. We are global Christians—world Christians, or international Christians—if we’re Christians at all. At the very least we need to let our people know what’s going on in the world we live in. We need to know the conditions under which our fellow human beings are living. It’s a world full of sickness and poverty.

One of the benefits of travel is exposure to human need. We are spoiled here in America; we would not accept the conditions under which most people live. Almost 800 million people go to bed every night hungry; that is almost a billion people! Almost three billion people (half the world’s population) live on less than \$2 a day. A billion

people drink unsafe and unsanitary water. Two and a half billion people do not have access to safe sanitation. More than ten million children under five years of age die each year of preventable causes. Seventy percent of the world’s poor are women and children. Every day 27,000 children—children loved by their parents, just like your children, die of hunger or related causes. Perhaps most tragically, more than a million young girls are forced into prostitution each year, and this is a growing problem (in China, India, Thailand, other Asian and African countries, and in the USA). Fortunately more and more information is coming out about this.

7. Acknowledge the Reality of the AIDS Epidemic

The suffering of this world does not end with the things we’ve been discussing. One of the greatest tragedies in world history is right here before us, and that is the AIDS epidemic. Dale Hanson Bourke wrote that AIDS is “the biggest public health problem the world has ever faced.” It is a pandemic health crisis that claims the lives of 8,500 people every day. Bourke writes, “It

has already surpassed the bubonic plague, which wiped out twenty-five million people—one quarter of Europe’s population

at the time. An estimated three million people die each year from AIDS, a death toll that has been compared to twenty fully loaded 747s crashing every single day for a year!”

Bourke continues, “AIDS has now spread to every country of the world. ... Reported AIDS cases are rising so swiftly in China and India that they could eventually eclipse the numbers in Africa. ... In some countries more than one-third of the population is infected, effectively wiping out entire generations.”¹⁰

8. Leaders Must Set a Vision Before the Congregation

As leaders we can make a difference in the consciousness of our people. Too often we fail because we are narcissists. We become consumed with our own little problems (the

We need to have sympathy and compassion for a pain-ridden world. We will soon see our own little problems pale in comparison to the problems and needs of others.

plumbing in our houses, the problems with our cars, the hypochondriacal fixation on our bodies—my pulse, my breathing, my skin color, my appearance in the mirror, my sleeping disorder, etc). We need to set a vision before our people

that pulls us out of our self-centeredness. Our people need to be stirred to a compassionate care for our congregation, and a compassionate awareness of a world situation that is almost unspeakable. This is one reason why I encourage young people to go on mission trips. They need to get out there and see this world. They need to get out of themselves and see what much of the world is like. It’s our job as elders and leaders to establish structures that convey to our congregations the need for prayer and awareness of the needs of our people and the needs of the world. Believers in Jesus Christ should have a big heart for this: they should weep with those who weep. We need to have sympathy and compassion for a pain-ridden world. We will soon see our own little problems pale in comparison to the problems and needs of others.

A Greek scholar, who was on the translation committee of one of our modern English translations, was also a member of an organization that feeds the poor of the world. He was asked, “Isn’t this unusual that a Bible translator is also on a committee to help the poor? Do you find any contradiction between these two pursuits?” “No,” he said, “in both endeavors I am translating the New Testament.” That was a good answer.

Caring for New People

A Greeting Ministry

It's very difficult to find a good church! And many of the people that will come to your church have tried a number of other places, and now they are just wandering around. Perhaps they've been wounded; they have had a terrible experience in the last church. And now you have an opportunity to minister to them. I believe very strongly in the greeting ministry. The greeting ministry is not just handing bulletins to people with a warm, glowing smile. That's part but not all there is to the greeting ministry. The greeting ministry is having people who actually greet members and visitors alike. They get people's names, give them a nametag, bring them in, direct them to different parts of the building (Sunday school classes, adult classes, snack and fellowship area, restrooms, literature and tape/CD racks, main auditorium, etc.). In short, visitors are personally welcomed and oriented. Give them some literature; explain what is going to transpire.

Listening to Visitor's Observations

I just received a letter last week from a man who visited our Lord's Supper for the first time. He is a very intelligent and serious Christian, and he wrote this letter to me saying, "This is the first time I've come to this meeting, and I

want to tell you the observations of a 'first-time person' who's never seen this." I thought, "this is going to be great." It was an excellent letter, but not what I expected. He observed, "Your church needs to have a brochure explaining exactly what's going on because," he said, "I couldn't figure it out. What exactly is this meeting all about? Who does what in the meeting? Is there one person in charge or not? What has been planned, and what has not been planned?" Where's this thing going, and what's it all about?" And then he made some other very helpful comments that we as a group of elders will be addressing in a future meeting. We will go over this letter very carefully and make some changes—we'll probably write a brochure on the Lord's Supper. We will do this because we realize that people need to be oriented when they come to our assembly.

Visiting Other Churches

It is good to visit other churches in your area that the Lord is evidently blessing. Last summer I was given a sabbatical and I went to six different kinds of churches, churches I would normally never visit. I did so just to get the experience of what it's like for a new person coming to our church. Each visit was very interesting; I learned a lot. I saw again how important greeters are. I saw the attractiveness of a sense of warmth and friendliness in a church. We have to develop this in our churches. We need to be caring

churches, and we need to be friendly churches. We must reach out to new people. We—everyone in the assembly, not just the greeters—must greet new people, welcome them...not just the greeters, but everyone in the church. When you see a person you don't know, go up and introduce yourself, or sit with them during the service.

Selfish and Unselfish Christians

I sometimes like to give an explanation of the differences between a selfish person and a non-selfish person. The selfish person comes to church on Sunday morning and he looks for the closest parking spot. He's attended so long he feels entitled to park anywhere even in the "handicapped" or the "visitors" spots. He knows he is not supposed to do that, but he is so inherently selfish that he can't stop himself! He wants to park as close as he can; he doesn't want to walk too far because the walk might wear him out! He comes into the building, and he and his wife look around for their good friends, so they can spend time with them. Then his mind wanders off to the fellowship break next hour. He's very concerned that they have the coffee made just right—he wants it good and strong; he doesn't like that weak coffee. And he's also worried that they might not have the right kind of donuts that morning. He needs that sugar to keep him going through the morning. During the

morning he'll always have complaints. "It's too cold in the auditorium. It's too hot in the auditorium. The music's too loud. They don't sing the songs that I like. I hope the preacher won't be too boring this morning. I sure hope he doesn't go overtime again." From the moment he enters to the moment he leaves he is thinking about himself.

What about the unselfish brother or sister with a servant's heart? He arrives and doesn't even park in the parking lot because they're expecting a crowd today. He'll park across the street so new people and older people can park closer. He comes in and his first concern is that the auditorium is at the right temperature for people, because he knows that some older folks have a problem if the temperature is too cold. And in the summer, if it's too warm, the same folks almost pass out. So he's very concerned that it's the right temperature for everyone. He notices there are some new people he hasn't seen before. He goes right up to them, introduces himself and asks if there's anything he can do to help them this morning. He offers to sit with them if they'd like.

He then wants to make sure the coffee and donuts are good because he understands that for many people the snack break between services is a good time of fellowship. He knows they need this time to interact with other believers

It's amazing, but visitors can come into your church and within minutes detect the spirit of your church.

They can sense it. There's something—it's intangible, but they can intuitively feel it. If it's a loving, peaceful, welcoming, warm, and believing church, they can sense that. And they will soon detect if you are cold, unwelcoming, and harsh!

because they may not see each other for the whole week. He also realizes that good strong coffee keeps people awake—it aids the Holy Spirit sometimes to keep people awake! Like the Epistle of James, this man is a practical brother! During the meeting, while the service is going on, he prays that everyone really can enter into the music and be blessed by it. He is concerned that everyone feels free to join in the singing. He is praying during the meeting that the speaker will speak to this person who is not a Christian, and that person who is going through a family crisis right now. He's also praying that the Lord will use the preacher, even if he's a little boring this morning, and will use the words he's saying and minister to people.

And then he's the last one to leave, making sure that everyone is greeted. That's the ser-

vant's heart.

It's amazing, but visitors can come into your church and within minutes detect the spirit of your church. They can sense it. There's something—it's intangible, but they can intuitively feel it. If it's a loving, peaceful, welcoming, warm, and believing church, they can sense that. And they will soon detect if you are cold, unwelcoming, and harsh! A lady in my home assembly told me of a visit she paid to a small church. When she came in the door everyone was talking. It was between services, and everyone turned to look at her. She said, "I felt like an animal in a zoo; everyone was just looking at me!" Then they all went back to their conversations, and no one came up to greet her! They probably muttered to one another, "It's just a visitor! Have you ever seen one before? She'll never be back. Don't waste your time talking to her. We've seen visitors before; they come in, attend the service and leave. We never see them again." I don't mean to step on toes, but a place like that is not a friendly church.

Hospitality to New People

Get visitors into your home. That's one of the best things you can do as quickly as possible. Get to meet them personally. Help them to integrate into the church; help them to meet people so they won't just flounder around for five years and wonder what to do with themselves. Set up structures so this will happen

(continued on page 28)

Romans 13:8

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

1 Peter 4:9

Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

Romans 15:14

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works

Hebrews 3:13

but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Colossians 3:16

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

Ephesians 4:2

with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love

Romans 14:13

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

Romans 13:8

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Romans 12:10

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

1 Corinthians 1:10

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 John 4:7

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

James 4:11

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

Romans 12:16

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Ephesians 5:19

speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you love one another also."

John 13:34

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

1 Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;

1 Peter 5:5

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Romans 14:13

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

Galatians 5:13

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

1 John 4:11

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Colossians 3:13

bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

1 Peter 1:22

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Hebrews 10:25

not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Peter 5:14

Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

1 John 3:11

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another

1 John 4:12

No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

1 John 3:23

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

Romans 15:7

Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

Ephesians 5:21

submitting to one another in the fear of God.

quickly and efficiently. People want to be ministered to, but they're often a little scared when they come into your local church. Make them welcome. Let them know you're there for them.

The Ministry of Deacons

The Beginning of the Diaconate

The elders first established a body of men to serve as what would later be called deacons in Acts 6. Luke records their decision, "It is not desirable for us [the apostles, who were serving in Jerusalem in the capacity of church overseers] to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables [that is, to collect and administer funds to the poor]. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation ... whom we may put in charge of this task [i.e., relief for the poor] (vv. 1-6). The ministry of the deacons has been as confused as the ministry of elders for most people. The body of deacons is organized official church care, namely, the coordination of all mercy ministries. Deacons are people who must meet spiritual qualifications (v. 3), and must be publicly examined as to their qualifications (1 Tim. 3:10).

Deacons are Church Officers

A deacon occupies an office in the church. Yes, it is true that everyone is a deacon in the general sense that

we are all called to serve. The word *deacon* means "servant." But while all believers are called to serve, not all believers are deacons in the technical sense of the term. In the technical sense, there is an official servant body. And like the elders, they have to meet qualifications, and they have to be examined publicly before they can serve. You don't have to be examined and have spiritual qualifications to paint or mow the lawn. But there are certain jobs carried out officially on behalf of the church—such as the handling of money, caring for the weak and vulnerable, and dealing with the needy and abused—that require spiritual men of maturity. That is the office of the deacon. It's a benevolent ministry, a servant ministry.

Deacons Care for the Physical Needs of the Saints

The early church did not have church buildings. So what did the deacons do? They didn't have any lawns to mow, walks to shovel, or siding to paint! They served people and relieved the elders to care for the *spiritual* needs (teaching, preaching, prayer, guidance, etc.) of the congregation. The deacons had the spiritual oversight of the *physical* needs of the people. That's why they needed a fund, and that's why their successors, modern day deacons, also need a fund of money to help people. John Calvin said that at the Lord's Supper he always put a collec-

tion plate for the poor. So in Geneva (Switzerland) they had the elements of remembrance and a plate for the poor.

Deacons Emulate Christ Who Care for the Poor

Christ served us. He became poor to make us rich (2 Cor. 8:9). The deacons turn right around in response to serve others. In doing this work they need a "service bank," i.e. a bank of volunteers who have gifts and skills in different areas. They need a list of people who are income tax people, car mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, and electricians. They need such a list so that they may turn to it when people in the church have need. When they detect a need or are told of a need, they can turn to their "service bank" list and send the appropriate people to help. They can be the ones to organize the board for giving away cars, furniture, and other items. Deacons can be involved in so many mercy ministries as they follow up on what elders are doing spiritually. The deacons take care of the material things.

Conclusion Narcissists or Servants?

Just months ago *U.S. News and World Report* reported a new study done on narcissism on college campuses.¹¹ This study said that narcissism is growing at an alarming rate among college students, students that are self-consumed with looking

at themselves and worrying about themselves and their own fulfillment. The result of this narcissism is increased worry, emotional disorders, depression, and sleep deprivation. After reading that article I thought, God did not create us to look in a mirror all day, feel our pulse, ponder our appearance, and wonder, "How am I doing?" We were made to serve. We are never really happy until

we're serving. Christ said, "I came to serve" (Mark 10:45). We are His followers. We, too, come to serve, to give, to reach out of ourselves, and to be interested in the needs of other people. It is amazing how the worries and problems go away when you're dealing with other people. We were made to be servants of the great Servant-Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. †



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We were made to serve.

We are never really happy until we're serving.



The Characteristics of Leadership: A Biblical Perspective

Dr. Steven Witter

One of the great and magnificent promises of the Lord Jesus Christ is found in Matthew 16:18. Upon hearing Peter's great confession that "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus responds by saying, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." What a joy to know that the church is *his*...and *his* plan and pleasure is to build it. We as believers gather together in local expressions of His body, the church.

New Testament ecclesiology would show us that the Holy Spirit raises up elders in the assembly, and their function is to act as "under-shepherds," tending the flock of God. Many clearly understand the responsibility an elder has when it comes to the spiritual ministries of prayer, teaching the Word, and providing wise counsel. Perhaps less appreciated is the leadership ministry elders have.

Undoubtedly you have heard the name George Barna. Barna is the founder of the Barna Group, an organization that studies non-profit organizations and Christian groups. Barna research on leadership is worthy of notation. In his book, *Leaders on Leadership*, Barna says the following:

The central conclusion is that the church is dying due to a lack of strong leadership. In this time of unprecedented opportunity and plentiful resources, the church is actually losing influence. The primary reason is a lack of leadership. Nothing is more important than leadership. (1998, p. 18).

This is not to say that prayer isn't important, or that discipleship isn't important, nor is it making a comparative statement concerning the teaching of the Word of God. But what many churches are missing is the element of spiritual leadership that ensures that the sheep are being well-tended.

It would be helpful to everyone if there was a succinct, universally understood definition of the concept of leadership. That, however, is simply not the case. Authors Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, who have written extensively on leadership, have said this: "Leadership is a lot like love...we all know it exists, but it is difficult for us to define." Rather than try to define what leadership is, let me suggest what leadership does, and the characteristics that effective leaders must possess.

In giving the Great Commission, Jesus instructs His followers to do several things. We go, make disciples, baptize, and, finally, we *teach*. Jesus provided the curriculum when He said, "...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..." What is the result of our teaching? Change! We want to see change in several different areas. A cognitive change produces a change in knowledge. An attitudinal change produces a change in motivation. Behavioral change produces different actions. The ultimate change is a change in essence. We seek to teach the flock of God what it means to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. The goal of our leadership should be the same—to lead others into conformity to the image of

the Savior.

What are the characteristics of the leadership—or, perhaps better stated, the leader—who will lead men and women to conformity to the image of Jesus Christ? Although there are many, following are some of the key characteristics that skillful leaders *must* display in their leadership.



Unwavering Obedience

A leader who is about the business of leading others towards conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ must demonstrate unwavering obedience to the Lord. When King Saul disobeyed the word of the Lord, Samuel reminded him that to obey is better than sacrifice and further states that because of Saul's disobedience, he had been rejected as King (I Samuel 15:22 - 23). John, in writing his first epistle, suggests that obedience is a sign of life when he says, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments" (I John 2:3).

Commitment

Leadership is hard work, and there will be times when a leader is tempted to give up and throw in the towel. However, a godly leader has no such option. Paul reminds us in Romans 12 that we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. The picture of sacrifice does not permit half-heartedness. I'm reminded of a story that I once heard about a conversation between two barnyard animals. A chicken and a pig were talking about the upcoming ham and egg breakfast. The pig wisely noted that the chicken was making a contribution; he would be making a total commitment.

When the Lord Jesus was speaking of commitment, He said, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Christ has set apart men and women to lead others into conformity to His image. We

can't quit; we

can't give up; we must be found faithful until the end.

Spiritual Maturity

I get excited when I read about examples like Joshua and Elijah. These men were willing to stand up, seemingly alone, and call the nation to follow after the one true God. They were mature! The author of Hebrews longed to teach about Melchizedek, but couldn't because the readers were immature—because they had not been partaking of the meat of the Word. A successful godly leader is one who is mature because he or she is a student of the Word of God. Be reminded that Paul told Timothy that all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable, and that the Word will make a man adequate and equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16 - 17).

Character

With our society in shambles, perhaps now more than ever the adage, "character counts" is important. Webster's Dictionary suggests "moral excellence" as

one of the definitions of character. Tragically, we know that not all leaders possess moral excellence. There are examples of significant failures from society and even examples the church. A godly leader *must* be a person of highest character.

Paul said it well in 1 Cor. 11:1 when he wrote, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." The author of Hebrews reminds us that we should remember those who lead us, considering the result of their conduct (Hebrews 13:7). Why is it essential that a leader possess moral excellence? Perhaps Jesus said it best in Luke 6:40 when He said that a pupil who is fully trained will be like his teacher. If those I am leading turn out to be like me, will they be people of character?

Vision

The concept of vision includes the idea of having discernment and foresight. Where there is no vision, the people perish, says Proverbs 29:18. What does that mean? Solomon penned his words after speaking about discipline. There seems to be a clear link to the vision of correction—doing for your child today what will prepare them to face tomorrow.

The vision of a leader must include

discernment and foresight about things to come. In his epistles, Paul encourages us to catch the vision of several things that should motivate us, enhancing a leader's ability to lead others towards conformity to the image of Christ. Paul suggests that the love of Christ controls us (2 Cor 5:14). How powerful it would be if a leader had a true vision for the magnitude of the love of Christ! The glory of God should be a positive motivation. Do you have the foresight that helps you see that God receives the ultimate glory when we are obedient and serve Him? Winning the lost, the maturity of the saints, and heavenly reward can all be motivation for leaders if they have a vision for these things.

Communication

Communication has been called the lifeblood of leadership. Without it, leadership fails. Nehemiah is often touted as an excellent example of leadership. When Nehemiah heard about the condition of the walls of Jerusalem, the first thing he did was communicate. If you are familiar with the story, you know he communicated with God. Keep in mind that communication with God is the single most important communication that leaders can engage in. Jesus said in John 15:5 that without Him, we can do *nothing*.

We should note also that the Word gives leaders some other helpful guidelines concerning communication. We should:

- Be lovingly honest (Ephesians 4:14 - 15)

- Keep short accounts (Ephesians 4:25 - 27)
- Use a grace-filled tongue (Colossians 4:6)
- Be characterized by kindness (Ephesians 4:32)
- Use a guarded tongue (Psalm 141:3)
- Have a gentle tongue (Proverbs 15:1 - 2)

Conflict Management

A weakness that some leaders have is dealing appropriately with conflict. From time to time, those that we are leading are going to be in conflict with us or with others. An effective leader needs to be adept at handling and defusing conflict. In Matthew 5 and again in Matthew 18, the Lord Jesus teaches us to deal with issues personally and directly. In the latter passage dealing with issues of sin, steps are laid out regarding what to do if the conflict isn't appropriately resolved. Acts 15 is another fine example of dealing with conflict. The matter before the Jerusalem Council was no small thing. However, leaders came together, had "much debate," considered Scripture, and reached an agreement. The resulting letter of instruction was received with rejoicing, as its readers were undoubtedly encouraged by the conflict's resolution.

Courage

When the mantle of leadership was passed to Joshua, the Lord spoke to him. Since Moses was dead, it was now Joshua's responsibility to lead the nation to the Promised Land. Three times over the Lord tells Joshua to be strong

and courageous. Leadership is not for the faint-hearted, it is for the strong and the brave. Of course, we are not to be strong and courageous because of our own strength or abilities, but rather in the power of His might.

Love

Perhaps the overarching characteristic that needs to be seen in leaders is love. Love seeks the highest good for the object loved. It is the great and distinguishing mark of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Paul reminds us of the importance of true love in 1 Corinthians 13 where he teaches us that our words, ministries, faith, and offerings are *nothing* without love. May we be characterized as true servant — leaders, who lead because we love.

These are just a few of the characteristics that mark effective leadership and an effective leader. May God give you strength and help as you seek to lead others to conformity to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. †



Steve Witter

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The Motivating Power of Love

Alex Strauch

What motivates you to want to lead and teach people? Desire to help people, a sense of duty, enjoyment of leadership, money, the pleasure of teaching people, peer pressure? For Christian leaders, the primary answer must be love. Love is the greatest motivating power in the universe. It is at the heart of the gospel. God's love moved him to give his Son for our salvation. Love is the indispensable motivating force for all Christian service. Leadership is to be motivated by a threefold love: Christ's love for us, our love for Christ and love for others.

The love of Christ controls us. – 2 Cor. 5:14



Motivated by the Love of Christ

In a profoundly revealing passage of Scripture, Paul discloses the single, driving, motivating force of his life:

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

Please note that Paul is not speaking about his love for Christ, but about Christ's love for him. Paul never ceased to be amazed by Christ's love for sinners as demon-

strated by his death on the cross. Christ's love totally controlled his life. It is the reason for all that Paul did.

One missionary who understood Paul's grasp of the love of Christ wrote, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."¹ Hymn writer Isaac Watts captured Paul's understanding of this love in the lyrics to *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. The hymn ends with the unforgettable line, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

Understanding the love of Christ is so essential to Christian living that Paul, in one of the most magnificent prayers in the Bible, prays that God would empower all

believers to grasp the vast, incomprehensible nature of the love of Christ:

that you ... may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. (Eph. 3:17-19)

Although it "surpasses knowledge," the love of Christ is something we are to grasp not only intellectually but experientially, personally, and intimately. Biblical commentator Harold Hoehner highlights this paradox:

The very fact that Christ's love expressed itself in his

willingness to die on behalf of sinners is in itself beyond one's comprehension. The reality of Christ's love is overwhelming to all believers. ... No matter how much knowledge we have of Christ and his work, his love surpasses that knowledge. The more we know of his love, the more we are amazed by it.²

History provides many examples of leaders and teachers who tell of the motivating power of the love of Christ. Methodist preacher and pastor William Alfred Quayle, for example, recorded a conversation he had with a horseback-riding, frontier preacher to the North American settlers during the 1800s. The pioneering missionary said to Quayle,

I feel the woes of the heathen: I know the bitter barrenness of their lives; but this would not suffice to keep me among them. One gets used to heathenism and grows callous to its desperate tragedy. Not the love of man sufficeth to keep me away from my wife and from my children through these years. Only the love of Christ is competent.³

Iain Murray tells us it was the realization of Christ's love that influenced renowned preacher D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones to leave his prestigious medical career to preach God's Word:

he came to see the love of God expressed in the death of

Christ in a way which overwhelmed him. Everything which was happening to him in his new spiritual life was occurring because of what had first happened to Christ.⁴

Hope MacDonald, missionary to Brazil, describes her realization of God's love:

Love is to be our chief motivation for serving people. It is to be the sustaining power that enables us to endure the many difficulties of leadership.

I saw for the first time the ancient truth, "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19 KJV). How had I overlooked it? I had memorized that verse before I started school! As the reality of His love for me engulfed me for the first time, I wanted to get out of bed and jump for joy. I wanted to climb to the top of the roof and shout to the world, "Wake up! God loves me!" It was a moment I will never forget. Since then I have never doubted His love for me.⁵

And Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission (now called the Overseas Missionary Fellowship) believed that if money could motivate the merchants of England to cross death-defying oceans and enter the interior of China at great personal risk of loss of life, could not the love of Christ motivate missionaries to do the

same for the sake of the gospel?⁶

The great truth we must come to again and again throughout life is this: Not that we love God, but that he first loved us and demonstrated his love by sending "his only Son into the world ... to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10). This is what should most thrill our hearts and motivate us to serve others.

Motivated by Love for Christ

Knowing Christ and grasping his great love compels us to serve him, but even more, it causes us to love him. We love him because he first loved us (1 John 4:19), and he gives us the ability to love others. Love is to be our chief motivation for serving people. It is to be the sustaining power that enables us to endure the many difficulties of leadership.

Our Lord says the "great and first commandment" is to love God with the totality of our being—"with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:35-40). Jesus Christ is to be the supreme object of our affections. More than anything or anyone else in the world he is to be loved, treasured, and enjoyed. He is to be loved above all other people, even our closest family members: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37).

When our leadership is motivated by love for God and Christ, we are most pleasing to God and

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There is, therefore, hardly anything better we can do for those we lead than to love the Lord Jesus Christ supremely and keep our love relationship with him fresh and growing every day!

most effective with people. You may be a highly skilled public speaker and a dynamic leader, but if you don't love God first and foremost, you will not be pleasing to him. Your leadership will not be godly or Spirit-empowered leadership. Ministry for ministry's sake does not please God; rather, it is ministry born of love for him that is pleasing and acceptable (1 Cor. 13:1-3). "All the commandments," writes David Jones, "are to be performed out of love for him, even the service of neighbor as well as the service of worship."⁷

We should, of course, seek to continually improve our skills in leadership, personal discipline, time management, interpersonal relationships, and teaching. But above all these things, we should seek to increase our knowledge and enjoyment of Christ and deepen our love for him (Phil. 3:8-14). After all, the deeper our love for him the more we will become like him in love and the more we will be able to teach others to love.

There is, therefore, hardly anything better we can do for those we lead than to love the Lord Jesus Christ supremely and keep our love relationship with

him fresh and growing every day! Out of this blessed and holy love relationship will come a greater manifestation of God's love in us, shining out to others and drawing them to Christ.

Amy Carmichael lived such a life of love:

the love of God within her was so powerful a magnet that all through her life others were drawn irresistibly to her. It was little wonder that the Hindus began to call her "the child-catching Missie Ammal," and they truly believed that she used some mysterious powder which drugged their children and made them long to be near her.⁸

Caring for the Lord's people is not always a pleasant experience. The very people we pour our lives out to serve are imperfect and sinful. They can turn on us and attack maliciously. They can be unreasonable, demanding, and ungrateful.

Two of the most godly leaders ever to have graced this world were Moses and David, yet at times people complained bitterly about them and even were ready to kill them. It is no different for leaders of God's people today. An elder in a church told me how he had experienced numerous abuses during the many years he had served his local church. He had been physically choked, punched, had his jaw broken, been spit on, cursed at, falsely accused, and

threatened with a lawsuit.

This kind of abusive treatment by people helps explain why so many pastors and church workers become bitter and disillusioned with people and leave the work of the Lord. But when our service is motivated by love for Christ, we will be better able to persevere and find greater fulfillment in our labors. Oswald Chambers, author of the classic devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*, said it well:

The work of feeding and tending sheep is hard work, arduous work, and love for the sheep alone will not do it; you must have a consuming love for the Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then He will flow through you in a passion of love and draw men to Himself.⁹

Here, then, is a key to endurance in spiritual leadership: We must serve people out of love for Christ. When we do, we will have joy in the work, and, most important, our service will be acceptable and pleasing to God. Being motivated, therefore, by the love of Christ and love for Christ is essential to Christian leadership. It is the starting point for all Christian service.

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Motivated by Love for People

Hours before his death, after washing their feet, Jesus gave his disciples "a new commandment":

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35)

One simply cannot understand Christian living, evangelism, or church leadership without grasping the new commandment. Note that Jesus didn't merely say "love one another." He said something far more profound: Love one another "just as I have loved you." Jesus sets his own example of love. His

love is a love for the unlovely as well as the lovely. It is a caring, serving love. It gives itself unselfishly for the good of others. That is why he gave us the example of washing the disciples' feet and of sacrificing his life on the cross. He was establishing a new pattern of love.

John explains the full implication of imitating Jesus' love when he writes, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (1 John 3:16). Benjamin B. Warfield says, "Self-sacrificing love is thus made the essence of the Christian life."¹⁰

The new commandment applies to every Christian, and especially to leaders and teachers. All of our work — leading, teaching, correcting, protecting, speaking, serving, motivating, organizing, planning, visiting, praying, counseling, or evangelizing—is to be shaped by the new commandment. We are to love others as Jesus loved. We are to love as



the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep (John 10:11).

More than any other leader in the New Testament, Paul displayed Jesus' self-sacrificing love for those he taught and led. Paul's handling of the turbulent church at Corinth illustrates his love-motivated leadership. The church at Corinth caused Paul much heartache. Most of us would have given up and walked away

in anger, yet despite the grief they caused him, Paul repeatedly affirmed his love for them.

Commentator Paul Barnett remarks, "Historically, few ministers can have suffered at the hands of their congregations as much as Paul had from the behavior of the Corinthians. Yet he continued to hold them in his heart."¹¹

In 2 Corinthians Paul says, "I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together" (2 Cor. 7:3). Later in the same letter he writes, "I seek not what is yours but you.

... I will most gladly spend and be spent

for your souls" (2 Cor. 12:14-15). James Denny refers to this as "one of the most movingly tender passages in the whole Bible."¹² Denny goes on to say, "'Not yours, but you' is the motto of every minister who has learned of Christ."¹³

From his extensive study of 2 Corinthians, which reveals Paul's heart and life, Philip Hughes writes, "No man on earth had a warmer and more devoted heart than the Apostle Paul. Love was the impulse of his whole life and ministry as Christ's Apostle."¹⁴

Paul had enormous giftedness, but it was his love that allowed him to "endure all things" (1 Cor. 13:7) and deal effectively with troubled people. It is no different for Christian leaders and teachers today. Consider, for example, Anthony Norris Groves, a missionary to Iraq and India. He has been called the "Father of Faith Missions." Like Paul, he suffered much for Christ. Yet one of the shining qualities of his life was his selfless love for people. This love was rooted in his love for Christ.

Biographer Robert Dann noted how Groves' love for people made him a great missionary despite his weaknesses:

He was not a gifted evangelist, nor a natural orator. He was not particularly sociable, and he often found relationships

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painful. He was never a great organizer or administrator; he was not physically or mentally tough. ... One might think he was not cut out to be a missionary at all. But he had one quality that more than made up for his deficiencies: he knew how to love. Love was the key to everything: "I feel there is something in love so hallowing; it kills that hateful selfishness which twines round all that is human." It was love that drew people to Christ—not ceremonies or rules or customs, or even doctrines, but love. And it was love that drew people to Norris Groves.¹⁵

John Christian Arulappan, an Indian evangelist and church planter who saw thousands converted and many churches established in India, also affirms Groves' influence of love. He writes: "He

loved me sincerely as his dear child in Christ Jesus. I never knew anyone who loved me so for the sake of the Lord Jesus."¹⁶

Love motivated leadership will make an impact because people are hungry for love. This point was brought home to me by two friends who planted a church. Soon after the church had been established, they organized a question and answer session for the new congregation. During the meeting, a young lady who had recently become a Christian asked them this question: "Would you be willing to die for me?"

Her question caught them completely off guard. Not wanting to be glib, they gave her a wise response. They told her they first needed to examine their own hearts honestly before God to see if they really loved her that much. After they had done that, they would answer her. This young

convert's question was a thoroughly biblical question. How would you have answered her? †

"The Motivating Power of Love" is an excerpt from *A Christian Leader's Guide to Leading With Love* by Alexander Strauch, Copyright 2006, Lewis & Roth Publishers.



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Love motivated leadership will make an impact because people are hungry for love.

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Chris Lange

Loving the Household of Faith

This year's Iron Sharpens Iron Conference has made it plain for us believers that a caring church is not only biblical but also essential for the maintenance of the body of Christ. When I think of the amazing and marvelous calling of believers who are Christ's body, I can hardly fathom how expansive is God's love for us. The reality of His deep love and commitment to us is meant to be the generating influence in our lives to love others as we are loved. As I read Galatians 6: 1-10, I see several pivotal principles which ought to be remembered as we seek to walk before our Lord Jesus as He would have us walk—living love as it becomes the believer.

Do you remember the power of the love that broke your heart when the Savior beckoned you from the darkness to the light?

Remember who you are...

First of all, we should not lose track of who we are and where we have come from. Though many believers were saved at a very early age and did not live for years apart from God, many of us were saved much later in life. I, for one, can still remember the futility and void in my life at 22 that endured throughout my earlier years. This should remind us of how we need to love unconditionally those who yet suffer from sin in their lives. This holds true for believers as well as for unbelievers. The statement "There but by the grace of God go I" is more true the older I get. Caring for others in the body, loving them in spite of their flaws and sin, teaches us not to forget our own sin and darkness. We ought to be led by the abiding love of Christ both to sympathize and empathize with all our hearts with those around us. As we "bear our own load," we are also to bear what we can of those lives that are overly burdened down and suffering.

Remember what you have learned...

As a young Christian at Littleton Bible Chapel, I recall hearing the words to a song, "...and they'll know we are Christians by our love." This pertains to our neighbors in the church as well as to those outside of the body. Loving people is the reason for sharing our faith and our lives. People are

not "conquests"; they are human beings who need the eternal love and faithfulness of our loving Father. Do we not want them to know the same ecstatic love and forgiveness that we have enjoyed in Christ all these years?

Are unbelievers looking for this unconditional love? Are they skeptical of what they see in churches today? Do they have reason to believe that such "Christian" love is conditional and affected? These are tough questions. Galatians 6:6-8 deal with the consequences of the manner in which we live and love. Yes, we will reap what we sow—both for eternal things and for the flesh. Whether in our personal time, our helping hands, our wallets, our listening ears, our genuine fellowship, or in our heartfelt prayers and commitment, we will reap what we sow. Our "Christian love life" is to be tangible, abundant, and ready—and not weakened by time passing which may blur our hope for reaping the spiritual benefits of loving others. Verse 10 is clear: we are to respond as we can in love to all men, especially to the household of faith. It is a matter of leaving behind the fear of involvement and of embracing the love of genuine fellowship and service. Caring for others is a frame of mind, one that takes as its motivation the reality that "we have the mind of Christ."

Remember Whom you love...

In my life I can only look to what has been done for me by the Lord Jesus. He embraced me as a wandering and pitiful shadow of a man, hopeless and discontented with just about everything I put my hands to in those years. I am bound by Him whose tender face looks on me and forgives my sin to love those around me wholly and to desire that those apart from Christ know Him and know His irrepressible joy. Do you remember the power of the love that broke your heart when the Savior beckoned you from the darkness to the light? In the following poem I have written, I trust you will relive the "hilarious love" that you knew at your salvation so that in your hilarious giving to and loving of the body, you may rejoice in the desire to love others. †



*Chris Lange
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“The Old and the New”

by Chris Lange

Can it be true that Christ has given me
A second chance at life so early spent
In sin amid unholy ways, enslaved:
The dark and double blindness without
God
Of mind and eye that wastes away
the soul?
For me, the one who chose his
selfish way –
Whose willful and repeated arrogance
Would anger and offend a loving God-
Did Christ, the Son of God upon
the cross
Determine to forgive and then forget
My sordid self in all its filthiness?

For in the midst of my forsaken days,
Mired-mindless, empty, purposeless-
I heard the words that opened up
my soul,
A life for life He gave in His despair-
No greater sacrifice for one to make.
He offered up Himself in love in death
To free me from the curse that held
me hard,
And give me peace and purity within.

Amazing love that I could be brand new
And know the God who loved me yet
in sin!
How great the joy that settled in
my soul,
The wonder of new life with
sins forgiven,
Removed from condemnation and the
law
That judges any soul apart from God!
A world apart! So indescribable!
One blind from birth can see the living
Christ!
A mind awake, a vision purified.
What madness! Can I now perceive
the truth
That so eluded all my fruitless days
When selfish pleasure kept me bound
in chains?

So bent, so prone to languish as the rest,
And never know the mind alive in Him
Until the words came softly to my heart,
“Believe in Me, you must be born
again.”

By faith now must I walk a narrow path,
In step with Christ whose mind I have
been given.
Oh God, such truth is far beyond my
ways
And causes me to shudder when I think
That fallen flesh still lies within my
frame
And panders to my old and shameful
ways.
How can I come before my Savior
chained
To sinful nature and the heart of God –
From crippled nature unto nature
cleansed?

A greater grief I do not know attends
My aching emptiness when I pursue
Those ends that turn me further from
His face.
For often though my presence may
appear
In step with practiced, outward
righteousness,
My mind may roam at will its journeys
dark
And vandalize my spirit cleansed in
Him.
Do I believe that eyes can so deceive
The ones who search my face for
holiness?
How rude a world that often may survive
Behind two eyes whose lenses bend the
truth
Of alter ego festering within.
Oh, my shame before the Christ of God,
The holy One who gave Himself for me;
The thought that I could yet within
retain
Such sin, my heart is broken yet again.

But safely kept in tact as well within,
I contemplate the wonder of His grace,
So marvelously offered for my sin –
God’s most approving love for me
expressed
In His adoring Son of righteousness.
How great my joy that in the midst
of sin,
So compromised by foolishness and woe
And counterfeit amusements in my way-
That Jesus beckons me to walk
with Him,

To make confession of the things
I’ve done
And know forgiveness from His
gentle hand.
Without a trace of guilt I take my place
Beside His steps along the path of life-
I hear Him sing a love song to my soul
Of love unquenched by my ill-tempered
heart.

And so my moments go in life, in Christ
A riddle though they may persist to be –
Of reckless days of inconsistency
That harshly tread on loving sacrifice,
And often wound the tender heart of
God.
Oh the shame that haunts my secret self!

But greater hope I never would
have known
Apart from Jesus’ resurrection joy.
To live forever when His sure return
Confounds this poor earth’s aged misery-
Reveals me with Him newly glorified.
Such ecstasy in triumph when at last
What God has promised is reality
And that which eye could never
fully see,
Nor ear might hear in pleasant reverie-
No – all that once was but an airy dream
Will then commence forever at His Word
Such joy unspeakable to know Him then
Without the curse of sin that now abides
Within this heart of dark self-
centeredness.

“I’ve loved you with an everlasting
love,”
He tells me in His ever faithful Word.
Lord, keep me closely walking in
the light –
That though the darkness threaten to
confuse,
And Satan’s restless hatred press me hard
In vile temptation meant to cause
me grief –
That I may see your face in tender gaze
Fixed firmly on my needy, humble self
And know that I am loved eternally

Dr. MacLeod Asks

Faculty member Dave MacLeod leads us in a public forum to discuss issues pertinent to contemporary Christian life. Last issue he asked the following question:

Over the years I have heard a number of preachers and Bible teachers make a distinction between “knowing about God” and “knowing God.” Recently, an able teacher told a congregation, “Knowing God is more than knowing God’s attributes.” How do you understand the distinction between “knowing God” and “knowing about God?”

Janice Leverentz responds:

I would like to suggest both a passage of Scripture and a contemporary illustration that I think address the question. The Scripture passage is 2 Timothy 3:14–15 (*Amplified Bible*); “But as for you, continue to hold to the things that you have learned and of which you are convinced, knowing from whom you learned [them], and how from your childhood you have had a knowledge of and been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you and give you the understanding for salvation which comes through faith in Christ Jesus [that is, through the *leaning of the entire human personality on God in Christ Jesus in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom and goodness*].

My illustration comes from a scene in the film, *While You Were Sleeping*. Two characters, Lucy and Jack, are speaking and are interrupted by a third.

Lucy [to Jack]: “Okay, um. What do you mean by the leaning thing? You mean because he gave me flowers?”

Jack: “And then you *‘leaned.’*”

Lucy: “And then I *‘leaned?’*”



Jack: "Leaning involves 'wanting' ... and 'accepting.'" "Leaning ..."

Joe Jr.: Hey Luce! Is this guy bothering you?

Lucy: [Laughs] "No, no."

Joe Jr.: "Are you sure? Because it looks like he's 'leaning.'"

I'd like to suggest that it's the "leaning" that makes the difference when it comes to knowing God.

Janice Leverentz
Edina, MN

Henry Palmieri responds:

"Knowing about God or 'Christ' in an intellectual way or belief in the historical God or Christ is distinct from "knowing God" or believing in Him. The latter implies trust, dependence. Intellectual belief (knowing about God) does not bring salvation, as belief with trust does (knowing God or Christ) due to their trusting truly with the head, as well as the heart believe. This is the beginning of "knowing God" or "Christ." Forty-seven years ago I took a course from Emmaus, and I learned that "I may know Him" (Phil. 3:10) means to gain practical day-by-day acquaintance with Him in such an intimate way that the apostle himself would become more Christ-like. He wants the life of Christ to be reproduced in him." That's "knowing God;" that's "knowing Christ"—not "knowing about God or Christ."

The true Christian (who knows God) worships God, for he "knows God." He worships God in the Spirit, apart from whose presence mere outward forms (knowing about God) are in vain. One who "knows God" glories in Christ Jesus and has confidence, but not in the flesh (knowing about God). I have found that the direction of confidence in the flesh (the mere external knowledge of God) is often fourfold: It is in religious rites, race, religion, and outward righteousness. The Christian, with the apostle Paul (who knew God) counts these things loss (Phil. 3:8). The Christian who knows God is marked by four other qualities which Paul extols. They are justification, having a righteous standing before God by faith (v.9), identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (vv. 10, 11; cf. Rom. 6:1–6); consecration to Christ's purpose in apprehending him (12–14), and anticipation of his personal return (20). This is what it means to "know God." It's a far cry from merely "knowing about God!"

Strauss says, "The first step to a knowledge of God is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. This must, of necessity, include the experimental knowledge of Christ as Savior and Lord." Philip said to Jesus, "Lord show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus answered, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:8–9). Again He said, "He who

sees Me sees the One who sent Me" (John 12:45). If a man would know God he must begin with Jesus Christ; he must know Jesus Christ. Paul expressed his aspiration by saying, "That I may know Him" (Phil. 3:10). Mark well the fact that he did not say, "That I may know about Him."

The average man of any intelligence and elevation of ideas about the teachings of Jesus will sympathize with you and possibly follow along in pursuit of knowledge about Him. But say to him that your aspiration is to know Christ experientially in "the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death," and he will be bewildered at your babbling in an unknown tongue. Yet this was the ambition of the great apostle who, in his day, would match wits with the philosophers of the schools of the Epicureans and Stoics (Acts 17:17–18). Had Paul been totally ignorant of philosophy, which he was not, he would still have known more with his knowledge of Christ than did they who knew not Christ.

We cannot stress too emphatically that the word "know" in Dr. MacLeod's question means "to come to know by experience." Paul's aspiration is to come to know the Lord Jesus in that fullness of experiential knowledge by identifying himself with Christ and being like him. Such learning is the highest kind of knowledge

attainable, for experience is the best teacher after all. It is good to know about the Lord Jesus, but it is best to know Him by participation in a living experience. There is nothing shallow or superficial about the man who has set such knowledge as his goal in life. A knowledge about Christ received from reading a book or listening to a sermon could not satisfy the man in search of such a holy quest. Conformity to Christ is his goal and he refuses to stop short of it. It was this personal contact with life, and no mere intellectual knowledge, that our Lord had in mind when He prayed for His own: "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3).

Knowing about God' is an acquaintance with facts as external and intellectual conviction of their reality, but "knowing God," is an appropriation of these facts (so to speak) as an influencing power into the very being of him who knows them.

Knowing God is a matter of appropriation and companionship. Let me give a final illustration. The difference between "knowing a person" and "knowing about a person" must never be forgotten. We may know a great deal about a person, whose acquaintance and friendship we never acquire. We may in the same way know a great deal about Christ; we may be erudite theologians; and yet if we do

not "know Him" as our incomparable companion, our Savior, our Lord, our best Friend (cf. John 15:12–15), all will be vain.

I'm sure Paul knew much about Christ as an unsaved man, but he got acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus, and that acquaintanceship he cultivated ever after by supplication, meditation, cooperation in Christ's work and by every means of his power. Let no one be content with anything short of their acquaintanceship, companionship, and friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, there is a vast difference between "knowing about God" and "knowing God."

Henry Palmieri
Mechanicville, New York

Lois Henderson responds:

To the current question regarding "knowing God" and "knowing about God," my simple, uneducated mind thinks the distinction might (to some) be the difference between being married to a person versus reading a biography about the person. This is, admittedly, a rather simple illustration.

L. Lois Henderson
Staten Island, New York

Darrel Harman responds:

Many in this world know about God and His attributes as seen in His Creation, but have no clue as to knowing God in a personal

sense. Knowing God can only come when a person acknowledges His Son Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. When a person comes to faith in Christ by trusting in His death on the Cross for their sins, the process of "knowing God" begins. The veil has been rent and the barrier to knowing God has been eliminated. The believer now has the ability to enter the "Holy of Holies" and to have fellowship with the God of the Universe—a relationship that will transcend a lifetime into eternity.

The Apostle Paul knew every "jot" and "tittle" (Matt. 5:18, KJV) of Holy Scripture and knew much about God. As an unsaved man he studied under the famous Jewish theologian Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Yet it was not until he met Jesus on the Damascus road that the unbelieving scales over his eyes fell off and he began to know God personally (Acts 9:1–20). Later, on Mars Hill in Athens, after seeing an altar dedicated "To the Unknown God" (Acts 17:23), Paul vehemently tried to persuade those residents that there was a true God, and that He could be known through a relationship with His Son Jesus Christ (vv. 24–31).

God's holy Word reveals much about "knowing God." Peter counsels his readers, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). John adds, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one

who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:3-6). He later says, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:19-20).

Paul exults, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33). To the Philippians he writes, "That I may know Him and

the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10). Paul also says that "to know God" in this saving sense is also "to be known by God" (Gal. 4:9). And this can only take place through faith in God's Son.

Darrel L. Harman
Lake City, Minnesota

NEXT ISSUE'S QUESTION:

Some time ago a friend bemoaned the splitting of an assembly with which he was acquainted. He said, "I wonder if it is ever possible for a local church to split amicably?" That's my question for this issue. Here are some related questions you may want to consider as you write your answer: (1) Is frustration a good reason for leaving your local church? (2) Is the desire for a different leadership style or ministry style a good reason for leaving your local church? (3) What are some good reasons for starting a new assembly? (4) How large should an assembly be before the elders agree to "release" a group of innovators to start a hive-off assembly?

Please send responses to Journey Magazine, Emmaus Bible College, 2570 Asbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001, or e-mail to journey@emmaus.edu. Include name, city, state, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited to yield brevity and clarity.

Emmaus On the Road

Name	Location/Events	City/State	Dates
 Ken Fleming	Bayside Community Church Boise Chapel Lombard Gospel Chapel	Tampa, FL Boise, ID Lombard, IL	Sept 30 Oct 13-14 Oct 20-21
 Jack Fish	Woodside Chapel Men's Retreat Woodside Chapel National Worker's Conference Buttonwoods Chapel 50th Anniversary	Keswick, NJ Fanwood, NJ Terrill Rd, NJ Buttonwoods, RI	Oct 5-6 Oct 7 Oct 9-11 Nov 3-4
 Joel Hernandez	Park of the Palms	Keystone Heights, FL	October 19-21
 John Jimo	Northwest Bible Chapel	Chicago, IL	Sept 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
 David MacLeod	Lombard Gospel Chapel Lake Geneva Family Conference Woodside Bible Chapel Atlantic Gospel Chapel Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel	Lombard, IL Lake Geneva, WI Maywood, IL Atlantic, IA Dubuque, IA	Aug 26 Sept 1-3 Sept 2, 9, 23, 30 Sept 14-16 Sept 14-16
 Ben Mathew	Faith Bible Camp	Winnipeg, SK	Aug 31-Sept 3
 Dan Smith	Mid-South Bible Conference (Horton Haven) Bethany Bible Chapel Bayside Community Church Lombard Gospel Chapel Northwest Bible Chapel Lansing Gospel Chapel	Chapel Hill, TN Cedar Falls, IA Tampa, FL Lombard, IL Chicago, IL Lansing, IL	Aug 31-Sept 3 Sept 9 Sept 16 Sept 23, 30 Oct 7, 14, 21 Oct 20
 Mark Stevenson	Evangelical Theological Faculty Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel Woodside Bible Chapel Warrenville Bible Chapel	Leuven, Belgium Dubuque, IA Maywood, IL Warrenville, IL	Sept. 4 Sept 16, 23, 30 Oct 14, 21 Nov 4, 11
 Steve Witter	Brooklyn Bible Chapel Bible Truth Chapel IFCA Regional Meeting Park Manor IFCA Regional Meeting Grace Bible Chapel	Baltimore, MD Wausau, WI Charleston, IL Elgin, IL Grand Rapids, MI Timmins, Ontario	Sept 9 Sept 16 Sept 22 Sept 30, Oct 7 Oct 22 Oct 26-29

If you would like more information about having faculty speak at your assembly, retreat, conference or camp please call 1-800-397-BIBLE or e-mail info@emmaus.edu.

News from Emmaus

New Dual-degree programs

Emmaus Bible College is excited to announce the addition of two new programs this fall! In cooperation with the Northeast Iowa Community College, (NICC) Emmaus is offering cooperative dual-degree programs in **Biblical Studies/Nursing and Biblical Studies/Business Administration**. The programs are designed to provide students the opportunity to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in Biblical Studies at Emmaus and an Associates degree in either Business Administration or Nursing at NICC at the same time!

The Biblical Studies/Business Administration program can be completed in just four years. Students in the program take approximately 93 credit hours at Emmaus including a full Biblical Studies major (45 credits), General Education coursework (30 credits), and general electives (18 credits). An additional 33 credit hours are completed at NICC in Business and related courses. **The Biblical Studies/Nursing program** takes a little longer, 4 1/2 years plus two summers. Students in the program take approximately 71 credit hours at Emmaus including a full Biblical Studies major (45 credits) and General Education coursework (26 credits). An additional 80 credit

hours are completed at NICC in General Education and Nursing. After successful completion of this program, graduates are eligible to write the National licensure exam (NCLEX) to become a Registered Nurse. The program is approved by the Iowa Board of Nursing.

These programs provide students the opportunity to receive significant training in Biblical Studies while training for a profession; all of this, in a Christ-centered environment that will challenge them to grow in their knowledge of the Savior and in their service for Him.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have! Please feel free to call Lisa Beatty, Dean for Academic Affairs, at 563.588.8000 x1103 or email your questions to lbeatty@emmaus.edu.

FACULTY TRAVELS

Dr. Donald Patten – Malaysia
I spent two and one half weeks in Malaysia and Singapore promoting



EmmausOnline. The journey actually began two years ago when I received an email from a Malaysian brother, Nyanen Thiran. He expressed an interest in the courses for Malaysian assembly believers. Through several conversations, I determined to travel halfway around the world and see what God had in store for the online program.



I discovered several things from the trip. First, the Malaysian and Singapore assemblies are incredibly hospitable. I did not want for food or conversation. My first day, Sunday July 8th, I ate seven times. They kept giving me food. It is their way of keeping in touch with other believers.

My travels took me to Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. I met with elders from 7 different assemblies and provided them with details concerning EmmausOnline. In addition to promoting the program, I was heavily involved in teaching at the assemblies. The weekend of July 13 and 14, I

conducted a ten hour seminar on Church history which included discussion of assembly roots, practices and challenges for today. Over 160 elders and leaders from Malaysia, Australia and the Philippines gathered for the lectures. It was a very successful conference.

Following my time in Kuala Lumpur, I traveled to Taiping. The town is about 3 hours north of the capital. The Malaysian assemblies run a GLO (Gospel Literature Outreach) school in the city. I taught a basic course on Church history and provided a three day seminar on assembly practices and challenges to the believers in the city.



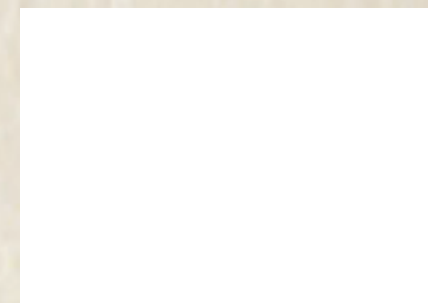
From Taiping I traveled to Pinang, which is an island city in Malaysia. My time was short but relaxing. I stayed with two believers, Edward and Roselyn Low, who took me sightseeing and shopping. They extended warm fellowship and hospitality unlike anything I have experienced as a believer. I spent time on Thursday evening,

July 18th, teaching at their assembly.

The weekend of July 21-23 found me in Singapore. I met with an elder, Kian Tan, from the Bethesda Ang Mo Chio assembly. We spoke in length about offering EmmausOnline courses to the Singapore believers. I also ate my first sushi meal...and will most likely not do that again. Saturday afternoon, July 21, I spoke to a group of around 100 students interested in the program. Sunday morning I taught on Leviticus 13 and 14 to that same group of students. One graduating senior came to speak with me following the message and indicated an interest in coming to Emmaus Bible College.

All-in-all, the trip was rewarding and encouraging. I believe the Lord has great things in store for EmmausOnline. Time will tell if the Lord has Singapore or Malaysia in those plans.
– Donnie Patten

Dr. Jim Van Dine – Ireland
From May 24-June 18 I, along with four Emmaus students, traveled to the Republic of Ireland as part of the TnT Teams' yearly short term missions ministry. While there we received excellent orientation to Ireland and to ministry among the Irish people as well as practical training for the



ministries we would be involved in. Working with local assemblies and assembly missionaries we were involved in a number of things including door-to-door visitation, children's clubs, street evangelism, and ministry to the assemblies. In addition I led seminars on interpreting the Bible and sought to encourage the church through preaching and friendship. Assemblies struggle in the South of Ireland just to get established and outside help is always welcomed.

Ireland represents a unique opportunity for short term missions experience in that it affords a truly cross-cultural experience without the language barrier. As Ireland continues to experience increased emigration due to its membership in the European Union, we encounter many people groups besides the Irish. To view a fuller presentation of this past year's trip go to www.TnTTeams.org.
– Jim Van Dine

News from Emmaus



Joel Hernandez and Ken Fleming – Germany

International Brethren Conference for Missionaries
 “Come, behold the works of the Lord . . .” Psalm 46:8

The IBCM conference took place in June at the Wiedenest Bible College, a missions school nestled in the forested area near Cologne, Germany. Some 400 missionaries, full-time workers and others from

about 80 countries came together to consider the Lord’s work throughout the world, and to encourage prayer, fellowship, and networking.

I was grateful to have Mr. Ken Fleming as traveling companion. Nothing like traveling with a veteran, and an expert one at that! Tom and Patti Marinello, missionaries in the Netherlands, regaled us with gracious hospitality before and after the conference.

Reflecting on the value of the conference, I consider how easy it is for those who serve the Lord to acquire a myopic view of His work. To conclude, as the prophet Elijah did once, that the extension of God’s work is limited to my own narrow world. This was one of the great benefits of the conference, to “behold the works of the Lord.”

And there were many surprises that led us to prayer and praise: To hear first-hand reports of how the Gospel is finding a wide open door in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; that the work in closed countries is on the rise; that Peace in Burundi has resulted in nationals planting new assemblies; that there are 24 assemblies in Cuba, 60 in Burma, and over 1000 assemblies in Chad, and over 1300 full-time workers in India!

So next time you find yourself discouraged in His service, open a missions’ magazine and use it as a praise guide. Attend the missionary prayer meeting. Call a missionary on the field. Do some research in Operation World. Consider the works of the Lord beyond your doorstep; beyond our borders! – Joel Hernandez



Since 1941,

thousands of choice young men and women have walked on the Emmaus road, and learned the things concerning Himself. Many of these students recall their days spent at Emmaus as the “best days of their lives”...because while studying God’s Word for the first time with an adult mind, their lives were changed.

You can find Emmaus graduates anywhere in the world....doing most anything, yet with one common thread. From the several hundred foreign missionaries, to the camp directors, from those engaged in full-time ministry in the United States, to those who build houses, our graduates seek to serve the Church, using the gifts that the Lord has given them to bring honor and glory to the name of Jesus Christ.

If you want to be involved in service for the Lord that is impacting the world...make Emmaus Bible College YOUR College. There are many ways that you can be involved.

- Pray for the college on a regular basis.
- Invite an Emmaus representative to your local church to update the leadership and the Saints about what God is doing...and where He is taking Emmaus.
- If you know of a potential student....send us their contact information—OR request a recruitment packet for them.
- Consider financial support to the Annual fund, or one of several ongoing projects.



Dr. Steven R. Witter
 Director of Advancement
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