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THE **IPMT** REACHER'S MAGAZINE



KEEPING YOUR MEMBERS

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EXPERIENCE

"To most men,
experience is like
the stern lights
of a ship,
which illumine
only the track
it has passed."

—Samuel Coleridge
Table Talk

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Editorial

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JUST A PARISH PRIEST

AUG 15 '89

When asked what I do, I usually reply, "I'm just a parish priest." In the five months between my last two churches, I came to appreciate what a wonderful thing that really is: "Just a parish priest!" It speaks of a precious relationship, not just a job. Something special happens when you look out over that crowd and relish the fact, "These are my people. And I belong to them!"

On the wall above my typewriter hang two important things: a panoramic photograph of Jerusalem taken from the Mount of Olives, and a three-dimensional map of Spokane, my parish. They remind me of my task—to learn all I can about the world of the Bible and the world of my parish, and by the grace of God, to bring them together. The roles of preacher and pastor belong together. Phillips Brooks insisted, "The preacher needs to be pastor, that he may preach to real men. The pastor must be preacher, that he may keep the dignity of his work alive. The preacher who is not a pastor grows remote. The pastor who is not a preacher grows petty. . . . Be both; for you cannot really be one unless you are also the other."¹

As a man serves faithfully as a parish priest, he notices his congregation changing from an audience into real, live persons. As he enters into the stream of their hopes and hurts, he finds himself changing

from only a preacher to a pastor of his people. Someone once said, "To love to preach is one thing. To love those to whom we preach is quite another." Jerry Vines noted, "The preacher may say nearly anything he wants to say to the people if they are convinced he loves them, is interested in them, and wants to help them."²

The parish priest often feels torn between his hours of preparation and his hours of parish care. I confess that I have never learned either to totally dismiss the pressing problems of my people clamoring for immediate attention during my time for prayer and preparation, or to totally dismiss my obvious need for prayer and preparation while I am tending to the people of my parish. A. C. Craig wrote, "A very wise old pastor once told me of two equal and opposite errors a preacher can fall into. One was to neglect his study for his people. The other was to neglect his people for study. Both errors are tragic. People and study are in constant tension and competition with each other. But both must be attended to."³

Parish priest, you must learn about the world of the Bible. It points to Jesus, "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2, NIV). Focusing on Jesus, you will never run out of something to tell.

Parish priest, you must also learn about the world of your people. That is also an unending task. The edi-

torial board of this issue of the *Preacher's Magazine* includes members of the Association of Nazarene Sociologists of Religion. Their research and case studies give insight and provoke thought in analyzing one's parish. Ronald R. Schmidt's article may point out something we need to know and something we can do about it. He notes reasons why people leave their churches.

I believe with John Stott that to "expound the scripture is to open up the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God's voice is heard and His people obey Him." The pastor's heart of Joseph Parker exclaimed, "Preach to the suffering, and you will never lack a congregation. There is a broken heart in every pew."

In a recent interview, William L. Self said, "Preaching is worth the effort. It is the greatest thing in the world if you are called to do it.

"Furthermore, the Church is worth it—it really is. Don't despair over the church or give up on it. Every preacher is tempted to do that at one time or another. But the church is where the action is. If God is going to do anything in this world, He is going to do it through His Church."

The work of the parish priest marches on unendingly. The hours grow long. Emotions dip and soar. Bodies grow weary. There's an occasional "payday" when a sinner is converted or a weak saint bears a

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BRIDGE BUILDING:

THE NATURE OF INCORPORATION

In Deut. 6:4-9, the people of God were commanded to pass their faith on to their children.

In the poem "The Bridge Builder," Will Allen Dromgoole tells the beautiful story of this passing of the faith:

*An old man going a lone highway
Came at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm vast and wide and steep,
With waters rolling cold and deep.
The old man crossed in the twilight
dim,
The sullen stream had no fears for
him;
But he turned when safe on the
other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.
"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,*



by
Kenneth E.
Crow

registrar, MidAmerica Nazarene College, Olathe, Kans.

*"You are wasting your strength with
building here.*

*Your journey will end with the ending
day.*

*You never again will pass this way.
You've crossed the chasm, deep
and wide,*

*Why build you this bridge at even-
tide?"*

*The builder lifted his old gray head.
"Good friend, in the path I have
come," he said,*

*"There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this
way.*

*The chasm that was as naught to
me*

*To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall
be;*

*He too must cross in the twilight
dim—*

*Good friend, I am building this
bridge for him."*

I am grateful that my parents built such a bridge for me. Most of us have had such bridges into the

church. But some of our prospects are not so fortunate. Their social networks are not a part of the church. For them, we need to intentionally build relationships strong enough to help them come to Christ.

We are influenced a great deal by the primary relationships of our lives. Casual, limited friendships and associations are not strong enough to influence most people. Prospects who do not have important relationship ties within the congregation need our help in becoming a part of the networks of the church.

Most often God has provided bridges across which we can minister. However, when we encounter someone without significant, pre-existing relationships, there is a need for understanding how relationships are built. Three basic characteristics of primary groups help make clear the steps we will need to take if we are to intentionally build bridges of faith.

1. Primary relationships are formed where people spend a lot of time together.

I wish the following song was the Sunday School's theme song:

*Making your way in the world today
Takes everything you've got.
Taking a break from all your worries
Sure would help a lot:*

*Wouldn't you like to get away?
Sometimes you want to go
Where everybody knows your
name,
And they're always glad you came.
You want to be where you can see
Our troubles are all the same.
You want to be
Where everybody knows your
name.*

*You want to go where people know
People are all the same.
You want to go
Where everybody knows your
name.¹*

Unfortunately, the setting of the television comedy for which this is the theme is not a church. However, the song describes the important sense of belonging, the sharing of troubles, and the acceptance of others that often develops in frequent, face-to-face, long-term interaction. Relationships like this are not possible among strangers, nor among people who get together only occasionally. "Touch-and-go" interaction is sufficient for secondary relations, but it is not adequate for establishing and maintaining primary attachments.

Jesus and the apostles illustrate the intense interaction necessary to permit intimate and inclusive relationships. They were together for three years. It is hard to imagine the apostles maturing in their faith if they had only been together for quarterly, monthly, or even weekly meetings.

Hour-long meetings once a month for a year, or weekly meetings for 8 to 12 weeks are unlikely to allow the formation of primary relationships. Neither would fellowship restricted to the relatively formal setting of a worship service be likely to provide opportunity for extensive enough interaction to permit the joining of a primary group.

If we want to build networks of faith, we need to get prospects involved in small groups that get together frequently over a fairly long

period of time. Infrequent, touch-and-go, short-term meetings are easier, but they will rarely be enough to build strong relationships.

2. Primary relationships are formed where people are open and vulnerable to each other.

During the time set aside for sharing prayer requests in one of our midweek prayer services, one of the "fringe people" requested prayer for a personal, spiritual problem. She

It is hard to imagine the apostles maturing in their faith if they had only been together for weekly meetings.

found herself not always able to resist a particular temptation. Her request for prayer and group support was not well received. By comparison, other requests that evening were much less personal and open.

Her experience illustrates the need for intimacy and the difficulty of achieving it. The group was too large. She had not met with them often enough or long enough. There were primary groups in the church where such a request would have been received as appropriate and support given, but this was not one of them; and she was not included in any of them.

She did not have an existing network in the church. Nevertheless, she was either so naive or so desperate that she ignored the fact that she had not gained the "right" to share with them one of the major concerns of her life. Maybe she assumed that instant intimacy is possible. Maybe she decided that she could not wait until she had earned the right to share burdens.

We did not recognize quickly enough the importance of primary relationships with this person in need. She was left with her social

network outside the church. Without a strong enough bridge, she was soon lost to the church and to the faith.

There are dangers in intimacy, of course. That is one reason we take so long to develop openness and trust. We carefully evaluate the risks involved before we open ourselves to any group.

We would probably have been very cautious about getting involved in John Wesley's band society meetings. The "Rules of the Band Societies" required openness. They asked four questions of each other at each weekly meeting:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?

Intimacy is rare. Primary relationships are demanding. Still, if we intend to establish networks that will affect spiritual decisions, intimate interaction is necessary. In those few groups that we are confident will feel both our joy and our pain without rejecting us, we trust their message and want to remain.

3. Primary relationships are formed where people are known and accepted in all of their roles—as whole persons.

The best example of primary relations is the family. One of their strengths is that they tend to know and be interested in all aspects of our lives. With them, we are not limited to a role of fellow worker, student, shopper, or any other single role. They know us.

This familial-type knowledge and acceptance of the whole person takes a long time to develop. But prospects need to be convinced that we are really interested in more than their role of fellow worshiper, tither, or worker.

We really care when they suffer or rejoice. Paul says we Christians should "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that

weep" (Rom. 12:15). A sociologist described primary groups as having "a certain fusion of personalities within the group, so that what one experiences the others also tend to experience. This fusion can be observed, for example, in the case of stage fright on the part of persons who are not actually on the stage but are close relatives of someone who is. They often experience the ordeal as vividly as if they were on the stage themselves. . . . It does not mean that one party sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of the other, but simply that the other's interests are also his."

If we want to intentionally build re-

lationships, it will require face-to-face interaction often enough and long enough to develop a trusting, open relationship in which we know and accept the prospect. When we really understand that bridge building is that demanding, we will understand more easily why most converts come to Christ and His Church through existing networks of faith.

Some practical suggestions may be helpful for those pastors who want to become more intentional about building relationships:

1. *Identify all prospects.* To accomplish this, make a file of prospects. This file will include a record, such as a 3" x 5" card, for each per-

son who is on the fringes of the congregation, who has not really become incorporated into the church family. The card should include space for notes regarding their incorporation needs and visits or activities to meet the needs.

There are many potential sources for prospect names. These might include Sunday School class records, guests in recent services or special events, names from the pastor, VBS records, NWMS membership records, neighborhood canvass results, new arrivals in town, or inactive members. From those lists make a record card for each person/family who is not already involved in

HOW IMPORTANT IS INCORPORATION?

by Bill M. Sullivan

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One of the most important tasks in process evangelism is social incorporation. Research reveals that most people come to a church because of a relative or friend who already attends. Most Christians have intuitively understood this. That is why we have proverbial concepts like, "You have to win a person to yourself before you can win him to Christ."

But functionally the task has been difficult. For one thing, most people are timid about initiating friendships. Lack of time to develop friendships is also a factor, but probably the biggest impediment has been the lack of intentionality in the church's program.

We have assumed that, given time, people will form friendships. Unfortunately, that is not true in most instances. Given time, people tend to drift away from rather than become incorporated into the social fellowship of the church. Two out of three people who join the church eventually leave it. Who knows what

the ratio is in relationship to visitors!

Involved in this breakdown is an oversight. Social incorporation must occur as early as possible if people are to be won to the Lord and kept in the church. Win Arn's research indicates that the retention rate of new converts is directly related to the number of friends the person had in the congregation before conversion. Although we have understood the importance of friendship in the church, we have overlooked the importance of its occurring as early in the relationship as it needs to occur.

Obviously, what is needed is intentionality, expressed in a structured program of social incorporation beginning immediately following contact with a new prospect. Many churches, perhaps most churches, have made an effort at this some time in their pasts. But for one reason or another, it does not seem to have continued very long. Having one or two church couples prepared each Sunday to invite a visiting family for dinner is a difficult

a strong social network within the church.


2. *Recruit volunteers*, if they are not already in place, who will take responsibility for making prospects feel welcome and a part of the group. You might recruit families who will invite visitors to their home for a meal and/or fellowship, people who are willing to make friendly visits to get better acquainted with prospects, and people who will make prospects know they are welcome at the church. There are many possibilities. Look at the ways God has been using your people, and at the needs of your prospects as you decide what is needed.

3. *Monitor the progress of each prospect*, asking such questions as, "Have the Smiths been invited to the Browns' home yet?" Make certain that no one is being left without fellowship.

4. *Add information to prospect cards* concerning the results of incorporation efforts each week. Make assignments to hospitality volunteers. Make church groups and planners aware of prospects' needs and concerns.

5. *Seek out the lonely*. In all congregations, some people seem to be sought out by many people while others seem rarely, or never, to be included. The people who tend to be

left out need the special attention of the incorporation workers. Identify them and find ways to incorporate them more effectively, to make certain they are included as a vital part of the group.

Incorporation is vital to the retention of members. If we want our people to be involved, committed members, we need to do all we can to make our church "user-friendly." Our fellowships have to become places "where everybody knows your name." 

NOTE

1. "Theme from 'Cheers' (Where Everybody Knows Your Name)," by Gary Portnoy and Judy Hart Angelo, © 1982, Addax Music Co., Inc. Used by permission.

program to keep going. Add to that the reluctance of visitors to go to the homes of strangers, and you have the ingredients for failure. But we cannot afford to give up on a task so important to evangelism.

At this point, several thoughts are worthy of consideration. First, accept the critical importance of social incorporation in the process of winning new people to Christ. It may not be as important as prayer or the work of the Holy Spirit, but it follows very closely.

Second, develop or reactivate a structured program of social incorporation. Perhaps the most critical aspect of this is a person who is good at detail and also prompt in doing the work. The assignment should be to process every visitor card or name on the prospect list. A file, a book, a page, or a computer disk of new contacts should be kept up to date. The incorporation secretary should be responsible for assigning all prospects to participants in the church who will perform the


task of incorporation. If the pastor prefers to make the assignments, he should charge the secretary with the task of reminding him so that the work does not go undone in the midst of his busy schedule and frequent interruptions.

Third, involve your most outgoing and winsome people in the program of incorporation. There is probably nothing else in the church that so desperately needs their abilities. Free them from some other responsibilities, if necessary, to involve them in the essential task of incorporation.

Fourth, the goal should be to acquaint each new prospect with at least five people in the fellowship. These should be more than just speaking acquaintances. They should be close enough that the new person feels comfortable in carrying on conversations with church people. Even better would be the prospect of developing friendships. Remember, people aren't looking for

a friendly church—they are looking for a friend.

Fifth, the system should provide for transferring the prospects from group to group and stage to stage as progress dictates. If a particular prospect does not really fit with the assigned sponsors, be sure that the system provides for quickly changing them to another sponsor or group. Also, when a prospect is making progress in the incorporation process, be sure there is a way of getting him involved in other church activities. At the right time, an evangelism call should be made in their home, or an effort be made to ensure their attendance at revival services.

Introduce intentionality into efforts to socially incorporate new prospects into the church fellowship. Devise a structure that provides for the functions to occur automatically and consistently. Incorporation is critical to evangelism. Make a firm and continuing commitment to it. 

MINISTERING TO POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

John's announcement dropped on me like a bomb. "Pastor, Nancy and I have decided to leave the church."

I was in shock. I admired him for his courage to tell me face-to-face, but I had no idea this was coming. Immediately I began to fight feelings of anger, frustration, and discouragement.

John and Nancy were young and attractive, hardworking and fun loving, and I appreciated their work for the church. He was a member of the board, chairman of the Evangelism and Growth Committee, and a volunteer youth worker. She was active in our sanctuary choir and special musical ensembles, a member of

the Board of Christian Life, and helped him with the youth. Three months earlier, they had opened their home for a young adult Bible study. It had appeared they were growing in the Lord and enjoyed the church.

"John, why? What has happened?" Because this came as a complete surprise to me, I immediately began to probe with questions. If there was any way to redeem the situation, I was willing to do it. "Have I offended you in some way?" I was desperately searching for an answer to this mystery.

"No, Pastor," he said, "Nancy and I like you; we voted for you. We like your preaching, and we have grown under your ministry; but," and he paused for a moment, "this church just isn't meeting our needs. You see," he continued, "we decided if the young adult Bible study didn't work out, we were going some-

Continued on p. 10



by
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THE CASE OF JO DROPOUT:

One Person's Heartbreak

The subject of this case study is a married Anglo female in her mid-30s. Three years ago, she severed all ties with the Church of the Nazarene, of which she had been a member since age 12 and an attender since birth.

She is the middle child born to Nazarene parents who are still living.

Having received her B.S. degree from a Nazarene college, she pursued graduate studies, earning her master's degree and Ph.D. from a major midwestern university. She currently maintains a counseling practice in a suburban setting. Her husband, the oldest child and only son of four children, was reared in

the Church of the Nazarene and followed a similar educational track, receiving an A.B. degree from a Nazarene college and his Ph.D. from a state university.

For the purpose of this paper, the subject in this case study will be identified as "Jo." Jo was quite willing to talk to me about why she dropped out, even though it took her over 30 typed pages to tell "her story."

CHURCH BACKGROUND

Jo can never remember not going to the Church of the Nazarene as a child. Along with her siblings and parents, Jo attended services on Wednesday and twice on Sunday, assuming that it was the only decent and Christian thing to do.

Her recollections of the church are not flattering. Sunday School teachers tended to be older, stern, and judgmental types, while the church leaders were clearly held in suspicion by the city in which she lived.

She wrote:

There always seemed to be considerable conflict among the members of the church. Even as a young girl, I sensed that our church consisted of people who were social misfits.

While at school, Jo enjoyed acceptance and popularity, being elected homecoming queen and receiving several other honors, including membership in the National Honor Society. The story wasn't quite the same at church. There she was linked in oppressive ways with the pastor's son, who, regrettably, was mentally deficient. Because of the pastor's denial, she was made to feel less than Christian for not wanting to date the boy, something she did "just once" before realizing there

Continued on p. 11



by
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Potential Dropouts *Continued from p. 8*

where else." I practically begged John to give it another chance, but his mind was made up: He and Nancy were leaving.

At some point in his career, every pastor will confront the frustration of members who are considering leaving the church body. We call these persons "potential dropouts." While at times it may come as a total surprise, most pastors can intervene and salvage such members. From my experience I have gleaned five principles that are effective in ministering to those on the brink of leaving the church.

The first principle in ministering to potential dropouts is **BE A GOOD LISTENER**. James 1:19 says, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak" (NIV). This doesn't mean concentrating on what is said so much as how it is said—discerning the secret messages people couch in their conversations and actions. This may appear to be a Herculean task, but we can master this skill. By asking the right questions and listening closely to the responses, we can move quickly to the kernel of the issue. For example, someone might say, "I can't teach; I want to give up my Sunday School class." This person may not really wish to abandon his class but is bewildered or no longer challenged with the age-group he is teaching. Your response could be, "I sense you're frustrated; let's talk about it." Your reply must first express concern for the individual. You can deal with the Sunday School class later if it is, in fact, the real problem. A good listener will listen with his eyes and feelings as well as with his ears.

The second principle is **CLARIFY CONFUSED THINKING**. Our society's social values have become complex. This has affected the Christian's value judgments. While some choices have a distinct delin-

eation for decision, others are nebulous. Without unambiguous teaching it will be difficult for other people to discriminate between spiritual and earthly matters. When I began to piece together the puzzle for John's desire to leave the church, I realized part of the problem rested with his work ethic. In his weekday world, John was an aggressive, successful salesman. However, he had transferred his success in that arena into the context of the church. He wanted to succeed as a layman in the church to the same degree that he had as a salesman in the business world.

John was young, athletic, and aggressive. Because of this, he naturally expected the young people to be responsive. When they did not respond to him as he expected, he became disenchanted with the young people's program. Next, turning his energies toward the leadership of the evangelism committee, he ran into resistance to his ideas. He faced difficulty motivating volunteers. Finally, he took on hosting the young adult Bible studies. While it was making progress, it was a slow beginning. John, however, felt things were sagging and the people were not interested. In his mind, it was "three strikes and you're out." He needed to understand that spiritual success is not measured in the same way success in the business world is measured. Care needs to be taken in helping our people realize that commitment to Christ and the church is a priority and a life attitude. It has its own rules and guide for success, the Bible. When "the Book" is read, studied, and understood, confusing issues become more clear.

The third principle is **AVOID OVERTAXING THE VOLUNTEER**. Churches desperately need workers. However, many good people


drop out because of commitment overload and burnout. A pastor can avoid this trap with adequate training programs and careful monitoring of his workers' progress and concerns. Remember, however, success-driven people, like John, are eager to serve the Lord through the church. They need recognition and reward. Although it need not be elaborate, public recognition and private reinforcement can effectively stave off a potential dropout who thinks himself unappreciated and overworked. It is amazing how a small personalized note of gratitude can revive the sagging spirit of a tired Sunday School teacher or missionary council president. A good maxim to remember is: Give them enough work to be challenged, train them to succeed, encourage and reward them, but do not exhaust them.

The next principle is **EARLY DETECTION AND CURE**. Like most pastors, I learned to detect the early warning signs of a potential dropout. It generally began with irregular attendance and/or avoidance of me. For example, a person wouldn't shake my hand, or I would sense a coolness in our relationship. When I perceived these behaviors, I knew I needed to make a call to investigate and confront the problem. It would be an awkward situation; but while I was not asked, I was generally expected to come and resolve the imagined or real conflict.

John Savage has discovered that dropouts have had some "anxiety producing event" that has been "triggered by personal relationships with the pastor, another church member, or a member of the family, in that order."¹ If we neglect making contact, thinking they will just get over their hurt feelings, we need not be too surprised if they start dropping out of our services. Savage has

pointed out those who have dropped out "consciously or unconsciously give the local congregation only six to eight weeks, once they have dropped out, to call on them."² When we fail to look after those who appear to be dropping out, we only reinforce their feeling that no one misses them or even cares. Remember, the sooner you contact them for an appointment, the better.

Finally, when dealing with potential dropouts, **BE SURE YOU HAVE WORKED THROUGH YOUR OWN PREJUDICES AND PRECONCEIVED IDEAS** about the individual and/or the situation you are about to discuss. You cannot call every problem spiritual or every upset church member carnal. Respect the other's viewpoint. If they are wrong, lead them in love to the truth. Furthermore, remember how you act and how you say what is said carries a stronger message than your words. The tone of our voice will deliver 33 percent of the message, while 55 percent will be communicated with our nonverbal body language.³

People usually build strong relationships and memories around the church's rituals, ceremonies, services, and fellowships. Just *considering* a decision to leave the church one has put life and soul into for any period of time does not come easily. Sometimes it is a corporate decision made around the family dining room table. Sometimes it is a private spousal decision dictated to the family. At times the decision is cloaked in mystery and disguise, part of a family's hidden agenda for an extended vacation. However, in a majority of cases, signs and signals for help are given by the potential dropout. Not every situation is salvageable. Given your best efforts, some people will leave regardless of what you do or say. But when you do recognize the signs of a potential dropout, the insights listed above may help you keep them in. 

NOTES

1. Royal W. Natzke, "The Gift of Exhortation and Ministry to Inactives," *Evangelism* 2, no. 3 (May 1988): 97-114.

2. *Ibid.*, 102.

3. *Ibid.*, 104.

Jo Dropout Continued from p. 9

are some things worse than manipulation and guilt.

During her college years, Jo continued to be well received. She faithfully attended services at "college church," though starting to feel some disdain for a "camp meeting" environment. She participated in Student Mission Corps and was actively involved in student government.

At age 22, Jo moved to an unfamiliar city for a job opportunity. Without much thought, she attended the city's only Nazarene church, where the pastor was "pretty dull and pretty dumb, but relatively harmless." That passage was short-lived, since the pastor resigned weeks after her arrival. His replacement was "less dumb, but decidedly more harmful."

He preached sin and damnation every Sunday. My senior high Sunday School students were running to the altar every Sunday night. I, too, was riddled with guilt, mostly from my negative feelings toward the pastor.

I did the only thing I could do in a city with one Nazarene church. I left.

TWO YEARS OUT

Jo found help in the Mennonite church. "There," she said, "I grew, breaking the sin/guilt/saved cycle." Unfortunately for Jo, her newfound freedom didn't last, because of her decision to marry a "solid" Nazarene.

With marriage came a move to a major city. With that came several choices, most of which were "dismal." Her husband insisted they attend a Nazarene church, and they did. When he matter-of-factly announced that they were going to transfer their membership to the church they chose to attend, Jo objected, inducing his rage. Knowing

that her decision was final, Jo's husband called the pastor and explained Jo's difficulty while confessing his own embarrassment.

Though not members, Jo became involved, teaching classes, serving on the Women's Ministries Council, a "second-class slot, sorta like the NWMS president." Her husband sang in the choir and met with the pastor for breakfast on a weekly basis. In time they did join the church, and Jo was elected to the board. Now she was definitely part of the "inner circle" and a key decision-maker.

All the while Jo and her husband attended "First Church," Jo was in graduate school and unable to attend all of the church services, much to her husband's and her in-laws' dismay. "The more I felt their disapproval, the less connected I felt with the church." In time, she resigned her Sunday School post and wanted to simply attend Sunday School with her peers.

I was disappointed to discover that I couldn't connect. There were no other educated women. Oh, there were lots of professional women who were wives of some high-muck-a-muck, but no women with whom I could have serious conversations. The pastor didn't help the matter. He and his submissive wife were heavy into marriage enrichment, much to my amusement. He was domineering, and she cowered at his command, saying all the right things that I'm convinced weren't right at all.

That whole scenario reinforced her husband's view that men are "controllers" and women are "controlled." The more Jo resisted the model, the more angry her husband became, believing Jo to be "backsliding." Still, he attempted to maintain the "Mr. Perfect" image at

Continued on p. 58





WHAT HAPPENS TO NAZARENE COLLEGE ALUMNI WHO “MAKE IT” FINANCIALLY?

Those who watch patterns of church growth and change in America recognize that personal income and social opportunity bear a direct relationship to denominational affiliation.

For a variety of reasons, changes in personal status and expectations often result in losses or gains in the denomination's membership.

In this respect, the Church of the Nazarene may be no exception. There is increasing evidence that these social changes may be challenging the growth and maintenance of lay leadership within the denomination.

Information arising from interviews with alumni of Southern Nazarene University (formerly Bethany Nazarene College) during the years 1983-85 led to some surprising findings. Officials there found that, among alumni with incomes of \$60,000 or more a year, only 39 percent were then members of the Church of the Nazarene. A surprising 47 percent were *former* Nazarenes. An additional 14 percent had never been members of the de-

nomination. This suggested that at least 61 percent of SNU's most affluent alumni were no longer in a position to be easily ministered to, or communicated with, by the church.

That these findings arose from the alumni pool of a college representing what generally has been thought of by the church as a “conservative” educational region may suggest that such loss to the denomination is more or less a national phenomenon typical of all of our colleges and universities. If so, the cost in resources and leadership may be significant. Southern Nazarene University is a strong representative institution of the Church of the Nazarene. Its history of support for church positions and programs over the years has been impeccable, and its academic record impressive.

Indeed, there is nothing within the college experience of its students

that differs significantly from that of any other Nazarene campus. Over 92 percent of the alumni sample interviewed testified to having a personal commitment to Jesus Christ—hardly a shabby showing of the remarkable success that the college has had over the years in communicating the gospel in an academic setting.

Therefore it is reasonable to suspect that the nearly 50 percent loss to church membership among these affluent alumni is due to factors that the church has not yet adequately researched. Where do these persons go? Why did they leave? Are there factors of personal growth and change that interact with the characteristics of an increasingly mobile society to create a great willingness to try alternatives? What can the church do to address the problem?

Our information surfaced through a fund-raising effort to address certain college construction and programmatic needs. Unlike previous campaigns at SNU, the focus of this thrust was unique—one addressed to many potential donor groups pre-

viously unsolicited. The plan included metropolitan area businesses, regional corporations, special larger-income friends, foundations, and college alumni. In this effort, alumni were to play a significant role in moving the college forward.

Preparatory activities yielded over 14,000 alumni names. Distributed from coast to coast, our alumni clearly represented our largest donor potential. But we had little data available on their interests, occupations, or capabilities. To fill this gap in our data, comprehensive questionnaires were sent to all former students, requesting selected items of personal information. An unexpected response rate of over 58 percent yielded personal data on over 8,000 persons.

Although all alumni were to be a part of the campaign, special attention would be focused on those who clearly had the capability of enabling the college to reach its \$3.5 million goal. In cases where substantial support was probable, personal visits would be made to explain more specifically how a person might financially assist in the college mission. Therefore, our findings only reflect responses from a donor pool of persons annually earning \$60,000 or more. (Nationally, we knew that persons seldom commit more than 10-12 percent of their net incomes to charitable causes. For a gift of \$10,000, a donor probably would need to be in the \$100,000-120,000 annual income range.)

An analysis of our alumni's stated income and their degree of satisfaction with the college led to the selection of 200 persons to be visited at their homes or places of business. Each person or couple would be personally asked to make a gift as an "alumni leader." Visits were designed to build friendships, alumni commitments, and personal bridges of understanding and trust.

Hunger for Contact

During the course of the cam-

paign it became apparent to our personnel that the alumni were somewhat indifferent to the needs of the college. With the exception of infrequent visits in connection with expected church-college functions, college administrative personnel seldom, if ever, visited former students either at their homes or their workplaces. If alumni were no longer in Nazarene churches, or if they did not take personal initiative to visit the college themselves, they simply faded from view. The result was that the college lost contact.

This loss of contact was exacerbated by the financial inability of the college to fund the frequent travel necessary to maintain personal contacts. As is typical in many private colleges, budgets were tight, and significant appropriations for activities that might appear long-term in their benefits were seldom available. The campaign therefore offered a unique chance to address this issue and begin to cultivate nationwide friendship networks for the school.

It is important to note here that the history of funding the Church of the Nazarene's colleges basically has been a collective action by local churches. Strong personal involvement in building and improving one's college has not been an expected behavior. Philanthropy, such as is found in older, more elitist schools, has not been a group expectation of the social and economic groups that traditionally have been the strength of the denomination. The origins of the church were primarily working class, and although more recently the church has become somewhat middle income, our more affluent members today still do not exhibit a group sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of their colleges.

Therefore, it seemed that an effective alumni strategy needed to address effectively two contextual situations: the widespread view that "the church" will take care of the

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"real financial needs," and a distinct absence of a sense of personal philanthropic responsibility for the college by former students maintaining little or no systematic contact with the school.

Early visitation of "targeted" alumni began to reveal some surprising and somewhat consistent information. Responses to casual and friendly questions about personal religious life, church affiliation, and college experiences began to become more and more predictable. Information valuable to the denomination and its future was being communicated. We were increasingly encountering alumni who had affiliated with another church body after years of being Nazarene. What was happening?

At this point, lest it be felt that we inadvertently could have selected persons most likely to have left the church, or that we might have introduced bias into the responses through our procedures, we admit

to recognizing that as a possibility. From the beginning, our intention was never to undertake a systematic, rigorous study of alumni attitudes. Our mandate was to conduct a capital campaign. The information arose from this effort.

It was only during the process of visitation that consistent similar responses began surfacing. Shortly into our efforts we realized that we needed to systematize our procedures to continue to gain consistent information while reducing the chance of bias, or inadvertently influencing the responses of our alumni donors. We initiated a consistent and routine approach: In conversation, to casually inquire about the person's church home—where they attended, why they attended that church, and other related questions. At the conclusion of our visits, we recorded by dictaphone or note pad the responses to these questions casually inserted into the conversation. Insofar as possible, we took care not to prejudice the responses. We were, after all, official representatives of a Nazarene college. In that capacity we were, and were expected to be, representatives of the church.

We found, however, that when the question of church affiliation was raised, responses were sometimes guarded or noncommittal. On occasion there was an evident awkwardness, during which time the person apparently tried to determine what we should hear. The fact that we were laymen often surprised the respondents. We were assumed to be members of the clergy. Many thought that clergymen were the only persons who become presidents or vice presidents. Significant involvement of laymen in college leadership appeared to be totally unexpected. Our lay status even seem



To make judgments based on church affiliation could have destroyed the bridges of friendship we were building.

ed to be an advantage and may have fostered a warmer, more candid relationship.

Conversation was informal and friendly. Questions were made unobtrusively and casually, and in the normal process of friendly discourse. At some point we asked: "What church do you go to?" "Did you ever attend a Nazarene church [if the person was obviously not Nazarene]?" and, "Were you a member?" "If so, how long ago?" "How did you happen to find the church that you now attend?" and (if formerly a member), "Why did you change?" Finally, "How do you now feel about the college [or, your college experience]?"

We deliberately tried to make no judgments on a person's church affiliation and/or membership. To do so would have biased the person's responses, possibly destroying the bridges of friendship that we were building. We affirmed persons who were Nazarenes in their identity; those who had changed denominations were asked where they were attending and how they happened to be at the churches where they were worshipping. We also asked of them the factors that led them to their present church homes.

What the Alumni Told Us

Nearly all persons interviewed professed to be Christians. We were not dealing with the spiritually disaffected. A clear majority were reasonably satisfied with their college experience. Of 200 persons originally selected, 189 were actually visited, and 99 became donors to the campaign.

How then are we to account for the 47 percent of the group who had formerly been members of the church? Where were they now? Thirty of them, or 34 percent, had become Methodists; 16 percent Presbyterian; 12 percent Baptists; 12 percent attended independent or Bible churches; 3 percent Roman Catholic; and one person each was in the Church of God, Wesleyan Church, Evangelical Free church, and the Greek Orthodox church. Of the three who had become Roman Catholics, one changed through marriage; one returned to the church after having left it; and one converted from Nazarene to Roman Catholic. Seventeen, or 19 percent, were either unwilling to specify a particular church or simply did not identify one during the course of conversation. Only four persons ad-

mitted to "being distant from the Lord" at the time of the visits.

At this juncture, one might reasonably question if these persons were representative of SNU's entire alumni. They were obviously somewhat atypical in income and life opportunity. However, a more recent mail survey (1986-87) by SNU's alumni office, this time of the *entire* alumni group, points to a lesser, but still significant, degree of loss. With a return of 3,247 from a mailed survey of 16,191, 909 (28 percent) identified themselves as former Nazarenes. Interestingly, the average length of time between graduation and a denominational change was 12.7 years. Apparently the college experience had little directly to do with these changes.

In this latest analysis, 41 percent of the 909 identified as having changed denominations had affiliated with independent, Bible, or nondenominational bodies. Twenty-four percent were Baptists; 18 percent were Methodists; 9 percent were Presbyterians; and 8 percent were found in a variety of other denominations. Finally, 2,272, or 72 percent, identified themselves as Nazarenes, most presently active in a local church.

Reasons for Leaving

What are we to make of these figures? What are the implications for church policy? Obviously our findings do not provide answers to these questions. However, conversations during the visits with alumni did provide some significant indications of concerns needing systematic and comprehensive investigation. The following are perceptions. They are not necessarily true of the institution but were *perceived* as true by the respondents. Three most often surfaced:



Seventy-two percent identified themselves as Nazarenes, most presently active in a local church.

By far, the greatest number of former Nazarenes (50-55 percent) cited "legalism" or "rules and regulations" as a cause for personal dissatisfaction and a reason for their change. Included here was a perception that the denomination had difficulty with laymen "who question or think," or "have differing opinions."

Another frequently given reason was a person's perception of a lack of "spiritual food" or "Bible preaching" in the church they had attended prior to changing. What this actually meant was sometimes uncertain, but in each case it indicated a dissatisfaction with obtaining the depth of

teaching they saw themselves as needing for their own spiritual journeys. At this point there seemed to be much discontent with a perceived emphasis on "doctrinal" preaching as opposed to what the respondents felt was "biblical" teaching. To be fair here, it is important to note that these points were seldom well articulated but nevertheless cropped up with enough frequency to be cited.

A third reason given was a "lack of fit" between a church member who had moved to a new town and the local church that he found there. In these instances, a church in another denomination was deemed more like "my church back home." Doctrinal issues did not seem to perceptibly play a part in this decision.

These and other reasons for leaving continually surfaced. Whether these reflect the "real reasons" for such attrition remains to be researched and studied further. The latter reason is probably inevitable in our mobile and increasingly pluralistic society. People have an ever-expanding number of choices in all areas of life, and some will inevitably choose church alternatives. But this very fact may make it even more important that the first two are addressed. Certainly there are real reasons why church organizations slow in their growth over time.

The Church of the Nazarene is now only a moderately young organization. Its success has been significant, and today it bears little resemblance to the struggling organization of earlier generations. But its relative growth has plateaued, and past successes should not blind any of us to the need for a solid and on-going Spirit-filled analysis of the institution. Our commitment to Christ and the Great Commission demands it.





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INDIVIDUALISM vs. COMMITMENT IN OUR CHURCHES

Three years ago, sociologist Robert Bellah and his colleagues wrote a book that inspired social commentators to reflect on the peculiar qualities of American life.¹

Bellah claims that an underlying tension has existed throughout our history between our "rugged individualism" of the American character and our commitment to social groups.

There is some reason to believe that this tension has increased over the last 30 years. Changes in marriage and family patterns, political activities, and business ethics make it appear that modern social life is less committed than that of the late 1950s.

Recently, sociologists who study

religion have discovered that this change in commitment has affected religious commitment as well. The tension between individual freedom and commitment to the religious group is a theme in recent works titled *American Evangelicalism*² and *American Mainline Religion*.³

These larger changes in American religion have direct implications for trying to solve the puzzle of why church members quit. If commitment to groups is declining in modern society, then religion can become simply a personal option, an expression of individual choice. Looking from the opposite viewpoint, leaving the church is also an expression of individual choice. The motto of the "modern" churchgoer may be "What's in it for me?" As long as the individual feels good and satisfied, he will stay at the church. But let things get rough (because of building programs, preaching on the

ethical implications of holiness, or calls to service), and the individual will begin to find someplace where the "return on investment" is higher.

Sociological Research on Member Attrition

Sociological research on why people leave church and what they are like shows that individualism challenges our normal assumption about congregations and how they work. Two specific pieces of work may be helpful in helping us determine how to respond to this situation.

*David Roozen Studies Dropouts.*⁴ Hartford Seminary sociologist David Roozen studied data from the Gallup polls to understand patterns of dropout and reentry. Roozen claims:

Most studies of religious disengagement and disaffiliation stop at the point of defection, leaving the impression that disengagement represents a permanent state. Such an impression is heightened by the lack of any substantive body of research on the "rechurched" of church dropouts (p. 431).

In his study, Roozen discovered



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that most "dropping out" occurs during the teen years. He provides some evidence as to why people drop out. The most common reasons are personal life experiences and the irrelevance of religion. Somewhat less common are maturation and intrachurch conflict. Roozen finds that teens are more likely to mention maturation and irrelevance as causes of dropping out. But older populations seem to focus instead on personal contextual factors (changes in work schedule, health, family).

Surprisingly, Roozen found that over half of the dropouts returned to active participation in the congregation. The majority of returnees reentered the church between the ages of 20 and 34, suggesting that family changes (i.e., birth and education of children) may be important.

Roozen makes three general conclusions. First, dropping out is a fairly common activity. Second, contrary to our common assumptions, church discord does not seem to be an important factor in causing people to leave. Third, the rate of return is such that there are only minimal losses to the religious organization over the long term.

*Reginald Bibby Studies Inactive Anglicans in Canada.*⁵ A more recent examination of people who have dropped out comes from the Project Canada research, conducted primarily by Reginald Bibby of the University of Lethbridge. In a presentation to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Bibby reported on a study of inactive Anglicans from the Toronto diocese. Bibby claims that we have caused unnecessary alarm with the confusion of infrequent attendance with religious defection. He says that what has happened is not a decline in religion but a change in religious image from that of religious commitment (which has the group as its focus) to religious consumption (which has the individual as its focus). He calls this "religion à la carte."

While the inactive Anglicans have significantly lower attendance rates, they still maintain fairly orthodox positions. The majority of these inactives hold traditional doctrinal positions, and over half of them report themselves to be "committed Christians." What is especially sur-

prising is that a high percentage (77%) of Anglican inactives think that it is either "very important" or "somewhat important" for them to be Anglican. Inactive Anglicans show nearly identical patterns to active Anglicans in terms of attitudes and values and report having a considerable number of friends who are still within the Anglican church.

For the inactives, the church plays an important role as the mediator of rites of passage. Bibby reports:

It is highly significant that there is *no less anticipation by inactives* than actives of the need for such church services. These past experiences and future expectations make the conclusion inescapable: for many Anglicans, especially the numerically dominant inactives, the Church is expected to play largely a *service role*. . . [This] "right to rites" may be largely a struggle for *consumption without commitment* (p. 11, Bibby's italics).

Bibby claims that, in spite of their lessened commitment, these people maintain strong ties to the Anglican tradition. He claims that "contrary to popular belief, they are not 'lost' to the church. The truth of the matter is that they literally would be hard to lose" (p. 12).

Responding to the Challenge

Both pieces of research summarized here suggest that people leave the church because of individual factors and may return for the same reasons. This "consumerism," as Bibby refers to it, calls for some specific responses from the congregation, particularly from the pastor.

Effective response to the problem of consumerism must take place on three fronts. First, community needs to be built within the local congregation. Second, it needs to be easy for people to return to the church. Third, the church needs to take a lead role in carrying the banner of commitment to society at large.

Building Community in the Congregation. In order to combat consumerism, community needs to be developed within the congregation. As individuals become involved in a congregation with a sense of community to it, the individual decision to leave the church becomes more difficult. To leave means more than

simply lessening or stopping attendance, it means breaking significant bonds with others in the congregation. Community is also established as the individual sees himself as part of a group that has existed across many years rather than seeing himself as an isolated participant.

The pastor can play a key role in nurturing this community. This is much more than simply declaring the church "the friendly church" or by sponsoring church socials. The pastor can create a sense of bonding to and with the congregation through a tight combination of preaching and acting. To preach about caring about your neighbor without becoming involved in his life will not do. As the pastor becomes involved in the quiet, personal life of the individual, the community begins to infiltrate the individual: The two become one. Leaving a congregation where this has happened can only be done at great psychological loss. It is hard to quit a church where community has infiltrated the individual.


Allowing Inactives to Return. If Bibby and Roozen are correct, people will return to the church when it is in their individual interests to do so. This is likely to happen after their children reach Sunday School age or when there is the need for a sacrament or a wedding or a funeral. If the congregation can be responsive to their needs without being either punitive or condescending, these ritual occasions could provide the dropout with a socially acceptable excuse to return. In the absence of a shared group excuse, returning is only done at great social and psychological risk to the dropout.

Again, the pastor can play a significant role in assisting the inactive's return. This is done by welcoming the person back to the church, without reference to the length of time between visits. If the pastor is willing to accept the individual's "excuse" (e.g., "I wanted my children in Sunday School"), the reentry will be made easier. The pastor also needs to encourage the rest of the congregation to accept the returning individual into the community without assigning a "second-class" status.

Carrying the Banner of Commit-

ment. The church is in a prime position to combat the larger social threats of individualism that Bellah and colleagues wrote about. Society already has certain expectations of religious organizations. They are supposed to be different. It is in the church where people gather together and reinforce values of commitment: to family, to the needy, to country.

In the same way, pastors are seen as the leaders of community morality. Many ministers have discovered the power of this role in terms of combating pornography or supporting certain political positions. If the pastor could broaden his vision to encourage increased commitment within all sectors of the community, it could be quite effective. People will not tolerate such talk from politicians or businessmen, but they will accept it from a pastor.

Finally, pastors can have an impact in increasing commitment, both within their churches and in society at large, only if they are willing to be committed themselves. Their decisions should be guided by principles larger than those of self-interest. As pastors can communicate their commitment to Christ and His Body, others will follow. 

NOTES

1. Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985).

2. James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983).

3. Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

4. David A. Roozen, "Church Dropouts: Changing Patterns of Disengagement and Re-Entry," in Hoge and Roozen, eds., *The Unchurched American: A Second Look*, supplement, *Review of Religious Research* 21 (1980): 427-50.

5. Reginald Bibby, "Religion à la Carte in Canada: Contemporary Mainline Religion Anglican-Style," presented at the annual meeting of The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Washington, D.C., 1986.

An important part of the pastor's job description is to model the triumph of commitment over self-interest.





SLIPPING OUT THE BACK DOOR

An Examination of Who May Leave the Denomination

It is the first Sunday in March, another "typical" Sunday morning. The pastor is the first to arrive at church, quickly making sure that all the "typical" things are done:

The heat is turned up to a comfortable level, all the Sunday School materials and the morning bulletins are put in the "typical" places for distribution. As the people begin arriving, the "typical" Sunday problems occur: There are not enough chairs in the primary room, they need more paper towels in the men's room, Mrs. Jones' junior class needs a substitute, and a burned-out light bulb in the sanctuary needs to be replaced. It's just another "typical" Sunday.

As the morning worship service

begins and the first "typical" hymn is sung, the pastor notices something very *untypical*: The Smiths are not in the service. A terrible feeling comes over the pastor as he stands on the platform that morning. It is the kind of feeling that is hard to describe, but one that all pastors recognize. It is that feeling that a pastor gets when he just "knows" that a family is in the process of leaving the church, and there is little that he will be able to do to change their minds.

This feeling is one of the pastor's occupational hazards. Although there may be some relief in knowing that the Smiths have begun attending another church, it still means the death of important relationships: relationships between pastor and parishioner, and between parishioners. These broken relationships do affect everyone in the congregation and often require quite some time for healing.

The problem with this scenario is that it is too typical of a situation that is happening in all congregations across the denomination. For every 10 members our church receives, over 5 members "slip out the back door."

Although the church has seen some good growth, this problem of "slipping out the back door" still remains. This phenomenon raises several questions. Why do people leave the denomination? Who are these people? Who are most likely to follow? Is there anything the church can do to keep people from leaving?

Several studies of other denominations have addressed similar issues and have offered some insights. Savage (1976) suggests that church dropouts are attributed basically to psychological reasons (church discord, unaccepted, unloved, or unwanted). Research (United Presbyterian Committee 1976; Hale 1977) suggests that some people drop out for personal contextual reasons (changes in work schedule, health, family changes) or for lack of meaning in church programs or services. Addi-



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tional research on college students suggests that students often leave religious institutions as a rejection of traditional religious background and a discovery of new life-style orientations (Wuthnow and Mellinger 1978; Caplovity and Sherrow 1977; Astin 1977). However, there is also good news. Roozen (1980) discovered that of the church members who dropped out of church, most eventually return.

As past research has focused on *why* people drop out of church, another question still lingers: Do these people who leave the church have any common characteristics? Are they young or old, highly educated or poorly educated, rich or poor? Why is it that some people remain loyal to the church while others never develop an attachment to it and are ready to leave for any "viable" reason?

Assuming that those members who are loyal to their congregations and denominations will be the *last* to leave the church and those members who are *not* very loyal to their congregations and denominations will be the *first* to leave the church, a sample of Nazarene church members was obtained. This study was used to see if there were any common characteristics among those members who don't put much importance on being a member of the Church of the Nazarene. This sample included 12 Nazarene congregations located in various areas of the United States, and was collected in the summer of 1985. There were 1,190 questionnaires mailed, and 713 usable questionnaires were returned (60%).

Several variables (characteristics) were explored to determine if any of them were related to the importance one placed upon membership in his church. These 11 characteristics were: (1) the number of years as a member in the Church of the Nazarene; (2) how often they attended the church services; (3) how often they practiced private devotions; (4) how often they testified or witnessed; (5) how socially active they were in the church; (6) how far they

lived away from the church; (7) if they were sanctified; (8) gender; (9) age; (10) highest level of education; and, (11) total family income. Each of these variables and how they were formed is found in Table 1 (see page 63). Some of the variables were formed by just one question, while others were formed by three or four questions ("scaling"). A value (number) was assigned to each variable. For example, if a respondent said that it was very important to him to be a Nazarene, a member of his own congregation, and wanted his children to stay in the Church of the Nazarene, that person would receive a high score. Likewise, a person who responded that those were of no importance to him, received a low score. Scores could range from 3 to 15.

Table 2 (see page 63) presents all possible combinations of the variables mentioned above. The numbers are called "Pearson Correlation Coefficients." These correlations show how much the variables are related. Correlations go from a 0.00 to 1.00 (or -1.00). The larger the number, the stronger the relationship. The closer the number is to zero, the weaker the relationship. Pearson correlations also can have positive or negative numbers. A positive number indicates that the relationship goes the same direction—that is, as one variable increases, so does the other variable, or as one variable decreases, so does the other. A negative number indicates that the relationship goes in the opposite direction—that is, as one variable increases, the other variable decreases.

As an example, in Table 2, the variables are listed in the first column. The numbers on the top of the table correspond to the list of variables on the left side. This is to eliminate the need to list all the variables across the top of the page. Look under column 1 (which stands for years of membership) and go down two rows to the second row, where it says "Attendance at Services." The Pearson correlation for these two variables is .14^c. Since this cor-

relation is positive, it means that as the length of membership increases, the more likely one attends church services more frequently. The little superscript *c* after the correlation designates the level of significance. If there is no superscript after the number, it means that there is no significant relationship. If there is the letter *a*, *b*, or *c*, it means that there is a significant relationship, with the *c* being the most significant.

Since the focus of this study is on who is more likely to think being Nazarene is important, then the bottom row of the correlations in Table 2 (bold print) is the most important set of correlations. Observing this row, the variable most strongly correlated with "importance of being Nazarene" is No. 5, which is "social relationships." Its correlation is $r=.30^c$ ("*r*" means Pearson correlation). This means that those members who are socially tied to the congregation tend to identify closely with being a Nazarene. The second strongest relationship is with "personal evangelism" ($r=.28$). Those individuals who witness, testify, or evangelize tend to strongly identify themselves with the church.

The third strongest relationship is education ($r=-.27$). This is a "negative" relationship, which means that those who have higher levels of education tend not to stress much importance in being a Nazarene.

Several other positive relationships can be found. Members who are older ($r=.24$), sanctified ($r=.22$), church members longer ($r=.22$), in most worship services ($r=.19$), and practicing their faith ($r=.18$) tend to identify with the Church of the Nazarene.

Two other significant relationships are negative: distance ($r=-.14$) and income ($r=-.16$). Those individuals who live further away from the church and who have higher incomes are most likely not to stress the importance of being a Nazarene.

All the variables are significantly correlated with the variable "importance of being a Nazarene" except one, gender. Males are no more likely to be satisfied or dissatisfied

with the Nazarene church than females.

Table 3 (see page 63) contains a statistical procedure called "multiple regression." Simply stated, this statistical technique compares all the variables at the same time to determine which variables are the most important. Out of the 11 original variables, only 6 were found to be significant: social relationships, level of education, personal evangelism, years of membership, distance of residence, and religious experience. Those variables that were no longer significant were: income, gender, devotional practices, attendance, and age.

What are pastors and church leaders to learn from all of these correlations and statistics? These findings have several important implications. First, social relationships or ties to the congregation are very important for Nazarenes. In fact, it is the strongest indicator as to who will stay in or leave the church. People

need people. Nazarenes want to have good Christian fellowship and close friends in the church. To keep people from "slipping out the back door," people must be integrated into the fellowship of the congregation. They must be welcomed and involved in the activities of the church and must establish genuine friends in the church. If they don't, they are more likely to leave.

Second, education is a significant factor. People who are highly educated tend to think that being Nazarene is not all that important. Education may have a detrimental effect on the importance one places on being a Nazarene. Education may cause one to be less committed or loyal to a group or organization. People with high levels of education tend to be more independent or "free thinkers" than those with less education. Thus, it is hard to get an educated person to commit himself to the church. But there could also

be the fact that the church doesn't do a very good job of trying to make the educated individual feel welcome. We all may feel threatened, insecure, or uncomfortable around these individuals. Additionally, these people may not be challenged or used to their full capabilities.

Third, testifying, witnessing, and evangelizing (devotional practices) are significantly important to the church. It appears that these activities are important not only in gaining new converts to the church but also in strengthening people's identification with the church. It is difficult to determine which variable affects the other variable. Are people committed to the church because they witness, or do they witness because they are committed to the church? No matter which causes which, they still go together.

Fourth, the number of years one is a member of the church is also significantly related to the import-

FALLING Through the CRACKS

by Robert E. Maner
Fitzgerald, Ga.



What happened to John and Jill?" the Sunday School superintendent asked one of the teachers. "I haven't seen them in Sunday School recently."

The teacher, looking a little blank, said, "I really don't know. They just seem to have lost interest."

John and Jill were saved in a Sunday evening service a year earlier. They were thrilled when the pastor approached them about joining the church. They attended every service, including Wednesday night prayer meetings. Then some night classes John's work required began meeting on Wednesday. This stopped their prayer meeting attendance for a time. They became irregular on Sunday night and eventually quit attending. Then, no one remembered exactly when, they dropped out of church altogether.

The pastor's visits and inquiry were met with, "Yes, we do need to get started to church again." But they never seemed to be able to make that new start.

We all know some Johns and Jills—you have some in your church. There are too many in every church who simply fall through the cracks. They are hardly missed until it's too late to recover them. Many are absent for months before they are missed; some are never remembered. Getting people saved and then dumping them does more harm than good.

This is not just a problem of pastoral negligence or Sunday School teachers who fail; friendliness is every member's job. It means more than a handshake at the front door on Sunday—though some don't even do that much. It means every member has a responsibility to be aware of new people coming into the church and to learn their names (correctly). Phone calls, cards, and visits by church members all help.

Assist those coming into the church to make new friends among God's people. Our highest casualty rate is among those who have few friends in the church and many non-

portance of being a Nazarene. Not surprisingly, the longer one is a member of the church, the more important it is to him. Therefore, the one most likely to leave the church is the one who has recently become a member. Pastors should carefully nurture the new members. Too often the temptation is to reduce attention to those who finally accept church membership, thinking that the process is complete. However, this research seems to indicate that it is the new members who are the most likely to leave the church and are in need of encouragement.

Fifth, the further a person lives from church, the less important that church is to him. This finding is not surprising to most pastors. It is very difficult to get a person involved in a church when that person lives far enough away that commuting to church becomes a miserable experience.


Perhaps this finding is another argument for neighborhood churches.

Neighborhood and community churches do a better job of getting people committed to the church, since distance from the church is not a problem.

Sixth, although not as strong as the previous variable, religious experience is significantly related to the importance one places on being a Nazarene. Those who have experienced entire sanctification consider their membership in the Church of the Nazarene to be important. Therefore, it is they who have not been sanctified who are most likely to leave the church. Encouraging people to seek sanctification not only helps the individual's relationship with God but also tends to strengthen his commitment to the church.

Finally, not only the significant variables but also the five insignificant variables are of interest: attendance, devotions, gender, age, and income. This means that none of

these variables affect how one feels about his church membership and who might leave. For example, those who might place importance on being a member of the church are not more likely to attend church services, practice devotions, and so on, than those who place little importance on church membership.

For some pastors, the findings of this research are of little surprise, while for others, the findings may have provided some insight as to who may slip out the back door of the church. Sometimes a little extra effort or a new strategy at the right time may save a person or a family from leaving the church. A pastor may find that it takes much less time to conserve a family or individual for the church *before* they leave than to try to "rewind" them to the church. Perhaps this research will help a pastor identify those possible "back door casualties" *before* he faces another one of those untypical Sundays in his ministry. 

churched ones. But most people must have help in making friends. Few have outgoing personalities and meet new people easily.

Sunday School secretaries should keep good records of addresses and phone numbers. These should be distributed among class members. Good records show *when* people are absent but not *why*. Each absentee should be checked on every week.


After conversion, the assimilation of new people should be the most vital concern of all. Larger churches have their greatest difficulty in growth at this point. This is the reason growth plateaus when the 400 level is reached. But small churches have the same problem for a different reason. In large churches new people tend to get lost in the crowd. In the small churches they have a difficult time just getting in! Small churches tend to have problems making room for the new families, integrating them into church life, and

giving them assignments. Many small churches have no small groups to attend other than Sunday School classes.

People must be helped in overcoming their problems. Some will come from divided families. Either their spouses will not attend church with them, or part of the family may attend another church. Some are so timid that they come across as unfriendly. Whatever problems new members have, they should be given a reasonable chance to become active church members. Someone in the church should discover their interests and abilities and help them develop their gifts.

In my work, I have met with over 125 church boards and Sunday School staffs and other leaders in local churches spread over 27 districts across the nation. Almost without exception, most church leaders think assimilation will just happen. Not only will it not "just happen," but if it does not happen soon after new

members unite with the church, they will probably not be around for it to happen at all.

The bottom line on why churches fail to grow is this: Not only do we fail to reach significant numbers of unsaved people with the gospel, but also, of the few reached, far too many just fall through the cracks within the first year. Churches that are growing have involved significant numbers of their members in salvaging the harvest. This the pastor can never do alone. Nor can a few conscientious Sunday School teachers. Warm, caring congregations can enfold new babes in Christ in arms of love and make them feel wanted and needed. But we must make it happen on an individual basis. If too many in the church expect to leave this to others, our churches will remain "dead in the water." These churches wonder why they do not grow. They should be wondering how they do as well as they are doing. 

KEEPING MEMBERS: Lessons from Social Theory

How can we address the problem of attrition? It may be that the question "Why do people stay?" is closer to the heart of the matter than "Why do people leave?"

After all, it stands to reason that the more that people are integrated into the social fabric and value system of a group, the less likely they are to leave. Of course, there are always potential uncontrollable influences in the larger social environment that will have an effect (e.g., rates of transience, economic factors, urban or suburban migration, etc.). However, setting those "uncontrollable" influences aside, a study of the degree of integration of different members into a group is bound to tell us a great deal about the group's attrition



by
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rate. Further, focusing on levels of integration has the added value of presenting problems that we can respond to and that can be addressed before the issue becomes one of attrition.

There are three aspects of integration that may be helpful: (1) incomplete integration, (2) extent of interaction, and (3) degree of value integration.

INCOMPLETE INTEGRATION

Could it be that one of the reasons we lose people is that we never really had them? Could it be that many of our reported losses are a result of reporting people as Nazarenes who were far short of being assimilated into the life of the church? Is it possible that a church could grow too fast so that it is incapable of fully assimilating new members?

David Kanter, a noted family sociologist and theorist, has discussed

the idea of boundary maintenance as it pertains to families. He maintains that some families have boundaries that are too easily penetrated. People come in and out of the family setting freely to the degree that family structure and norms are missing. The result is a lack of sense of family organization, unity, and identity. He also suggests that other families have boundaries that are overly restrictive. No one comes or goes at all. And if they do, it is not without careful scrutiny and granted permission. Such family members suffer from the lack of healthy interaction with outsiders. He concludes that the ideal is somewhere in between the extremes.

It appears that some ideas in Kanter's discussion are transferable to the issue of attrition and integration in churches. Of course, we are all interested in making our churches as accessible as possible. And yet, if there is little in the way of boundaries to church membership, there may be little in the way of the new member's identification with or commitment to the newfound group. Since we are talking about attrition of membership in particular, it may be that attrition may be eased in part

by making sure that coming into membership is sufficiently costly and meaningful. If membership does not cost the initiate commitment or personal sacrifice, it may not mean much. And, with relatively little invested, it may be relatively easy to leave. As in Kanter's model, the boundaries to the group may be so permeable that there is free flow both in and out. Such costs might continue to include affirmation of a crisis religious experience and a holiness life-style, and a commitment to the people, ministry, and doctrine of the church. Perhaps in some situations, we should consider a probationary period in which new members are given time to demonstrate those commitments. It may be that part of the way to "close the back door" is to make entrance through the front door costly and meaningful.

Of course, as in Kanter's model, boundary maintenance can be too restrictive as well as too open. And, in fact, that may also be the case in some of our churches. Some may be overly restrictive, being so tight-knit that it is extremely difficult for newcomers to get in. In these cases, we may make it too difficult to become a part of us. It appears that either extreme could be counter-productive for healthy growth in a church body.

EXTENT OF INTERACTION

Let's shift our attention to those who become integrated into a church body at one time or another. How does that integration take place? Are there contributing factors to achieving a higher or lesser degree of integration?

From the works of Georg Simmel comes the idea that the frequency of interaction of a group's members is related to the degree of internal solidarity and member integration. Simmel goes so far as to suggest that the nature of the interaction does not have to be cordial for bonding to occur, but even conflictual interaction can contribute "functionally" to the intensity and solidarity of the group.

The size of the group is crucial to Simmel's "formal sociology." The smaller the group, the greater the involvement of its members. In small groups, members have the opportunity to interact directly with one

another. Such personal interaction brings both bonding and accountability. As groups grow larger, they necessarily have greater and more complex organizational machinery. Interaction of members is more and more mediated through these organizational structures. Larger groups demand less of their members, and individuals who are members of larger groups tend to be less involved, less committed, and have intragroup interactions that are less intense.

Simmel would likely recommend that we not overlook the power of interaction in small groups as a tool for assimilation into our churches. It seems that the formation of multiple small groups with high levels of interaction, commitment, identity, and internal solidarity within a larger body (in our case, the local church), is affirmed by Simmel's theoretical foundation. Perhaps we should continue to give a good deal of attention to the assimilation of new members into the body through Sunday School classes, Bible studies, small groups, and ministry teams. Perhaps we should especially focus on strategies to introduce newcomers

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**It may be that the way
to close the back door
is to make
entrance through the
front door more costly.**

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to small-group functions. Part of that strategy might include development of groups around homogeneous common denominators of interest, background, age, and sub-cultural identity.

DEGREE OF VALUE INTEGRATION

As we turn one more corner and look at issues related to integration of values, our thoughts naturally turn to Emile Durkheim, the collective conscience, and his discussion of suicide. A study of suicide provides an excellent theoretical foundation for a discussion of attrition in that suicide can be seen as the ultimate exit from a group.

Durkheim theorized that there are two types of integration in a societal structure: (1) attachment to social groups and their goals, and (2) regulation by the group's collective conscience. Attachment is based on interpersonal relationships and the awareness by the individual that he is part of the larger group. Regulation keeps the unlimited aspirations of individuals in check through group norms and values.

For Durkheim, a society's suicide rate was a "social fact" indicating the degree of integration or disintegration of its social solidarity. Suicide rates varied from one society to the next, depending on the degree of attachment and regulation experienced by a given society. Durkheim saw suicide rates as curvilinear on each dimension. That is, suicide rates were high if attachment or regulation was either abnormally high or low. From this framework he deduced four types of suicide that he expected to be prevalent in a society resulting from the specific social conditions:

1. **EGOISTIC SUICIDE.** Egoistic suicide is the result of attachment being too weak. Similar to Simmel's position, Durkheim believed that social integration occurred, in part, to the extent that individual members interacted with one another. When individualism inhibits commitment to groups in a given society, the individual ends up with loose social ties.

Adapting this to the discussion of attrition of church members, where there is insufficient contact and interaction with other group members, inadequate integration occurs, and the member is in jeopardy of being lost. This ties in with the above discussion on the extent of interaction.

2. **ALTRUISTIC SUICIDE.** Altruistic suicide is the result of attachment being too strong. It is suicide by social obligation or for the sake of the society at large. It is the result of being so tied in and committed to the group that the individual's concerns and needs are overshadowed.

If altruistic suicide can be applied to church member attrition, it might be applied in cases of true burnout. In situations where the individual is so committed to the corporate goals and tied in and busy with church work that individual needs are sup-

pressed, the only apparent way to "get out from under it all" may be to leave. Commitment without adequate attention to personal needs equals attrition.

3. ANOMIC SUICIDE. Anomic suicide is the result of regulation being too weak. If there is a great deal of rapid social change in a given society or social group, norms and values are likely to be challenged and upset. The individual looking for stability in the midst of the changes discovers that the norms and values are no longer meaningful or appropriate. The individual is set adrift in a state of normlessness.

In the contemporary American church, we find ourselves trying to hold the line on traditional norms and values in the middle of constant social change. Durkheim suggested that religious norms could serve the function of shielding members of a group with high solidarity against the normlessness of the rapidly changing social environment. In the Church of the Nazarene, our sectarian norms have shielded us from the anomie around us very well. However, we are changing. And in the process, we are becoming less sectarian and are losing some of our shield. Our members are, as a result, more vulnerable to the anomie brought about by social change than they have been in the past. Some of this may be necessary as we adapt some of our norms to address the needs of our members as they attempt living Christian lives in a high-tech world.

Adapting or changing norms, goals, and ideals can be risky, as it may make some members more vulnerable to societal forces. But for other members who find traditional methods, goals, and norms no longer meaningful, it may be helpful to assist them with new and relevant forms that can serve as an adequate normative shield. The alternative may be to risk their rejection of the whole as they search for something they consider to be meaningful. Inadequate norms, values, and beliefs in the midst of social change equal attrition.

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Even conflictual interaction can contribute to solidarity.

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4. FATALISTIC SUICIDE. Fatalistic suicide is the result of regulation being too strong. This is the picture of individuals who find their futures blocked and passions choked by overrestrictive norms, beliefs, and values. In situations where there is little individual freedom or autonomy, and where that freedom and autonomy is desired, the result is frustration and, for Durkheim, one form of suicide.

In the church, this is the picture of those we lose by rebellion. Those who feel they are being forced to observe norms that are not personally meaningful may find themselves full

of frustration, rebellion, or both. Obligatory and overrestrictive norms that are not meaningful to the individual equal attrition.

CONCLUSION

Attrition of church members is a complex social phenomenon that resists oversimplified analysis and explanation. However, to the degree that the church does experience attrition resulting from inadequate boundary maintenance and social interaction, or from burnout, normlessness, or rebellion, the following possible strategies are offered:

1. Give attention to a personally costly and meaningful membership requirement, including the possibility of a probationary period.

2. Find ways to assist newcomers into small-group settings in which social interaction can provide a sense of integration and belonging.

3. Provide resource assistance for leaders and workers in the area of personal and family needs.

4. Continue to work on providing clearly stated and understood norms and values that are meaningful and relevant.

5. Provide opportunities for questioning of beliefs and freedom of expression, especially among our youth.

With the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can make a positive difference in the lives of people we would otherwise lose, by being sensitive to their needs while providing the structure for an adequate faith in today's world.

Pontius' Puddle



WHERE DID THE CONVERTS GO?

Jim came to my church discouraged, eager for acceptance and friendship. The church reached out to him with love and compassion, reassuring him of his worth and value as a person.

Through little acts of kindness that displayed Christian love and the Holy Spirit's prompting, Jim rededicated his life to the Lord. He was recently elected to the church board. Rather than continuing to try to fill the void in his life with the things of this world, Jim's desire now is to give of his time and talent to God's people. He is one whom we would consider successfully assimilated into the local church.



by
Donald W.
Welch

Although we rejoice over Jim and his integration into the church, untold numbers of people never become assimilated into the church. As a church fulfills its commission to reach its community for Christ and begins attracting many people, how does it go about keeping them?

A DEFINITION OF INCORPORATION

In order to discuss and study incorporation in the local church, it is necessary to define it as clearly and concisely as possible. Literally defined, incorporation means "to combine or join with something already formed; make part of another thing; to bring together into a single whole; merge."¹ All of these apply to what we mean by incorporation in a church.

Incorporation within a church can mean several other things, though. It

means assimilating new people or new Christians into the local church so that they feel at home and do not drop into inactivity. It can also mean helping them to mature as Christians and to strengthen their commitment to an organized body of believers. Waylon Moore, in *New Testament Follow-Up*, writes: "The great task of our churches is not only the salvation of souls but also the maturation of believers into Christ-like living."²

Incorporation means making people feel responsible for and to a local congregation. The pronouns people use to describe the church change from "yours" to "mine," from "you" to "we," and from "them" to "us." When an attendee begins speaking about "their" church, he is caught up in the incorporation process. He has assumed, at least mentally, responsibility for what happens to the church.

Incorporation is not a new concept. The church has always had bodies of believers into which people were incorporated. The bodies assumed many forms, from house churches (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 2) and village



H. Armstrong Roberts

communal units, as at Lydda and Sharon (Acts 9:35), to mixed urban groups, as at Corinth (18:7-8), migrating groups and individuals, as at Rome (Romans 16), and interracial segments, at Roman colonial posts like Philippi (Acts 16). People have always needed support, nurture, and encouragement to continue growing in the faith and to be assimilated into God's kingdom.

This vital incorporation usually happens in Bible studies, prayer groups, outreach ministry groups, or a Sunday School class. Donald McGavran and Win Arn, in *Ten Steps for Church Growth*, call it "the right mix."³ Charles "Chic" Shaver verifies prayer, fellowship, personal evangelism, public evangelism, and follow-up in right relation to each other as key ingredients for incorporation.

He further underscores this role of incorporation by stating that the

church must take on the right mix of delivery room, nursery, school, and workshop. These are where new souls are born, cared for, trained, and involved in service for the Kingdom, respectively. Each of these areas aids the incorporation process.⁴

Incorporation must also include the right mix in terms of pastor and laymen. Laymen probably do most of the incorporating, but incorporation also depends on genuine leadership from the pastor. James Kennedy describes the average pastor as "incomprehensible on Sunday and invisible during the week."⁵ By incomprehensible he means the average pastor does not express clearly goals and intentions to the congregation on Sundays. By "invisible during the week" he means that a majority of pastors are not seen during the week by the laymen. Thus, laymen are not being trained as coworkers for the building up of

Christ's kingdom. Pastoral leadership is critical in both ways if incorporation is to occur.

Training laymen to incorporate is as important as personal evangelists training other evangelists by taking them along when they present the gospel. Kennedy illustrates this by comparing Dr. Billy Graham and a personal evangelist. He explains that if Billy Graham preached 365 days a year to over 50,000 per night, winning 1,000 each night, that would average out to over 7,000 people per week accepting Jesus Christ as personal Savior. That translates into 30,000 per month. Kennedy then describes what he calls evangelism explosion. If a personal evangelist trains one person per year and the following year that trainee trains another, the multiplication factor would be such that the original person would have won the world in 32 years. Billy Graham, however winning people at the rate of 30,000 per month, would be farther behind than the evangelist who won just one while a trainee observed and went out and repeated the process. The cumulative factor of that process is the biblical secret of winning people by spiritual multiplication. This is also true of incorporation.⁶

Incorporation is the logical and necessary subsequent step to evangelism. Marlin Jeschke, in *Discipling the Brother*, says, "If there is aggressive evangelism without supporting discipline in the church created by that evangelism, there comes a short in the purpose of the evangelistic program. It often ceases to be considered the task of incorporating people into a church and becomes a religious experience for its own sake."⁷ Incorporation prevents evangelization from becoming a mere exercise. Instead it is the beginning of a lifelong process of maturation.

In summary, our working definition of incorporation is: "The process by which new Christians and church members come to understand and feel they are truly an accepted and trusted member of the fellowship."⁸

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR INCORPORATION

Many biblical passages support the concept of incorporation. In 1 Cor. 3:5-9, Paul indicates that we are instruments through whom God works in bringing others to Him and nurturing them.

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building (NIV).

Each Christian has a role in God's work, but men come and go. God uses those who are willing servants to bring about results. But He is the all-important ingredient in any of man's efforts to evangelize and incorporate.

1 Thess. 2:8 encourages the willingness to impart one's life to others. Not only did Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy share the gospel message, but also they participated in tender, God-imparting caring. Verses 11 and 12 of this chapter express an even deeper level of concern! "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (NIV). Each of these acts ("encouraging, comforting, and urging") shows Paul's careful dealing with individuals. Some need persuading, others consoling, and still others admonition within the church. There can be little true incorporation that does not follow this example. Imparting our lives to others and recognizing the infinite value of every soul are essentials in incorporating people into a body.

Many other passages assist us in understanding the biblical strategy

for incorporation. Heb. 10:24-25 instructs us to be more concerned for others than for ourselves and, in our churches, to be good examples for others. Our coming together should be to encourage one another, and this concern should increase with our awareness of Christ's second coming. This concern is necessary to incorporation in a local church.

2 Tim. 2:2 instructs us to commit to faithful persons what we have heard so that they can then teach others. The gospel message has come to us from many Christians who preceded us. It is, therefore, our responsibility to pass it on in its authenticity to those who follow us. This important trust in the body is part of incorporation.

James F. Engel and H. Wilbert Norton, in *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* say the church needs "a research based, Spirit-led strategy to reach people with the Good News and to build them in the faith."⁹

Each Christian is responsible to follow Christ's example of compassion for the spiritual welfare of others. This can be beautifully expressed through a body of believers as people are drawn and incorporated into that body. This is what we aspire to in incorporating people into local churches.

NEEDS OF PEOPLE BEING INCORPORATED

The people we are working to incorporate have many and varied
Continued on p. 60



Wesley D. Tracy



LISTENING: THE OTHER SIDE OF PREACHING

A sense of anticipation filled the air as the crowd began gathering. This was Feedback Sunday, the morning when Pastor Phillips opened up the service to comments from the congregation.

Following each sermon series over the past year, Pastor Phillips invited comment and commentary from the congregation. Since each sermon series lasted about a month, Feedback Sunday generally fell on the fifth Sunday. Judging from the crowd that attended these sessions, the people relished the event. Interestingly, since the inauguration of Feedback Sunday, attendance has picked up for the other Sunday morning services as well.



by
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Why Listen?

This technique represents one pastor's way of "tuning in" to his congregation. Yet with so much attention given to mastering preaching techniques, one seldom hears much about the other side of preaching—active and attentive listening. Upon reflection, it is questionable whether one can be a good *preacher*—or for that matter, an effective minister—unless and until one becomes an effective *listener*. Just as God speaks through the mouths of the poor, needy, and afflicted, He speaks through the congregation of believers.

1. Listening is necessary for good preaching.

It is unlikely that many men will become famous or go down in history because of their listening abilities. Yet God needs His spokesmen

to be good listeners. Remember Apollos, that great orator we encounter in the Book of Acts? It is evident that he became a more effective instrument of the Lord precisely because he listened to the counsel of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-28).

2. Listening is necessary for effective ministry.

While effective preaching requires good listening, there are other vital and important reasons for listening. In Exodus 3:7 we read that God listened and heard the cry of the children of Israel as they suffered under Egyptian persecution. As Norman Nelson has observed, God did not listen because He needed to. He listened because He cared, because He loved. Those who would effectively minister to the needs of others—and communicate God's concern for them—must be good listeners.

In *The Road Less Traveled*, M. Scott Peck defines listening as "love in action." And listening—real listening—often *feels* like love. It is a means of "reaching out and touching someone." So many people are starved for this. Yet how sad that those who really long to be listened

to—precisely because they are so desperate—often become obnoxious and offensive. As they scream at us out of desperation, we too often respond with irritation. But if others so easily offend us, it may have less to do with “unseemly conduct” than with their “interference” with our needs and our agenda.

Another kind of person presents a different problem. He is the one who, perhaps because of insecurity or fear of “rocking the boat,” prefers to bottle up that which is disturbing and keep it inside. In such instances, good ministry requires drawing out people, finding out what they need to say in order to commence their healing. Getting such people to open up requires that we cultivate great patience and trust. But this we must do if we are to create the opportunity to be the vehicle for their receiving God’s blessed grace.

3. Listening provides a means for reconciliation.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, 5:18-20, Paul calls attention to the importance of reconciliation. Of course the reconciliation theme occurs much earlier in the Old Testament accounts of God reconciling Israel to himself. But Paul reminds us that as God’s servants, we are to be about this business of reconciling.

In his provocative book, *The Growing Edge*, Howard Thurman states: “I have only one basic statement to make about the love of God and that is that it is always concerned with breaking the sense of isolation the individual human spirit feels.” Listening provides a means to break this isolation by restoring the vital bridge to fellowship.

While we often think of reconciliation more or less in a vertical sense (man to transcendent God), it is important to keep in mind that this cannot be divorced from horizontal (God as immanent) reconciliation. A critical ingredient in the reconciliation process is good listening. This point was driven home to me recently as I heard Ben Sherrill, my social worker friend, describe how he encourages the troubled children he works with to express their hostility. He pointed out that their language is often very abusive and takes the form of verbal attack at him. Learning to put up with foul language and

verbal attack has not been easy. Yet in the wisdom that comes from experience, he has learned to be tolerant and to carefully and searchingly listen to what they are saying. This has been critical to understanding them—and eventually reconciling them to themselves, to others, and even to God.

In recent months it has become fashionable to talk about reconciliation in the context of conflict resolution. In fact, a new wave of workshops on the subject seems to be spreading across the U.S. Listening to a member of my prayer group describe what took place in one of

Listening helps us develop the capacity to be broken over the things that break God’s heart.

these workshops, I was intrigued at the important role listening plays in the reconciliation process. It essentially involves getting opposing sides to listen to the other describe their problems and frustrations. It is important that we realize how our charge to be God’s peacemakers in the world extends to the group level—and to appreciate the contribution that listening makes to this process.

4. Listening allows us to be ministered unto.

The benefit to be derived from listening isn’t just one way; it flows both directions. As we endeavor to minister through listening, we stand to be ministered to. The personal growth we may derive from listening occurs in at least three ways:

a. We become more fully human. As we listen to the concerns and joys of others, we enhance our capacity to identify with those who experience such things. And by having these emotions called out in ourselves, we find ourselves becoming more compassionate, more joyous, more responsive, more empathic. In essence, we develop that essential element of Christian maturity—the

capacity to be broken over the things that break the heart of our Lord and to rejoice over the things that please Him.

b. We discover ourselves. We all have aspects of ourselves that others are not aware of. But by the same token, there are aspects that others can see in us that we are oblivious to. In this sense, each of us have certain blind spots. Thus as we listen to others, we become not only more aware of them but also more aware of ourselves. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can put down our defenses and open ourselves up to truths that we must be aware of and deal with.

c. We are blessed and encouraged. Occasionally our defenses extend beyond attempts to just screen out negative information and involve a screening out of positive feedback as well. At times we can become so self-critical, or so concerned about retaining the appearance of a humble spirit, that we refuse to heed the very comments that could otherwise be so encouraging. We pass compliments off lightly and suggest that another’s congratulations are not really warranted. As we learn to give God the credit for allowing us to actualize the talents He has given us, we become more open to the special blessing that comes from listening to the encouraging comments of others.

One Critical Barrier to Listening

This matter of self-acceptance is critical to the development of our listening skills and critical to establishing an environment in which others will feel inclined to share. Yet, as I have alluded to above, self-acceptance may not come easy. In his book *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Carl Jung makes the following assessment:

The acceptance of oneself is the essence of the whole moral problem and the epitome of a whole outlook on life. That I feed the hungry, that I forgive an insult, that I love my enemy in the name of Christ—all these are undoubtedly great virtues. What I do unto the least of my brethren, that I do unto Christ. But what if I should discover that the least among them all, *the poorest of all the beggars, the most impudent of all the offenders, the very enemy himself*

—that these are within me, and that I myself stand in the need of the alms of my own kindness—that I myself am the enemy who must be loved—what then? As a rule, the Christian's attitude is then reversed; there is no longer the question of love or long-suffering; we say to the brother within us "Raca" and condemn and rage against ourselves. We hide it from the world; we refuse to admit even having met this least among the lowly in ourselves.

Clearly, our ability to accept ourselves impinges on our ability to accept and listen to others. But how do we solve the problem that Carl Jung describes? After years of counseling experience, my friend Gene Garrison (to whom I am indebted for calling my attention to the above passage) is convinced that the solution hinges on our willingness to accept God's unconditional love for us. Along with the Psalmist, we must learn to praise God for making us who we are and trust Him to use us, His creation, for His glory. (See Ps. 119:7-12 and Isa. 42:3.)

Creating a Listening Environment

Erich Fromm, in his classic book, *The Art of Loving*, points out that many people assume that love will take care of itself as long as the loved one—the inspiration of love—remains lovable. This puts the stress in the wrong place. As a consequence they become rather fickle lovers. What people must do is learn to love or, in Fromm's terms, master the art of loving. The same could be said about listening. When we assume that listening will take care of itself if the person we're listening to seems "interesting" enough (according to our personal agendas), we become fickle listeners.

The Pastor as Teacher

If, as Scott Peck has suggested, listening is love in action, it is imperative that a congregation masters the "art" of listening. Indeed, the ability to listen is the first sign of a caring congregation. Pastors, as religious leaders, have a significant responsibility to cultivate in themselves and to teach others the art of listening. In endeavoring to impart

listening skills to a church congregation, it will be helpful to keep a couple of principles in mind.

Principle 1: Whether or not we approve of the message, love requires that we affirm the speaker.

This is tantamount to the injunction that true Christians love the sinner but hate the sin. This, of course, is seldom our first reaction. When someone says something we don't like, we often respond to him with irritation and disgust. We may derive some feeling of self-righteousness in doing so, but it isn't love, and it isn't Jesus' way!

I recall one particularly sad series of events that started with a meeting one evening in a church basement. Several issues had come to a head in the weeks preceding the meeting; and the pastor, in an effort to give the various factions a hearing, organized a meeting to clear the air. The exchange might have been quite productive—except for one thing. The different factions failed to observe the simple principle of affirming the speaker. Thus, the exchange soon degenerated into fits of shouting and name-calling. It took weeks, even months, for the resulting wounds to heal. If we are to disagree in love, the distinction between the message and the messenger must be appreciated and applied.

Principle 2: Listen for feelings.

People in our "sophisticated" society have learned to put a premium on rationally constructed and well-reasoned statements. (It is with such statements that we typically seek to "win" an argument.) But this emphasis tends to sidetrack us into listening to logic above feeling. At times what someone is telling us may even appear incoherent or inappropriate because we have failed to comprehend the source-feelings from which it arises. Listening for feelings is critical to manifesting "love in action."

The Pastor as Model

Effective teaching must be backed up by effective modeling. While much of this modeling can be done on a one-on-one basis, it needs to be done on a group basis as well. The lead paragraph illus-

trates how one pastor went about doing this. With a little imagination, there are many other means to model effective listening. These range from following the Sunday morning sermon with a Sunday School discussion session (when scheduling permits) to devoting a Sunday evening service to securing sermon feedback from the congregation.

I once attended a church in which, following each Sunday morning service, the pastor would invite comments from the congregation. I recall one occasion when a member took this opportunity to voice his objection to a prison ministry some church members were involved in. The beautiful part of it was that those involved in this ministry had a chance to hear the concern and respond. On this particular occasion, the exchange carried on well after the service was over.

There is one additional advantage to be derived from establishing a forum for discussion. Different sectors of the church community often hold quite different ideas about how to "do church." But people will often convey their divergent views to a pastor without fully realizing the bind this places the pastor in or the rationale that others have for "doing church" differently. As people are given opportunity to air their views in public, they stand to become aware of others' opinions on the matter and the reasoning involved. If well conceived, the forum can become open, free, and democratic while providing an energetic and exciting opportunity to work these conflicts through.

Whether or not effective listening is taught and modeled in public or in private, "the other side of ministry" merits careful and deliberate attention. It is not going too far to suggest that the very health and vitality of a congregation may be assessed in terms of their inclination and capacity to listen to one another. In fact our individual and collective effectiveness in ministering for our Lord may well depend on the extent to which we practice what Norman Nelson terms the golden rule of listening: "Listen to others as you would have them listen to you." 🦋



William
Shakespeare:

A RELEVANT PREACHER ON THE POWER OF SIN

One of Shakespeare's characters stands near a prominent intersection in Stratford-upon-Avon, preaching eloquent sermons on sin. I passed by her twice a day for nearly six weeks. Unless my mind was preoccupied, I couldn't help hearing what she tried to tell me and, undoubtedly, many others.

"I was the wife," she said, "of an influential man. Very ambitious, I sought more advancement and influence for him, and for myself. He was more cautious than I, and when he suggested that we shouldn't be so pushy, I accused him of cowardice and relentlessly pursued courses of action that would insure greater success. 'Screw up your courage!' I told him.

"'You must,' I told him, 'shut your eyes to everything but the goal. Our goal. If it means stepping on others, that's a little thing when we consider what it will bring us. It's impossible to wear kid gloves and get what you want and deserve in the kind of world we're living in!'

"My husband listened to me and advanced to power. In order to keep it, he had to do other things that he questioned. His conscience bothered him. I wouldn't let mine do that to me and told him if he wanted peace of mind, he must refuse to think about what he had to do to remain secure."

She continued speaking and I, listening and thinking. I knew that she was a master at suppressing feelings. But they seethed deep within and finally erupted. Her sleepless nights were filled with guilt-ridden memories that she could not make a truce with. She tried to dispel some of the darkness of her mind and soul by always keeping a light burning.

Her husband placed her under the

care of a physician. He watched as she walked in her sleep, carrying a light. He heard her exclaim, question, and try to reason—jumbled, confused hints of evil actions and their consequences. "She needs a minister more than she needs a doctor," was his studied opinion.

She took her own life. As she stands in Stratford today, still trying to wash bloodstains from her hands, Lady Macbeth preaches well to passersby. She is a living sermon in stone on the consequences of inordinate ambition.

Other people walk from the pages of Shakespeare and deliver timeless sermons on sin. A clever, brilliant serviceman is one of them. When a younger man is given the promotion he thinks he should have, he strikes back.

"I was better qualified and had seniority," he said. "It was like a slap in the face when Cassio was given the promotion I deserved. I decided to slap back—at him and at the one who promoted him. I was clever enough that no one, not even my wife, knew what I was bent on doing. They thought I was turning the other cheek, for I put on a front of friendliness, openness, and goodwill.

"Would you believe it? My employer and others called me 'Honest Iago,' as if 'Honest' were my first name!

"Of course, I was hurt over not being promoted. That was my initial cause for bitterness. But I had other reasons for hating those two men. One was the rumors going around that both of them were having affairs with my wife. I didn't know if these rumors were true, but you never know. I acted as if they were. After all, it's better to be safe than sorry.

"These wrongs fed my hatred.

And so I planned Slap No. 1 to get even by bringing about Cassio's demotion. I carried out that scheme successfully by playing up a weakness of Cassio and telling a few white lies.

"What better way to further avenge my wrongs than by doing in both Cassio and his boss at the same time? Slap No. 2. I could convince the boss that his favorite employee was paying too much attention to his wife. Green-eyed jealousy is a wonderful accomplice! How to bring about my scheme? Have Cassio beg the boss' wife to persuade her husband to reinstate him. Her persistence, I knew, would arouse suspicion. I had an equally clever scheme for 'proving' his wife's unfaithfulness—Slap No. 3.

"I used a subtle strategy in giving those slaps. I worked on their good points, like Othello's open, trusting nature. He didn't for a moment suspect me, he was so honest himself. I suppose the reason he suspected his wife was that, for one thing, he had been in the military all of his life and didn't know much about women. Of course, I pumped him full of their wiles.

"I used Cassio's goodness, too, to get revenge on him. He isn't the world's best, but—I hate to admit this—he's so much better than I that he showed me up. This I couldn't stand! Is there anything worse than knowing someone's character is better than yours? 'He has a daily beauty in his life that makes me ugly,' I told my helpful accomplice. I was bent on destroying that goodness by destroying his reputation.

"I really reveled in the way I worked on this 'goodness' idea. I even made a net out of the virtue of Othello's wife to snare three people. She *did* persist in trying to help a

good friend. Their marriage—hers and Othello's—ended in even a way I hadn't thought about. Cassio was further disgraced.

"Other things happened. Some further surprises. And now I'm in prison. But I got even. After all, I had been wronged."

Iago furnishes a living example of what jealousy turning into hatred can do. Even more significant is the fact that his hatred sought to destroy an integral part of his victims' characters, their goodness. Talk about relevance for today!

In other dramas, important characters possess weaknesses that, when not dealt with or held in check, result in tragic action or sin. Shakespeare adapted a feature characteristic of classical tragedies, in which a protagonist, ideal in many respects, had a prevailing weakness or "tragic flaw." It was hardly noticeable at first, like an almost invisible line in a bone china cup. With the frequent heat of boiling beverages, the line becomes a crack, and eventually the cup breaks. In the same way, pressure and strain enlarged the protagonist's tragic flaws to an alarming extent.

It is interesting to note that the basis for one of the New Testament words for sin, *hamartia*, is the "tragic flaw" of classical drama. Literally, it means "missing the mark." God has certain standards for us to live up to; when we fail to do so, we are guilty of sin. In both classical tragedies and Shakespeare's, the tragic flaw is not generally thought of as sin itself, but the forerunner of sin.

Impulsiveness, procrastination, gullibility, and passion are among the tragic flaws found in Shakespeare's central characters. His character studies show how these "innocent" traits result in wrongdoing.

One protagonist, basically upright and fine, is portrayed in many ways as an ideal young man. He comes from a good family and is well thought of. His friends and interests are many; they range from a minister to the town wit; from sports to poetry. His tragic flaw is impulsiveness. Not too bad, you say, for who of us doesn't act on impulse more often than we like to think? We may not get into serious trouble, unless we make major decisions too quickly, or our impulses lead us to rash actions. Shakespeare's young man is guilty on both counts. He falls out of love

quickly with one girl, into love quickly with another girl, elopes, fights on the spur of the moment (which results in the death of a man), is ready to take his own life when further trouble comes, and eventually does when he thinks his wife is dead.

Romeo lets a trait with a high sin-potential dominate his life. Recognition of it and its possible consequences, as well as exercising determination and discipline in handling it, could have saved him from sin and tragedy.

Though similar in several ways, a young man in another play is just the opposite of Romeo, in at least one important aspect. He too is well educated, capable, and personable. He holds an enviable position in the town. But he is as slow in acting as Romeo is quick. His "besetting sin" is thinking so long about something he feels he should do, that he somehow loses the power to do it.

Hamlet has a mission to fulfill, to avenge a wrong that had been done his father, causing death. The directive came to him, he feels, through a divine source, so he is obligated to carry it out. But he spends his days and nights thinking about what he should do; he mulls over possible actions and their outcomes; he finds excuses for not acting; he seeks proof after proof that the guilty party is actually guilty, although he knows in his heart he is; he berates himself for his procrastination. Before he finally acts, wrongs that could have been averted are done, some by others, and some by him.

One sees a good man, Hamlet, fall into sin through what at first appeared a slight weakness.

Trust, carried to an extreme, was another tragic flaw in the life of an outstanding man. So noble and honest himself, he could not think that his esteemed friend could possibly be false and evil. The friend's clear hints and innuendos fan Othello's usual calm composure into passion. He cannot, or does not, read in Iago's insinuations and lies anything more than a revelation of the hurtful truth that must be told "for your own good." Some consideration must be given to Iago's ingenuity in deception, but much more to Othello's blind trust, in ruining his marriage, his wife's death, and his suicide.

History, as well as drama, records the disastrous results of gullibility. Recognition of the frailties of human

nature, its corruption in its unredeemed state, and discernment are important in distinguishing trust from gullibility. The latter can be as deadly as excessive suspicion.

Who isn't familiar through reading history books about the illicit passion of the famed pair, Antony and Cleopatra—and tragic consequences? Shakespeare's portraits of them parallel those of history. Examples abound today.

Antony's greatness as one of the three rulers of the Roman Empire is well-known, as is the role of Cleopatra, the powerful queen of Egypt. Antony had been a victorious general and a leader. When he abandons his better self to passion, we see a man indecisive and torn. He is too clear-sighted to trust Cleopatra, but too much in love with her to leave her. We hear the sad commentaries of his hitherto loyal followers that further allegiance to Antony would result in further tragedy. He is defeated in war, abandoned by his generals, loses his part of the empire, and commits suicide.

Perhaps the most poignant thought concerns what could have been the continuing greatness of a man but for his refusal to curb his passions. His victorious opponent, Caesar, poetically characterizes Antony's earlier life and the far-reaching consequences of his latter sin-ridden life: "The breaking of so great a thing should make a greater crack. / . . . the death of Antony is not a single doom" (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 5.1.15-17).

Other characters in Shakespeare's plays also deliver eloquent sermons on sin. These are only representative. Though clothed in the garb of drama, they are flesh-and-blood people who illustrate that certain traits and attitudes are either sins themselves or likely forerunners of sin. Some people are prone to relegate these characters to fiction. But I could substitute more than one real-life name for Lady Macbeth, Iago, Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, Antony, and Cleopatra, or for those in other categories.

Today, when sin is all too often soft-pedaled in sermons, less offensive words used as substitutes, and consequences not sufficiently emphasized, it might be well to consider some of Shakespeare's excellent sin-sermons.

Shakespeare is a very relevant preacher!

DOES YOUR PREACHING MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

What preacher has not asked, "Does my preaching make a difference?" "Does it touch life at crucial points?" "Is it giving insight and hope?" Any preacher alive to his task and committed to good communication has asked these questions and a host of others.

Leslie Weatherhead lists these "test questions" for a sermon:

"Is it going to help people to live?"

"Does it actually touch life and come to grips with the things people are facing?"

"Does it send them out with new courage and hope for living?"¹

Weatherhead further states that "the preacher must not be satisfied until people go away saying to themselves, 'That made a difference to me; that's going to help me; that makes life more meaningful to me.'"

These are awesome measurements for a sermon. They bring into focus the task of preaching and immediately confront us with how difficult and sacred our task is.

If Weatherhead is right, and only

one who does not know preaching would disagree with him, then there are some basic things about preaching that we need to review and remember.

One of them is that preparation is crucial. Preparation of the mind and heart; preparation through prayer and study; preparation through discipline and concentration. Preparation that digs the wells of God's truths deep in our hearts, so that out of the overflow those who hear us will sense and feel the urgency of God's Word and truth to us, for them.

A second basic factor is observation and sensitivity to where people are. What are their needs? Their hurts? Their questions? Their fears? Their sins? Their hopes and frustrations? What are their dreams and disappointments? Not until we have spoken a Word from God to these matters will anything else we say make much impact or sense. Helmut Thielicke said something significant about preaching: "The gospel must be preached afresh and told in new ways to every generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. The gospel must constantly be forwarded to a new address, because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence."²

A third basic factor in preaching that makes a difference is preaching with conviction and authority. People do not lack for opinions. They traffic in those all week long. The abundance of them leaves them drained. People come to church to

hear a word from God's servant that rings with truth and conviction. William Hinson has written, "People are not upset with us these days because of what we believe. People are largely disappointed because they cannot discover what we believe."³

The great variety of pain and problems that people bring to the preaching event calls for a word that gives substance and strength, a word that makes sense in the midst of confusion, a word that gives foundation when everything is crumbling, a word that relates the fears and hurts to an eternal faith and hope.

Whatever evaluation you use to ask the hard questions about preaching, do not fear either the process or the answers. Only as you wrestle with both will you become a preacher who makes a difference in the lives of those who hear you. Take comfort in something that Lyle Schaller wrote. "To the surprise of many church members, more people on the outside are looking for good biblical preaching than we generally assume. They will come to a church where the preacher delivers an authentic word from the Lord and applies scripture to the real need of today."⁴



NOTES

1. Leslie Weatherhead, *Steady in an Unsteady World*, (n.p., n.d.).

2. Helmut Thielicke, *Leadership*, Summer 1988, 21.

3. William H. Hinson, *A Place to Dig In* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 20.

4. Lyle Schaller, quoted by Donald A. McGavran, *Effective Evangelism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1988), 149.



JOHN WESLEY'S PREACHING ON WORSHIP

Preaching, a fundamental mark of the visible Church, was always a part of the service for John Wesley and the Church of England. Wesley's personal records, while revealing a prolific volume of preaching from his own studies, indicate that he often relied upon The Book of Common Prayer's lectionary for sermon texts.

When he wanted to be clearly understood as he dealt with a controversial subject, Wesley said, "I wrote down my sermon."¹ Indeed, he "wrote down" many sermons. Early in his career, he would measure a sermon's success by the negative reactions it received. On a Sunday in 1738, shortly following his return from America, he recorded, "I believe it pleased God to bless the first sermon most, because it gave most offence."²

It is not as though Wesley appreciated only his own preaching. He shared his gratitude of good preaching, and also some philosophy of it, when he confided, "O how gracious God is to the poor sinners of St. Agnes! In the church and out of the church they hear the same great truths of the wrath of God against sin, and his love to those that are in Christ Jesus!"³

Wesley was the consummate preacher. It was a part of the worship experience for him both as proclaimer and worshiper. When it happened that the Church of England's pulpits began closing to him, he conceded, "I love indeed to preach in a church: But God can work wherever it pleaseth him."⁴ Wesley adopted field preaching primarily for evangelism and to reach the masses. Though field preaching never became a task he really enjoyed, he employed it for its effectiveness in evangelism. On September 6, 1772, he wrote, "To this day field-preaching is a cross to me. But I know my commission, and see no other way of 'preaching the Gospel to every creature.'"⁵

Wesley stated the effectiveness of and his reticence at field preaching when he summarized:

What marvel the devil does not love field-preaching! Neither do I: I love a commodious room, a soft cushion, an handsome pulpit. But where is my zeal, if I do not trample all these under foot, in order to save one more soul?⁶

Wesley so adapted to field preaching that he avowed, "O what a victory would Satan gain, if he could put an end to field-preaching!

But that, I trust, he never will: At least not till my head is laid."⁷ But for public worship, Wesley still attended church and cathedral—not always to preach, but ever for public worship.

Being preacher and worshiper, Wesley shared his expectations of preachers and preaching. For one thing, he would never divorce preaching from decorum. He admonished,

Scream no more . . . Speak as earnestly as you can; but do not scream. Speak with all your heart; but with a moderate voice. . . . Herein be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. I often speak loud; often vehemently; but I never scream; I never strain myself. I dare not: I know it would be a sin against God and my own soul.⁸

He also shared counsel on sermon content. In response to the question, "What is the best general method of preaching?" he stated: "(1.) To invite. (2.) To convince. (3.) To offer Christ. (4.) To build up; and to do this in some measure in every sermon."⁹

Wesley would amplify that by adding, "The most effectual way of preaching Christ, is to preach him in all his offices, and to declare his law

as well as his gospel, both to believers and unbelievers. Let us strongly and closely insist upon inward and outward holiness, in all its branches."¹⁰

"Some think, preaching the law only; others, preaching the gospel only. I think, neither the one nor the other; but duly mixing both, in every place, if not in every sermon."¹¹

To make sure we understand his intent, Wesley defined "law" as "the commands of Christ, briefly comprised in the Sermon on the Mount," and the gospel as the comforting "love of God."¹²

While addressing the subject of preaching, note that Wesley's custom was to wear "gown and cassock" while preaching.¹³ He felt debate over vestments to be the result of "Christian zeal," and lamenting, "O shame to man!"¹⁴

Being an adherent of The Book of Common Prayer, Wesley was a faithful follower of the Christian calendar. His *Journals* are repetitious with his notations identifying certain calendar days. One noted deficiency in this habit, however, is the lack of entries related to Easter—so lacking, in fact, as to make it obvious when it is

entered. One such was April 30, 1777:

Easter-day was a solemn and comfortable day, wherein God was remarkably present with his people. During the Octave I administered the Lord's Supper every morning, after the example of the Primitive Church.¹⁵

(The "Octave" is Holy Week, Palm Sunday through Easter. The "Primitive Church" is the post-New Testament church of the first three centuries.)

One feast day outstanding to Wesley was All Saints' Day, November 1. He has several references to it, including terms of endearment for it.

"Being All-Saints' Day, (a festival I dearly love,) I could not but observe the admirable propriety with which the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for the day are suited to each other."¹⁶

He would have this further word: "How superstitious are they who scruple giving God solemn thanks for the lives and deaths of his saints!"¹⁷

The preceding illustrates Wesley's regard for days (feasts) that singularly unite the church in a focused observance and worship. One Christmas Day he expressed, "We had many happy opportunities of

celebrating the solemn Feast-days, according to the design of their institution."¹⁸

Some of the energy for Wesley's enthusiasm of feast days is explained in these two entries, dated June 24 and July 7, 1755:

Observing in that valuable book . . . "Historical Collections," the custom of Christian congregations in all ages to set apart seasons of solemn thanksgivings, I was amazed and ashamed that we had never done this, after all the blessings we had received: And many to whom I mentioned it gladly agreed to set apart a day for that purpose. . . .

. . . our first day of solemn thanksgiving for the numberless spiritual blessings we have received. And I believe it was a day which will not soon be forgotten.¹⁹

Feast days, or *theme days*, were important aids to public worship for Wesley. They would evoke specific attitudes and responses in unison from the largest numbers of individuals. Therefore he advised, "Everywhere avail yourself of the great festivals, by preaching on the occasion, and singing the hymns."²⁰

NOTES

1. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3rd ed., 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978), "Journal," 4:58. Hereafter called *Works*.

2. *Ibid.* 1:85.

3. *Ibid.* 2:423.

4. *Ibid.*, 165.

5. *Ibid.* 3:479.

6. *Ibid.* 2:491.

7. *Ibid.*, 480.

8. "Letter to Mr. John King," *Works* 12:331.

9. "Minutes of Several Conversations," *Works* 8:317.

10. *Ibid.*, 318.

11. "Letter on Preaching Christ," *Works* 11:486.

12. *Ibid.*

13. "Journal," *Works* 1:430.

14. Sermon "On Zeal," *Works* 7:64.

15. "Journal," *Works* 4:95.

16. *Ibid.* 3:302.

17. *Ibid.* 2:388.

18. *Ibid.* 4:6.

19. *Ibid.* 2:336.

20. "Minutes of Several Conversations," *Works* 8:317.

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The Christian Ministry

AN EFFECTIVE PASTOR IS AN EFFECTIVE PERSON

A pastor's life can be a tug-of-war between commitments. Many are falling by the way because they have juggled too many obligations, hoping for perfection, and have found the ministry an impossible task.

Much of this problem can be attributed to stilted views of excellence pushed in the marketplace today. The "prescription" for excellence is long hours, undistracted goals, and great sacrifice of personal pleasure.

For instance, in their popular book, *A Passion for Excellence*, Nancy Austin and Tom Peters spend page after page outlining the elements of excellence. The book finishes with a revealing chapter titled "What Price Excellence?" in which they attempt to place the subject in perspective with the rest of life. "Excellence is a high cost item," they say. "If you prefer to spend all your spare time growing roses or playing with your children, I like you better, but do not complain that you are not being promoted fast enough."

Their point to the working world is

clear. We must say no to much of life in order to achieve their brand of excellence. It is the old story of upside-down priorities for the sake of profit or esteem.

The minister who falls into this trap will find that there is not time to be a family person, or a good neighbor, to develop solid relationships, or spend time in much-needed leisure. With all the things that make up personhood gone, this pastor cannot be effective.

Books and articles on the minister's work are endless. They all have good ideas for fruitful labor in the Kingdom, but many of them have one flaw. They adopt the world's approach to excellence. Some of them make an outright claim that pastors can accomplish all they recommend if only they are willing to work hard enough. The result is that many pastors (especially young ones) get the idea that they can do more than is humanly possible. And church leaders who read this information get outlandish expectations of their ministers.

There is another way. Excellence

in ministry must begin with the assumption that the good pastor is a well-rounded person. While there are several major divisions of work to be handled, the effective pastor will look closely at his gifts and calling and then make a tough decision about a ministry focus. Once this happens, a ministry style will emerge with results in the life of the church (some good and some bad), while giving the pastor the opportunity to major on his strengths.

There are three major areas of a minister's work. First, the pastor preaches and teaches. This task area also includes the essential studying, reading, writing, and sermon and worship service preparation. Second, there is pastoral care. I use the term "pastoring" in its specific sense of counseling, visiting the sick, discipling, personal evangelism, and other areas of ministry that require a personal touch. Third, there is administration. This is the work of planning, organizing, recruiting, and conducting church programs and activities. It includes writing bulletins, maintaining the church

by Kenneth Orr *pastor, Calvary Presbyterian Church, Glendale, Calif.*

office, working with church officers and staff, and many other details that demand the energy and attention of the pastor in the average church.

Every pastor will do many of these tasks in the course of a month, but the effective pastor will realize that, given time constraints, they cannot all be done with perfection. A tough decision will be made about which ministry area will be done best, reducing the load in the other two areas of work and delegating responsibilities to elders, deacons, and lay leaders.

Peter Drucker says, "The effective executive focuses on contribution. He looks up from his work and outward toward his goals. He asks: 'What can I contribute that will significantly affect the performance and the results of the institution I serve?'" (*The Effective Executive*, 52).

This choice will not mean that the other two areas of ministry will be totally neglected in the pastor's schedule. If, for instance, a time focus is on preaching and teaching, the pastor will be sure to give several hours each week to visitation or counseling. A concentrated ministry style should not be extremely lopsided.

An example of this decision to focus ministry is found in the apostle Paul's relationship to the Corinthian church. In his First Epistle he said, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1:17, NIV). Paul is making the point that he baptized only a few Christians in the course of his work there. He was not saying that baptism was unimportant, but that the pastoral work (which included baptism) was left to others so that Paul could focus his ministry on evangelism.

Here is what can be done. First, the minister can obtain an inventory and evaluation of his gifts and calling, with help from church lead-

ership. Every pastor can see some aspects of ministry that are done with more vigor than others. This insight, along with prayer and counsel, will lead to a decision about where to put the emphasis in ministry.

Next, the calendar sitting on the desk will be slashed and patched to tangibly reflect that decision. The pastor will say no to work that distracts from the focus, and responsibility will be regularly delegated.

Now the pastor is ready to be a real human again. The yard can be beautified, the children can be treated tenderly, romance can be brought back into the marriage, neighbors can be invited over for a barbecue—all this without having to promise that "next week we'll try to squeeze it in."

This effective person is now free to become an effective pastor.

Of course, the results of this plan will be seen in the life of the church. Some results will not be welcomed by parishioners. But who says that every church must excel in every area of ministry? Most churches and most ministers have strengths and weaknesses. This plan simply acts according to that reality. Take a look at some of the positive and negative results this approach could have on the life of the church.

The pastor who chooses to focus on pastoring (visiting, counseling, etc.) can have a very personal ministry. While preaching at other churches, I have often heard people complain that their pastor never has time to see them in their home. Many people like a pastor who focuses on this area of ministry. In time, this ministry style will probably breed a congregation of warm, caring people whose strength is their loving and supportive fellowship. But there may well be a trade-off here: This church might be weak in its pulpit and teaching work and have fewer organized programs


than the church down the street.

Another pastor might concentrate time on preaching and teaching, giving up to 25 or 30 hours every week to this task. There should be a strong pulpit ministry in this church. Sunday services will be the highlight of the people's week. This ministry style will very likely be weak in pastoral care (depending on the effectiveness of church leaders) and limited again in organized programs.

Finally, an administrative ministry style can have a church with a strong, people-oriented program and workers carefully trained and placed in their circles of activity. But people might recognize weaknesses in the pulpit and in the pastor's effectiveness in counseling, hospital visitation, and other personalized ministries.

Of course, these are generalizations. A few broadly gifted pastors may function relatively well in each area. Most, however, will be wise to major in their areas of strength and find others in their churches who can pick up on the weak areas. Many pastors will find that success in one area of work gives unexpected fruit in other labors. For example, some ministers who decide to focus on pastoral care in the church and give only a few hours each week to sermon preparation may find renewed preaching power because the time spent among the people helps him discern their needs.

Pastors are fearfully and wonderfully human. Not many of us can score an A on every point of our job descriptions. If we try, most of us are doomed to frustration at best—and failure at worst.

Most of us, though, can do one thing well. By freeing ourselves to be ourselves, we can be effective people in our families and communities—and effective shepherds of God's great flock. 

KNOW THY PEOPLE

Knowledge of the truth helps to remove obstacles and to deliver from compulsion, but knowledge is the very essence of positive freedom, the power of choosing carefully and being able to act wisely.

—Henry G. Sprinkle, Jr.

One of the great challenges facing pastors today is that of getting to know and understand their people. With superficial relationships seemingly the norm, and countless numbers in society who feel useless and alone, it is more important than ever for ministers of the gospel to identify who their people are and find out what makes them tick.

It is possible for you to know your people, and for them to know you, too. It isn't going to be easy. Some people are reluctant to disclose much about themselves. Others expect you to be able to read their minds. Your people might be willing, but you may be the one holding back. Whatever the situation, the benefits far outweigh the problems one might encounter on the road to discovery.

Knowing your people and what they're about has the potential to make you a better pastor. It can serve to improve your preaching. It will bring focus to your time of prayer. People are what the church is about. So whatever can be done to improve the relationship between pastor and people merits our best efforts. As the spiritual leader of your church, it is up to you to take the initiative in this effort.

Who Are Your People?

Start with your own family. No matter how pressing the needs of the church, your family should be your first priority.

Take a look at those who consider this

church their home. This will include members and nonmembers. People who no longer attend either the church you pastor or any other, but still live in the area, are your people. You may not feel this way, but chances are they do. People with whom you come in contact throughout the week may think of you as their pastor. These could be civic and community people without a church home.

Those in full-time Christian service who came out of your church are your people. Men and women in armed services may also remain connected to your church and thus be your people. Those attending college are your people, too.

Just remember that your church has a sphere of influence and responsibility far greater than the Sunday morning attendance figures may indicate.

What Does It Mean to Know Your People?

There are two words in the Greek that refer to the word know. The first is *ginōskō*, which means "to know by learning about." The other word is *oīda*, which refers to "the knowledge and understanding that comes from experience." Both words have application in our discussion, and pastors may simply have to learn to strike a balance between the two. But *oīda* comes closer to the kind of knowing that may prove to be more beneficial to pastors. While somewhat harder to realize because of the time necessary to build a personal relationship, *oīda* offers the prospects of a longer-lasting relationship between pastor and people.

To know your people means to love and appreciate them for who they are and not for their titles or positions in life. To know your people is to understand that just about everyone carries some kind of burden or concern. To know your people is to be able to share in the load that they carry.



by Russell D. Bredholt, Jr. *president, Atlantic Communications, Inc. Orlando, Fla.*

Knowing this, do you still want to know more?

Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about a pastor knowing his people.

Why Should We Know?

The issue of knowing begins with God knowing us. And in spite of what He knows, His love and concern for our lives remains strong. Beginning with God's love for us should help with our desire to know better the people He has called us to serve.

Perhaps it would be best to think of this building on three levels:

- Knowing God
- Knowing Yourself
- Knowing Your People

What is the benefit to God in knowing all about us? It allows Him to better care for us and meet our needs. The same is true for a pastor and people. We are better able to see how the relationship works between pastor and people through Jesus Christ and the analogy of the shepherd and his sheep.

The Old Testament speaks often of this relationship and the responsibilities that accompany such an important calling. In Prov. 27:23, we read: "Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds" (NKJV).

Jesus speaks to the issue of leadership and communication when He says: "And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice" (John 10:4, NKJV). "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers" (v. 5, NKJV).

Verse 14 reminds us that knowing works both ways. Jesus says, "And I know My sheep, and am known by My own" (NKJV).

If you have a problem being with your people or have no desire to know them any better than you do, maybe it's time to pray and ask God to check your heart and spirit. There is no doubt about the role that knowing plays in the work of the pastor. So if you're having trouble with this area of your ministry, pray and ask God to help you. You may want to talk this over with someone you trust. It is an issue that will need to be resolved if you are to remain in the pastorate.

Jesus says that there are two kinds of shepherds: one who is



called, the other who is simply a hireling. One does it for love; the other for the money. What is your primary motive in being a shepherd? It is a hard question, but one that should be asked and answered on a regular basis.

Some pastors who are not sure of their motives or identities have only to look to verse 11. Here Jesus says that He knows who He is: "I am the good shepherd." There is for Him no higher calling, no other calling. And He knows that His responsibility extends to those who are not in the fold. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (v. 16, NKJV).

Knowing your people begins with your knowing God. Secure in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His love for you, you are then free to discover with a pure heart just exactly who your people are.

This sequence is so important because it enables you to want to know and love even the most difficult people you encounter. Nothing except the love of Christ dwelling in your heart will allow you to accomplish this end.

Why should you know your people? Because it allows you to relate better to them. It helps you understand why they feel the way they do. It serves to improve your communication with people. Knowing where they are, you begin to speak in a way in which they will better understand spiritual truths.

Jesus Christ could minister no other way. The example God gives through His Son as the Good Shepherd is the one you are to follow.

What Should We Know?

It wouldn't take long to come up with a rather lengthy list of what pastors should know about their people (or vice versa). For our purposes, we are providing a checklist of things that are integral to the spiritual development of your people.

George Gallup, Jr., writing in *Religion in America*, provides the following as a basic "need to know":

- What are the current levels of belief, spiritual commitment, and stewardship of your people?
- How do your people put their faith into practice in their daily lives?
- What are the physical and spiritual needs of the people the church is supposed to serve?
- What is bringing people to your church? What is keeping them away?

In *Between Two Worlds*, John Stott makes a good case for a pastor knowing his people. He adds to the list provided by Mr. Gallup by stating that pastors should know:

- Who are their people?
- What kind of work do they do?
- What are their interests outside church?
- What is their family life like?

Some other basic pieces of information might include:

- What are the church's expectations of the pastor? And staff?
- Do your people know what to expect of them?

Feel free to add to or take away from the list if you so choose. I only offer these as a way to get you started with the process.

How Can You Know Your People?

There are a variety of ways to get to know people. Most allow for two-way communication:

1. Interaction with your people, preferably outside the church setting. The purpose may be spiritual or social. The real intent is fellowship, not to collect information.
2. It could mean spending time with people, either in your home or theirs; visiting their place of work (with an appointment); or maybe sharing a meal in a restaurant with a men's or women's fellowship group.
3. Recreation also offers an excellent way to be together with your people. Proficiency in athletics helps but is not a requirement for

participation. If you can't play, then consider attending and showing your support.

4. Share in the joys and sorrows of your people. This is the *oida* that was mentioned previously. The sharing of special experiences with your people does much to develop the relationship. Births, deaths, sickness, promotions, new jobs, loss of jobs, marriages, divorces, graduations, new homes, and moving away are all times when a pastor needs to be present to share and remind us of the spiritual significance of these events. Unless there is a good reason for not being available, you need to be near your people during major changes in their lives.

5. Conduct a survey. There may be times when you need to know something from your people, and time is of the essence. If this is the case, or you want to get feedback from the congregation as a whole, then you may wish to consider conducting a survey. This can be done in one of several ways. First, you can arrange to have a questionnaire developed and then distributed by the best means available. The survey can be done in church before or after service. It can be done by mail. You can drop it off and pick it up a few days later. You can even use the telephone to survey your people.

A second option available to you is to conduct a series of focus groups. You can spend time meeting with small groups (8 to 10 people) to discuss a particular topic in depth.

6. Setting up times in advance, you could meet with Sunday School classes or Bible studies. Spend time with the choir, ushers and greeters, bus drivers, and Sunday School teachers. Let them know you are there to find out what they think. Don't go into these meetings with the intent of handing out more work assignments. You are there to learn about your people.
7. Observations. Don't overlook this method of getting to know your people. Especially if you have recently come to this church. Someone once said that leaders



who come into a new situation would be better off many times to hit the ground thinking instead of running. They could have added observation, which is a good companion to thinking. Be slow to speak and quick to listen.

8. Don't forget the community. One way to know about the people where you live is to get involved in legitimate activities. School functions and various neighborhood groups are just a couple of ways for you to get to know the people of your area. Joining a civic club also allows you to meet business and community leaders.

Does the size of church have anything to do with the way you get to know your people? Yes. The pastor of a church that averages 150 to 200 regular attendance has a much better chance of knowing through experience. Pastors of larger churches may have to rely on knowing from learning about as well as from experience. Total reliance on knowing from a distance poses its own risks.

All of the methods mentioned here could be carried out by any pastor, no matter what the size of the congregation or geographical area. It may take more time in larger churches located in urban or suburban areas.

Pastors who lead extremely large congregations or "superchurches" may have to rely to some degree on staff and key lay leadership throughout the church. However, on a periodic basis, every pastor should meet

with people who are *not* on the church board and who have no official capacity within the church.

This way of knowing could be one of the most healthy exercises a pastor goes through. It will provide some much-needed perspective on you, the programs, and the church itself.

What Do You Do with What You Learn?

Sometimes you respond right away, especially in a crisis situation. Other times, you merely file away what you have learned for future reference. Experience is probably the biggest teacher at this point. But knowing what and what *not* to do will come primarily from personal experience, both good and bad.

You have the opportunity to share something about yourself every time you preach or teach. Laity, for the most part, have less of an opportunity to share about their lives. Pastor, if you feel this is important, you are going to have to make time to hear from your people.

There is a place for the pastor's spouse in all of this. Space does not permit us to explore this very far, except to say that a spouse can play an important role in both interaction and observation.

The pastor can't be everywhere at once, so others must be relied upon at times to help fill in the information gaps. These must be reliable sources, however. And a pastor would do well to follow up on his own whenever possible.

What are the chances of being misunderstood? Quite good, actually. Whenever you deal with people, there are going to be times when you may say or do the inappropriate thing. Someone is likely to get his feelings hurt. Occasionally, people have left the church over such misunderstandings. It has caused some to leave the pastorate. A willingness to forgive and ask forgiveness plays an important role in getting to know people.

You must press on in Jesus' name.

Remember, it is the "good shepherd" who cares about the sheep, even those not in the fold. A pastor seeking to model Jesus Christ will do as He did and make it a priority to know the people and, with God's help, tend to their needs.



BILLY GRAHAM AS EVANGELIST

Billy Graham came to town for a 10-day crusade in the wake of the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker debacle. The press in Colorado had taken every opportunity to attack religious groups, and all of us Christians were wondering how they would handle Billy Graham, the services, and the organization.

The media began coverage of the crusade weeks before the actual event. They interviewed Graham and the team, organization leaders, and people on the street about the crusade. It was clear, though, that they were most interested in Graham, not the program. The pre-crusade coverage was positive. At times the press went to great lengths to explain how different this evangelist was from the television personalities. They pointed out his meager salary relative to other men of his influence, his clear avoidance of explosive issues, and his ability to be among politicians but not become one. We all wondered what was ahead. When would the dam of reserve break and the floods of criticism come pouring through?

I had heard Dr. Graham on radio, television, and in one-night rallies before, but I had never sat through 10 days of his ministry. By the third night I understood why the media was so positive about the man. He

was unreal. He spoke with power. I felt I was listening to a prophet. He voiced phrases every minister of the gospel has spoken, but they resounded with "thus says the Lord." I was struck by his eloquent simplicity. If he used any words a third grader could not understand, I missed them. He had no showmanship. To criticize him would be to indict oneself. I sensed in him the very thing I as a Christian longed to do: honor Christ with my whole being. His power flowed from simple, childlike faith. Service after service I was struck as this gifted man openly revealed his total trust in Christ. It was awesome.

Though his sermon changed every night, he had but one message: "Come to Jesus." He called sinners to repentance, backsliders to reaffirmation.

His presence was so profound that as he entered and exited the stadium, the crowds had to be held back. His effect on the community as a whole made me think of John the Baptist. He influenced the governor, the media, and all the churches. Those sitting on the platform were Colorado's most influential people.

Like John the Baptist, Graham never got the message of Jesus tangled up with himself. It never entered the listener's mind to think of him

without thinking of Jesus. His illustrations were personal, but they always showed the great power of God, the saving power of the gospel, and the sureness of God's Word. As I reflected on one message, I realized virtually every illustration was from his personal encounters with others. He told of these personal experiences without making the listener aware that he was even there. He had uncanny skills in using his world without putting himself in the picture.

Another facet of Graham's presentation was his relevance. Every night his illustrations were from events that had recently affected our lives. He shared up-to-date information on AIDS, the Iran-Iraq war, Supreme Court decisions, local politics, today's weather, the best things in the community. I felt like he had lived in our state all his life and was concerned about the same things I was. He seemed to express my private inner feelings better than anyone I had ever talked with. Time after time I wanted to say to him, "You are the first person I have ever met who describes me so precisely."

Graham demonstrated his willingness to trust the Holy Spirit to do God's work. He, the team, and the planning committee had prepared well, but the services had an air of

holy indifference about them. They did not worry about the weather, the jets, the helicopters, the endless traffic on the freeways, the protesters, the smokers, the countless little things that went wrong. Most of the guests had a relaxed approach, and though the artists were outstanding, there was no feeling of showmanship. The invitation was mind-boggling. I felt no pressure, no manipulation, no tricks. After he preached, he simply asked people to come to the front to announce their decision to follow Jesus. He made a few more statements on why and how, but it was clear this part of the service was wholly God's. He felt and acted like no one came to Christ unless God led him. The force of his trust dumped the responsibility of responding clearly in our laps.

The whole experience made me think of what turn-of-the-century camp meetings must have been like. Those evangelists lived among the people. They had to be genuine. The people were there all week to hear the preaching, so there was no urgency to get saved "tonight." Instead, there was an atmosphere of trust in the power of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit.

I have wondered what all this means to me as a pastor. I am es-

pecially interested in the lessons I can learn for revival in the local church.

I thought to myself, Oh, if we only had an evangelist like Billy Graham! I know that is an irrational dream. Each night one of the leading pastors would give an offering message. His impassioned message seemed anemic compared to Dr. Graham. I know of no preacher who comes close to him in power to proclaim the gospel and call men to repentance. But that doesn't keep me from wanting evangelists to be as gifted as he.

Then I thought, If I were an evangelist, what would I feel to go to a crusade as well prepared for, organized, and promoted as this was? That, too, is irrational. No local church has the resources and talents to put together something of the magnitude of a Billy Graham Crusade. It took the whole state to do it. The chairman of the crusade committee donated two full years away from his job to put the thing together. The budget was \$1.8 million.

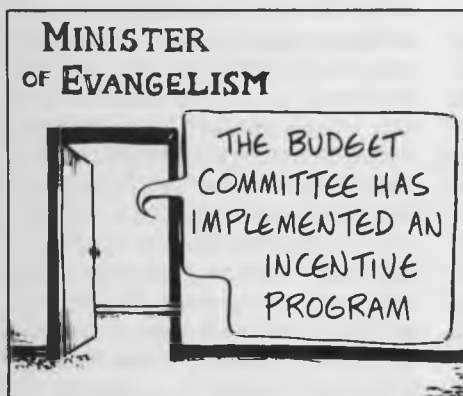
Since it is easier to see others' problems, my thoughts centered on how evangelists could spruce up a bit. First of all, they could come for no salary, like Billy Graham does. They could preach 22 minutes, keep

up-to-date on where we are, have simple altar calls calling men and women to Christ, and quit talking about themselves so much. Nice, but impractical. I cannot change evangelists; better get to myself.

Now, what can I learn? The biggie for me is a willingness to accept the evangelist as he is. After all, he's not Billy Graham; never will be. Yet underneath it all, I desperately want him to be that: great as a giant sequoia and humble as a toad. Somehow I have to give up those irrational expectations. I must learn to receive evangelists as they are, warts and halos. I must realize that, generally, evangelists tend to be loners, extremely up and down emotionally, prone to self-pity, and insensitive to those around them. Most of the time they are more interested in their own worlds than in ours. Evangelists tend to judge their worth by their honorariums, attendance at services, and responses to their altar calls. The basic temperament necessary to be an evangelist causes these characteristics to become prominent.

I must learn to see and understand that evangelists are gifted in reading congregations and overlooking attempts to reject the gospel. They have hidden reserves of energy enabling them to rise to the

BEYOND BELIEF



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challenge. They give of themselves mercilessly in times of need. They are not afraid of public confrontation and can force issues. They will force the pastor, the congregation, and the board to deal with them fairly. They are quick to size up a church and put their finger on its most tender spot. They can get in a few days to the heart of a matter that the church has been unwilling to face for years. They can do the same for individuals.

The church needs evangelists, but it's tough to accept their weaknesses. Billy Graham seems to be one of the very few who has the strengths without the accompanying weaknesses. (I suspect he has developed skills to contain them among a few select friends. The huge expenditure of psychic energy evangelistic preaching requires must cause these weaknesses to surface.)

I personally need to accept evangelists as they are. To subtly demand that they be more like pastors could remove their fire.

Also, I need to allow for an evangelist's weaknesses as best I can. I know of no self-supporting evangelists. He needs a good salary—better than mine, because my self-worth is not tied up in my weekly check, and I know I have another

check coming next week.

I need to give him special attention, letting him know how happy we are to have him supplement my ministry. If the accommodations cannot be the finest, I need to let him know I did my best. I need to be sure he has time alone when he needs it, and fellowship when he needs that. I should observe whether he likes to be around children, families, youth, or peers. I should then either bring those people into his life or shield him from them. I need to encourage him in the services.

I must learn to trust the Holy Spirit to work through the evangelist. After all, I am a pastor. My heart is so close to the congregation that I become protective when God needs to do some spiritual surgery.

If doing all these things is tough, some advice from a pastor friend may help. He often uses evangelists who are known for their intolerable behavior. I asked him how he did it. His reply, "We rent the best room we can find, provide the best food in the best places, and ask the evangelist to show up for services." I noticed that's exactly how Billy Graham is handled.

Evangelists are an endangered species because we do not understand their needs. We call on them to come over to our side, but in the

process, they are losing their fire. They feel the pressure, and their weaknesses intensify; and the pressure grows, and the weaknesses grow. We've put them on the defensive, and that magnifies the problem.

I, for one, want to try letting evangelists be evangelists. They are like dentists. They keep us clean and straight and reveal the rotten, but they are not our favorite people to have around.

Before leaving the subject, I see two areas I would appreciate evangelists watching more closely. One is relevance. Too often, they are out of touch. Sermons are filled with old material. It seems to me as though every sermon should have something from current civic and world events. I get the feeling evangelists have no idea what the world outside my door is like. I have to struggle to hear them saying things that touch my world. The second is simplicity. I want an evangelist who does not get tied up in counseling, technical, theological, or manipulative altar calls. I want him to preach and call people to salvation.

In those things, Billy Graham stirred in me a great desire to see evangelists in local church revivals copy him.

PREACHER'S EXCHANGE

WANTED: *Why I Am a Nazarene*, by C. W. Fisher, for ENC library. Contact Joan J. Holt, Assistant Librarian, Eastern Nazarene College, 23 E. Elm Ave., Quincy, MA 02170.

WANTED: Copies of *The American Holiness Journal*, *Christian Holiness Pulpit Digest*, and journals of the Wesleyan Theological Society, from 1980 to the present. Also wanted are books on holiness and the history of the holiness movement. Contact Larry P. Stover, P.O. Box 302, St. Bernice, IN 47875; 317-832-3113.

WANTED: Old *Manuals* from the Church of the Nazarene. I have all since 1936, and the 1908 commemorative issue; need 1932 back. Contact Ray Warne, Box 333, Dillonvale, OH 43917.

FOR SALE: Full set (23 vols.) of *Biblical Illustrator* commentaries. Excellent condition, \$170; or will trade for a complete set of *Pulpit Commentaries* or a complete set of *Expositions of the Holy Scriptures*, by Alexander MacLaren. Contact H. Mark Else, 2114 Bellevue Ave., Bettendorf, IA 52722; 319-355-0700.

FOR SALE: *Interpreter's Bible* (12-vol. set); \$100, and I'll pay the postage. Contact Mendell Taylor, 1716 N. Glade, Bethany, OK 73008; 405-495-4299.

FREE TO A GOOD HOME: Collection of *Preacher's Magazine* back issues, 1966 to present, with some random issues 1964-65. (I'm not sure I want to move them again!) Contact Barry Mohnney, P.O. Box 561, California, PA 15419; 412-938-2589.

CHANGING PATTERNS IN MINISTERIAL COMPENSATION

A review of the patterns of ministerial compensation over several decades would indicate that significant changes have taken place. Gone are the days when the majority of ministers received a large portion of their compensation in the form of food and clothing supplied by members of the congregation.

A close look at today's situation reveals that important changes are again taking place. These have the potential to significantly impact the pattern of future ministerial compensation. The implications of the 1986 Tax Reform Act are now dawning on many and are among the reasons causing these changes.

THE IMPACT OF THE 1986 TAX REFORM ACT

The 1986 Tax Reform Act was the most significant change in tax law since its last major overhaul in 1954. Along with many other things for which it is blamed, the act's revisions make it much more difficult for ministers to avoid paying income taxes on unreimbursed business expenses. For example, unreimbursed automobile expenses will no longer be deducted dollar for dollar from compensation but must be deducted as a part of itemized deductions on Schedule A. With the new higher standard deduction allowance many parsonage families will find it impossible to itemize deductions. The result will be an increase in income tax for those min-

isters who can no longer deduct unreimbursed automobile expenses.

The same problem applies to many of the business and professional expenses that a minister incurs in the exercise of ministry. In addition to the higher standard deduction allowance, these expenses must also exceed 2 percent of the adjusted gross income reported on the federal tax return. Entertainment expenses that have previously been 100 percent deductible are now only 80 percent deductible if not reimbursed.

These changes will cause many ministers to reevaluate their compensation packages.

THE COST OF A MINISTER VS.

THE COST OF A MINISTRY

For too long churches and ministers have lumped together into a single concept the "cost of a minister" and the "cost of a ministry." These are actually two distinct concepts. For proper planning they must be kept separate.

The "cost of a ministry" includes those costs related to the work of the minister and are more properly a part of local church expenses. Among these are the expenses that will be incurred without regard to which minister is serving the congregation at a particular time.

On the other hand, the "cost of a minister" relates to those items that are directly and indirectly related to

by Dean Wessels *administrator, Board of Pensions and Benefits USA, Church of the Nazarene*

the particular parsonage family serving the church at the current time. These costs include the general categories of employee benefits and actual salary.

The *least* advantageous way for a minister to be paid is to be given a lump sum amount out of which the minister must provide for professional expenses, employee benefits, and cash salary. Unfortunately, in most situations where these are lumped together, both the local church and the minister assume that the total amount of the "package" is compensation. In reality, part is for the "cost of a ministry" and another part is for the "cost of a minister."

WHAT IS THE COST OF A MINISTRY?

The following list includes business and professional expenses that are identified with the "cost of a ministry." They are more properly designated local church expenses than part of compensation.

When the minister is expected to pay for these items out of the amount provided in the church's "package," it will result in the parsonage family having to pay higher taxes on money they used to operate the local church's ministry. However, when these items are "reimbursed" (even if it means dividing the minister's "package" into two distinct amounts), it will usually result in lower taxes, a more accurate reflection of the minister's real compensation, and a more simple tax return to file.

The cost of a ministry includes the following business and professional expense reimbursements:

- Automobile
- Continuing Education
- Convention
- Hospitality
- Pastor's Professional Library
- Dues to Professional Organizations
- Church Supplies (birthday cards, postage, etc.)
- Pastor's gifts "expected" to be given to members (wedding, baby, etc.)

WHAT IS THE COST OF A MINISTER?

The "cost of a minister" is made up of appropriate employee benefits, provision for housing, and the actual cash salary paid.

Some of the items that are related to these are not discretionary, since the minister and family have no choice as to how the money is spent. The items of a nondiscretionary nature include most of the employee benefits listed below. However, many of these employee benefits can be provided on a tax-free basis if paid for directly by the church employer. The following list includes the type of basic employee benefits that should be provided in a well-balanced compensation package:

- Social Security
- Tax-Sheltered Annuity
- Health Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Group Term Life Insurance
- Long-Term Disability Insurance
- AD & D Insurance
- Cash Bonus
- Paid Holidays
- Vacation


The "cost of a minister" also includes the provision for housing—either a cash housing allowance or a parsonage plus utilities. Most churches provide a parsonage and utilities. Therefore in most cases, the minister has no discretion as to how that part of compensation will be spent. The minister cannot voluntarily choose to live in a less-expensive home and thereby free up income to cover other personal needs. Also, the minister cannot build equity for retirement housing. The church board should recognize that when the minister leaves the church, a significant portion of the compensation that has been paid is left behind in the form of the parsonage. Fortunately, many churches are now recognizing their obligation to assist the minister in preparing for retirement housing by depositing monthly amounts into the minister's Tax-Sheltered Annuity account on a tax-advantaged basis. This is an ap-

propriate part of the compensation package.

The remaining item in the "cost of a minister" is the cash salary. This is the amount that the minister and family use to meet living expenses and over which they have some discretion in spending. Among the factors that many church boards consider when determining their minister's cash salary are the following: the job requirements, the individual's professional qualifications, educational background, personal experience and expertise, the socioeconomic factors affecting the pay scale in the local community and such subjective factors as merit pay for a job well done. Cost-of-living adjustments should be considered in each annual salary review of all church employees.

THE NEW PATTERN OF COMPENSATION

Ministers and churches are realizing the need to differentiate between the "cost of having a ministry" and the "cost of having a minister." More and more churches are recognizing that their "package" approach does not provide nearly as much true cash salary as they had thought. They are making efforts to reimburse above the "package" amount for business and professional expenses.

Other churches are financially unable to increase above the amount committed to their "package." However, they can still help the minister by differentiating between these two kinds of costs and by allowing the minister to recategorize the total amount provided by the church into these two distinct expense categories. The result of this restructuring costs the church no additional funds but does provide a legitimate opportunity for the minister to reduce the potential impact of taxes. 

The information contained in this article is of a general nature. It is not offered as specific legal or tax "advice." Each person, local church board, and district should evaluate their own unique situation in consultation with their local legal and tax advisers.

GETTING PUBLICITY IN THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER



One of the most obvious ways to publish the Good News abroad is through the pages of your local paper. Yet few pastors seem to be aware of the most effective ways of making use of the newspaper.

Publishing articles about your church's activities accomplishes two things. First, it is a way of gaining public recognition for your church workers—for example, those who directed a youth activity or planned a church picnic.

But second, and more importantly, it helps to make the community aware of the work of your congregation in spreading the gospel. Of course, the gospel is not a product to be merchandized, and publicity can never be a substitute for a

live church. But if things are happening, people should know about it.

What sort of newspaper are we talking about? Primarily, the weekly papers that serve a small town, a neighborhood within a metropolitan area, or perhaps a small daily in a county seat. Large metropolitan dailies pose another set of problems that we will not deal with here.

The best thing about small newspapers is that the editors are for you. Short, chatty articles about local people doing local things are the bread and butter of the typical small newspaper. So let your editor know what's happening:

To get publicity on a consistent basis and to build a good relationship with the editor, keep these principles in mind:

1. *Submit your material in good form.* Your "press release" should be typed (and not in all capital letters) and double-spaced. Journalists are traditionally picky about grammar and spelling, even (perhaps especially) those who aren't particularly good at it themselves, so the use of reasonable care will make a good impression. Part of good form is finding out the newspaper's deadline and respecting it.

2. *Be prompt.* If you wait a month after something has happened before turning in a story on it, the editor will probably conclude that it isn't really very important.

3. *Include names.* If your youth choir sings at another church, list the names of all the teens who par-

by Norman Styles Sallisaw, Okla.

ticipated. The teens will enjoy seeing their names in the paper, a pleasure few outgrow; and making his readers happy will make the editor happy.

4. *Respect the editor's professional judgment.* Bakers bake, preachers preach, and editors edit. That means your story may be cut or revised; it is part of an editor's responsibility to maintain a certain uniformity of style in his publication. Sometimes, because of space limitations or human error, an article will be left out entirely. Don't assume that the omission is a personal affront; ask if there was a problem and offer to cooperate.

5. *Express yourself appropriately.* A news article is not the place to try to sneak in a sermon or a little devotional. Stick to the facts! If you want to publish your sermons, hire a printer.

Of course, sometimes an opinion should be included in a story, but it should always be attributed to

somebody. For example, don't say: "Mrs. Smith's devotional at the ladies' prayer meeting was very uplifting." Instead say: "Mrs. Jones, hostess of the ladies' prayer meeting, said Mrs. Smith's devotional was very uplifting." You can say whatever you want to say, as long as you don't present opinion as fact.

6. *Got a picture? Great!* Pictures benefit you by making it more likely that a person who is just thumbing through the paper, glancing at the headlines, will notice the article about your church. Pictures benefit the newspaper by adding visual interest to the page. Most papers are glad to get good pictures.


Technical requirements differ according to the printing process used by the individual newspaper. Ask your editor about it. Generally speaking, sharp black-and-white pictures reproduce better than color pictures.

7. *Advertise.* Journalists like to think of themselves as a profession

dedicated to serving the public, but on the other hand a newspaper is a business also. Let us hope that you never meet an editor crass enough to refuse to publish a legitimate story because your church never advertises, although such creatures are known to exist.

However, if any paper has space to print only one of two stories, both of about equal news value, one from First Church, which advertises sometimes, and one from Second Church, which never advertises, the First Church story is going to get preference.

So even a small ad two or three times a year will do a lot to maintain a good relationship with any editor—not to mention the value of the advertising itself as another means of reaching the public with information about special events in the life of your church.

8. *Keep trying.* The writer has not yet been born whose material was never rejected. Be persistent. 

FIVE STEPS TO INSURE FAILURE

by David J. Felter

Failure is the easiest thing in the world to accomplish. And yet it is often explained or rationalized until we are able to present a plausible excuse for our lack of success. There are really only five steps that need to be taken in the pastoral ministry to insure failure.

First; work on a day-to-day basis. Do not establish a calendar as a point of reference and guidance. Operate from the premise that today's troubles are sufficient in themselves. This way, events can come and go, and we will certainly fail to realize from them the po-

tential that we could have. Many will see our last-minute efforts as unproductive, but nevertheless sincere.


Second, never state your objective in behavioral terms. Why ask the questions, "What am I going to do?" "What am I going to make happen?" Objectives stated in terminology that answer such questions and others of a similar vein may make you look like you are trying to tell God what to do and how to do it in your church. Anyway, questions that ask the *what, why, when, how, where*, and *who* of our goals tend to put people on the spot. After all, isn't the church a "maintenance" organization?

Third, staunchly refuse to incorporate accountability in your planning. Why ask questions like, "Who's in charge here?" If you insist on accountability, that means you are going to have to *authorize*. That means investing authority in someone else and allowing them a range of freedom to accomplish the task. Accountability means time out

from your busy schedule to check up on the performance of the worker. It means that you are investing your precious resources in him to insure his success.

Fourth, reject basic management techniques as gross oversimplifications, obviously ill-suited for your situation. Management by objective was obviously written for General Motors, not a local church. Techniques that call for delegation, authorization, publication, promotion, accountability, and evaluation are too time-consuming and detailed for your staff of volunteers.

Fifth, repeatedly announce goals without spelling out in detail the means whereby these goals may be accomplished. The accompanying failure in achieving these goals will produce and encourage a mind-set of negativism, low self-esteem, and a poor church image. This in turn will encourage more failure and stave off the worldly influences of success.

See you on the first tee! 



ONE WAY TO START ONE

1. **Enthusiasm**—Portray a loving, caring, and enthusiastic attitude. A youth leader *must* be well liked by the youth.
2. **Initial Meeting**—This might very well be in someone's home, where even new youth will feel comfortable. Food always entices youth to get-togethers. This first meeting could be totally nonmusical, no rehearsal or singing. Generate excitement, set easily achieved goals. Talk about some simple ground rules. Dream together about the potential of ministry that is possible through music.
3. **Choose a Winner**—Picking a youth musical could be your answer to an exciting beginning. Pick out a few and meet with your youth leadership (two or three of your best teens). Allow these key teens to help you select the youth musical, subject to your senior pastor's approval.
4. **First Rehearsal**—This could be held at church or in a home. Be prepared. Know your music. One suggestion is to allow them to sing through the entire musical, with momentary stops along the way to briefly explain what is transpiring, and a hint of what you and the youth choir might possibly do to customize this work for yourselves.
5. **Helps**—Give the youth choir every chance for survival. Have a book available for every member. A listening tape of the full performance can also be ordered for those who can afford it. (Group discounts can be had from nearly every publisher via a simple phone call.) Also buy a copy of the accompaniment trax. Use your teen instrumentalists, where possible, for experience. You could still use trax on certain selections.
6. **Vocalization**—Voicings are determined, basically, by two factors: the size of your group, and their previous singing experience. The age level can affect the results also. Younger and smaller groups might best be put into two-part arrangements, or SSA. Larger and or more mature singers can easily handle SAB. Many youth choirs do SATB very well. Just remember, it is better to do two-part music well than to struggle with SATB. If you think it's too simple, spend more time in rehearsal on emphasizing blend, balance, accurate rhythms, phrasing, interpretation, spiritual content, and other important factors.
7. **Attire**—"Looking good" is important to teens. Matching outfits help in the identity area. Of course they look nice to the congregation, but that's secondary. Youth need security, they need to feel they "belong" to a group. Their self-identity and self-worth can be helped immeasurably by a matching look. The outfits can be handmade or can be bought through a local store where reorders can always match for newly enrolled members.
8. **Choreography**—You and the youth will plan an effective way,

song by song, narration by narration, to change the visuals so as to avoid boredom. Such things as: straight lines, semi-circles, large Vs, a big W, small huddles, profiles, back to audience, heads bowed, holding hands, boys looking at girls and vice versa, soloists step forward, everyone kneels except soloist, and so on. Remember, your visuals should *always* and *only* enhance the spirit of your presentation, not be *meaningless movements and gestures*.

9. Spiritual Emphasis—The dominance of this element is the key to the whole thing. Yes, the choir must be fun. Yes, it must be musically sound and solid. But the *reason* for *singing* is basically twofold: first, to help spiritually the teens you already have; and second, to attract new teens to your church and to the Lord. Youth are the “church of today” and the “church of tomorrow.”

10. Be Firm—You have to have a sense of order to accomplish your goals, but always mix in some fun. No gum chewing, talking, horseplay, and so on, should be allowed. Seat them in their sections; don't allow boys and girls to sit together; make them sit up in their chairs; work immediately on memory so as to challenge even your best singers; put weak singers between strong singers (don't let the weak sit together); stand and sit alternately during rehearsals to maintain involve-

ment; form a circle and sing to each other; sing a given song in the appropriate formation on the church platform; and so on. When teens sense that you love them and you are in *control*, youth choir rehearsals can be some of the best times of your life.

11. Technical Help—Sound reinforcement, lighting effects, props, and so on, can enhance your musical production. These could include the effective use of slides during one song, or a teen writing his testimony on an overhead projector during a song. The proper use of good sound and lighting systems can help make or break your effectiveness. This is an excellent area for the use of those teens who cannot or will not participate vocally in the choir. Meet with them separately and train them in their areas of responsibility, and they will soon have expertise and pride in their work. Use parents where needed. They usually love to help.

12. Share, Share, Share—One mission of our group is to take the gospel to as many people as possible. Most teenagers are selfish. Having been somewhat spoiled in the American culture, it does our youth good to realize that *sharing is fun*. Stress how much Jesus really cares for others. Point out that they have a newly established ministry, that this choir is a tool. They can sing, testify, witness, and pray.



by Dennis Hage
professor of church music,
Nazarene Bible College,
Colorado Springs

Thanksgiving

FAMILY THANKSGIVING PRAISE SERVICE

by Betty B. Robertson
St. Louis

Speaker No. 1: Heb. 13:15: "With Jesus' help we will continually offer our sacrifice of praise to God by telling others of the glory of his name" (TLB).

Congregation: Sing "Lord, We Praise You" (No. 41, *Scriptures to Sing*)

Speaker No. 2: Ps. 95:1-7: "Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord! Give a joyous shout in honor of the Rock of our salvation! Come before him with thankful hearts. Let us sing him psalms of praise. For the Lord is a great God, the great King of all gods. He controls the formation of the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains; all are his. He made the sea and formed the land; they too are his. Come, kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is our God. We are his sheep and he is our Shepherd" (TLB).

Quartet and Congregation: Sing "Let Us Sing to the God of Salvation" (No. 81, *Scriptures to Sing*). The quartet sings the verses; congregation joins in the choruses.

Speaker No. 3: Psalm 100: "Shout with joy before the Lord, O earth! Obey him gladly; come before him, singing with joy. Try to realize what this means—the Lord is God! He made us—we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Go through his open gates with great thanksgiving; enter his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name. For the Lord is always good. He is always loving and kind, and his faithfulness goes on and on to each succeeding generation" (TLB).

Solo: "Let's Make a Joyful Noise" (No. 93, *Scriptures to Sing*)

Speaker No. 4: Ps. 136:1: "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his lovingkindness continues forever" (TLB).

Soloist and Congregation: Sing "O Give Thanks" (No. 109, *Scriptures to Sing*). The soloist and congregation sing the phrases, "O give thanks to the Lord"; soloist does all other phrases.

Speaker No. 5: Ps. 148:1-5: "Praise the Lord, O heavens! Praise him from the skies! Praise him, all his angels, all the armies of heaven. Praise him, sun and moon, and all you twinkling stars. Praise him, skies above. Praise him, vapors high above the clouds. Let everything he has made give praise to him" (TLB).

Congregation: Sing "Praise the Lord! Ye Heavens, Adore Him" (*Worship in Song*, No. 80)

Congregation: Sing "He Brought Me Out" (*Worship in Song*, No. 381)

Sing verse 1

Testimony

Sing verse 2

Testimony

Sing verse 3

Testimony

Sing verse 4

Testimony

Congregation: Sing "Thank You, Lord, for Saving My Soul"

Pastor: Prayer



Pontius' Puddle

ONE ACT OF THANKSGIVING
WHEN THINGS GO WRONG
IS WORTH A THOUSAND
THANKS WHEN THINGS
GO RIGHT *



ALTHOUGH I'M GRATEFUL FOR
SHOES MADE OF LEATHER
CABLE-READY TV
AND SHELTER FROM WEATHER
I'M MOST APPRECIATIVE
DURING THANKSGIVING WEEK
THAT I WAS CREATED
WITHOUT FEATHER OR BEAK *

* JOHN OF AVILA

* PONTIUS

SERMON OUTLINES



ENOCH, MAN OF GOD

Gen. 5:24

Introduction

"Walking with God" is the Old Testament's way of describing a holy life. It is worth remembering that Enoch walked with God and with men at the same time. He did not leave earth to do it. He did not get out of business or shut himself off from mankind.

Enoch learned how to walk with God as he plowed the field and sowed the crop. In the marketplace and at home, he walked with God. He searched for Him and found Him, and then he went with Him. Enoch became God's man and thereby shared the peace of God and God's place of rest.

I. The Godliness and Translation of Enoch

A. And Enoch . . .

1. The Man

2. The Father

Enoch walked with God after having become a father (5:22).

3. The Companion of God

B. And Enoch Walked . . .

1. In Humility

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8).

2. In Honesty

"That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (1 Thess. 4:12).

3. In Holiness

"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart" (Ps. 101:2).

C. And Enoch Walked with God

1. In Communion (Ps. 146:5)

Julia Ward wrote to a senator on behalf of a man who was suffering a great injustice. The senator replied, "I am so much taken up with affairs of state for the benefit of the race, that I have no time for individuals."

Miss Ward pasted the reply in her album with this comment, "When last heard from our Maker, had not reached this altitude."

2. In Concord (Rom. 5:1)

To walk with God is to come out from a sinful generation and be in concord with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is such a walk as obtains a holy communion with God.

3. In Credence (Hebrews 11)

Phillip Sydney says, "Truth is the ground of science, the center wherein all things repose, and is the type of eternity."

4. In Contentment (1 Tim. 6:6)

Contentment is a pearl of great price, and whoever finds it at whatever cost, makes a wise and happy purchase.

II. Walking Worthy

A. Worthy of God, Who Called Us

"That you would have a walk worthy of God, who calls you into His Kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12, NKJV). If Christians are to walk worthy of God, they must walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. We are not to be too concerned about the difficulties of theological differences. We are to walk as the Gospel portrays how Jesus walked on earth among mankind.

B. Worthy of the Lord Who Owns Us

"That you may . . . walk worthy of

the Lord, fully pleasing Him" (Col. 1:10, NKJV). To love God's Son and to acknowledge Him is to show the highest essence of worthiness.

A wealthy man's estate was being auctioned. A portrait of his son, who had died some time before, was being offered for sale. There were no bids. Then an elderly lady asked if she could buy the picture. She had nursed the son when he was a child. She bought it for a few dollars.

When she got it home, she noticed a slight bulge at the back of the picture. Removing the covering, she discovered a parchment—the will of her former employer. In his own handwriting, it simply stated, "I give and bequeath all my property to the one who cares enough for my only son to preserve his picture."

C. Worthy of the Christian Calling (Eph. 4:1)

III. The Results of a Godly Walk

A. For Enoch

Enoch was not found (LXX).

B. For the Children of God

They will not be found (1 Thess. 4:17).

They will live forever (Rom. 6:8).

A Christian is a child of the Resurrection and therefore cannot die. Twice-born dies only once, but the once-born dies twice.

CONCLUSION

One's destination, in this life, depends on the road traveled. Is it going toward the place desired? How one travels does not make any difference in the destination.

There is only one road to the Eternal City—Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

—T. W. Thomas
Wilmore, Ky.

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS



A PARABLE FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS

A sheep found a hole in the fence and crept through it. He was so glad to get away! He wandered far and lost his way home.

Then he realized that he was being followed by a wolf. He ran and ran, but the wolf kept chasing him. Just as the wolf was about to catch the sheep, the shepherd came and rescued him. He lovingly carried the sheep back to the fold.

In spite of everyone's urging, the shepherd refused to mend the hole in the fence.

SOURCE

Anthony deMello, *The Song of the Bird*

TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

God's respect for human freedom

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Josh. 24:15; John 10:11-12

—Submitted by
Sue Nishimura

SHADOWS

Plato described a cave in which people perceived shadows of objects and of themselves as the object itself. The reality perceived in the cave had little to do with actual reality. Consequently, for one to place his trust or to stake his life on what he perceived in the cave could be disastrous.

SOURCE

Plato, *Republic*, Book 7; from *The Works of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett

TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

With our finite understanding, we cannot always trust what we perceive to be reality.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

John 13:7; 16:12; 1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2

—Submitted by
Wally Plock

SHAKEN, BUT NOT TOPPLED

On the 80th floor of the Citicorp skyscraper in New York City, a 210-ton block of concrete is mounted on computer-controlled hydraulic cylinders. The building's architects knew that the building would be swayed by wind and earth

movements. When that sway exceeds a certain rate, the computer moves the concrete block the opposite direction, countering the stress produced by the wind or tremors. This keeps the building from toppling over.

SOURCE

Popular Science magazine, quoted by Morris Weigelt in a chapel message, Nazarene Theological Seminary, September 1986

TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

The stabilizing love of God serves as a counterbalance to the things that would sway us or cause our lives to topple.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Ps. 103:5; Isa. 40:31

—Submitted by
Don Weston

NOT BAD FOR A SISSY

His name was John, but he preferred to be called Francis. His father was a wealthy cloth merchant, and Francis started in the company at age 14.

When Francis was 20, war broke out. Wanting to be a hero, he enlisted. The problem was, he was a short man. When he went into battle, his armor was too cumbersome for him. Francis was one of the first captured.

Prison proved to be a turning point in Francis' life. He had a chance to evaluate his life and his priorities. When he was released, it was with a new sense of direction. He had determined to spend his time and energy meeting the needs of the poor.

One night, while praying in St. Damien's Church, an old, dilapidated building, Francis heard God speak to him. "Francis, look at My house. It is in great disrepair. Restore it for Me." Francis took this message to mean not only St. Damien's but the church at large.

When he returned home that night, he took some cloth to the market. When he had sold it, he gave the proceeds to the poor. Francis' father, already not pleased with his new life-style, was enraged. He locked Francis in shackles in the cellar. Only after he had left town on business was Francis' mother able to release him.

Francis was undaunted. Again he sold some cloth and gave the money away to the poor. This time his father took him before the priest and de-

manded that the money be returned. With a crowd looking on, the priest ordered Francis to return the money. Francis obeyed. He laid the money at his father's feet. Then he said, "The clothes are his as well. I give them back." Francis took off his clothes and laid them with the money. The priest brought Francis a robe to cover himself. "I will no longer call him 'Father,'" declared Francis. "Now I will only say, 'My Father who art in heaven.'"

The division between Francis and his father was never healed. Francis lived the rest of his life in poverty. But his hometown would never be the same. Assisi is remembered to this day as the home of Francis, and those who follow his simple life-style are known as Franciscans.

SOURCE

William R. White, *Speaking in Stories* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982).

TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

To follow Christ may cause division in one's family.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Matt. 10:34-37; Luke 12:51-53

—Submitted by
Rich Houseal

ONE NAIL

Once in Haiti, a certain man wanted to sell his home. One prospective buyer wanted it badly, but he was poor. He couldn't afford the entire \$2,000 asking price.

After much bargaining, the owner agreed to cut the cost of the house to half the original asking price, with one stipulation: He would retain ownership of one small nail protruding just over the front door.

Several years later, the original owner of the house decided he wanted the house back. But the new owner was unwilling to sell. So the first owner went out and found a dog carcass. Bringing it to the house, he hung the carcass from the nail that he still owned over the front door. Soon the stench from the decaying carcass permeated the house, making it unlivable. The family living there was forced to sell the house back to the owner of the nail.

SOURCE

Dale A. Hays in *Leadership*, Spring 1983

TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

If we leave the devil even one small peg in our lives, he will return to hang his rotting garbage on it, making it unfit for Christ to dwell in us.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Rom. 6:11-14; 1 John 2:29—3:10

—Submitted by
Brian Deneen

I CAN'T SEE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING

Jerry and his son, Rick, farmed together. Often, as they worked in the fields, Jerry would urge Rick to attend church with him. Most times Rick declined, electing to spend his Sunday mornings relaxing at home with his new wife.

One day, as Rick operated the combine, Jerry jumped on to ride a few passes across the field with him. This time they talked about soybeans—how theirs were doing, and whether they should sell them at the current prices. As they talked, Jerry spotted a large rock in the combine's path. Rocks and combines do not mix. If ingested into the combine, a rock can do several hundred dollars worth of damage.

Jerry jumped down and picked up the rock, placing it on the combine's platform until he could put it somewhere out of harm's way. The next pass took them to the border of Leo's field. Jerry and Leo had been at odds for some time over a land dispute. As Rick drove the

combine beside Leo's field, Jerry lifted the large rock and heaved it into Leo's field, where maybe his combine might find it.

As he returned to the cab and closed the door, Rick looked at him. "If that's what being a Christian is all about," he said, "I want nothing to do with it."

SOURCE

Personal experience

TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

The importance of Christian example

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Matt. 5:13-16; Mark 9:50

—Submitted by
Gerald Snyder

TROUBLED BY CONSCIENCE

As two assassins stealthily crept into the sleeping Duke of Clarence's bedchamber, one is suddenly stricken with pangs of conscience:

"A man cannot steal, but it accuseth him; he cannot swear but it checks him; he cannot lie with his neighbor's wife, but that it detects him. It is a blushing shamefast spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom; it fills one full of obstacles; it made me once restore a purse of gold that I found; it beggars any man that keeps it; it is turned out of all towns and cities for a dangerous thing; and every man that means to live well endeavors to trust to himself and to live without it. . . . Zounds, it is even now at my elbow, persuading me not to kill the duke."

SOURCE

William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, act I, scene 4

TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

Our consciences are active to prevent us from doing evil; they are a tool used by God.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Acts 24:16; Rom. 2:14-15

—Submitted by
Bryan Davis

THE LITTLE BOY AND THE OLD MAN

Said the little boy, "Sometimes I drop my spoon."

Said the little old man, "I do that too."

The little boy whispered, "I wet my pants."

"I do that too," laughed the little old man.

Said the little boy, "I often cry."

The old man nodded, "So do I."

"But worst of all," said the boy, "it seems Grown-ups don't pay attention to me."

And he felt the warmth of a wrinkled hand.

"I know what you mean," said the little old man.

SOURCE

Shel Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

TRUTH/CONCEPT/DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

How we treat "the least of these," how we treat "insignificant" people is proof whether or not we really have love.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Matt. 19:13-15; 2 Corinthians 5, especially vv. 16, 18

—Submitted by
Phil Lindsley



WELCOME, RANDAL DENNY

C. S. Lewis characterized his conversion with the phrase "surprised by joy." The news of Dr. Wesley Tracy's election to editor of the *Herald of Holiness* came to me as a surprise of another kind. It was accompanied with anxiety that set my stomach "a-churning." Dr. Tracy had

been with the *Preacher's Magazine* for 11 years, maintaining an enviable standard of excellence.

Our relationship with Wes in Pastoral Ministries and the Church Growth Division has been mutually enriching and attended with a warm spirit of cooperation. We have valued the quality of Dr. Tracy's work in creating a professional journal for holiness clergy. So the thought of losing this multigifted friend from the *Preacher's Magazine* was disconcerting.

My anxiety, however, turned to joy when Pastor Randal Denny's name came to mind. With the enthusiastic approval of Dr. Bill M. Sullivan, Church Growth Division director, and Dr. Jerald D. Johnson, responsible general superintendent, Dr. Denny was unanimously approved by the Board of General Superintendents.

Dr. Denny will continue as pastor of the Spokane Valley Church, bringing to

the magazine a practicing minister's perspective. He is able to assume this assignment because of a strong relationship with a generous congregation and the fruit of a well-ordered, disciplined life. The combination of his writing skills, avid reading habits, spiritual sensitivity, and devotional integrity has made him a model preacher and pastor.

We can look for creative changes reflecting his unique contribution to the lives of our ministers. Those who have benefited from Dr. Denny's books and have seen his contributions to the "Worship and Preaching Helps" will have a growing appreciation for his gifts through the *Preacher's Magazine*. I am anticipating with joy the resources of inspiration, information, and leadership that will come with our new editor. Welcome, Randal Denny. It is all joy!

—Wilbur W. Brannon, Director
Pastoral Ministries
Church of the Nazarene



TODAY'S BOOKS for TODAY'S PREACHER

PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION, ed. David G. Benner (Baker Book House, 1988), paperback, 343 pp. (PA080-100-9472; \$12.95)

Twentieth-century students of psychology and of Christianity have progressed from an initial mutual paranoia, to a midcentury stage of amiable dialogue, to the current attempts to integrate these two perspectives of the human condition. Among the more articulate overviews to emerge on contemporary evangelical efforts at such integration is *Psychology and Religion*.

Drawing together the writings of over 30 psychologists, psychiatrists, and academicians, this anthology is comprised of selected chapters from the historic 1,200-page *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology*, also compiled by Dr. David Benner. While the writers represent a diversity of theological backgrounds, their contributions reflect a common core belief that all truth—psychological as well as spiritual—is God's truth.

The 52 contributions are divided into three sections. Part 1 covers the Psychology of Religion; Part 2, Psychology in Christian Perspective; and Part 3, Christian Psychology. Topics range from conversion, perfectionism, self-esteem, and sexuality, to demonic influence and psychopathology, inner healing, and the psychological consequences of sin.

Whether providing a reference base for sermon preparation, a resource to enrich pastoral counseling, or a source of information for learning and personal growth, this book can be a useful addition to the pastor's study. Scholarly yet readable, this volume is meant to be ingested in bits, as needed, rather than digested in one cover-to-cover reading. It represents a broad-ranging short course on the integration of psychology and faith. The chapters are concise summaries with references to facilitate in-depth follow-up study by the interested reader.

Some will be disappointed that this compendium does not conclude with a consensus picture of a "Christian psy-

chology." However, the collection does add up to a harmonious tapestry of Christians in psychology seeking to understand and explicate the experience of being human, as viewed through the lenses of faith.

—Cary E. Lantz, Ph.D.
Oklahoma City

THE CHURCH AND PASTORAL CARE, ed. LeRoy Aden and J. Harold Ellens (Baker Book House, 1988), paper, 189 pp. (PA080-100-2133; \$9.95)

This is a book that has a message to pastors in the role of counselors. It is a serious attempt to bridge the gap between modern psychology and a biblical theology. The editors, LeRoy Aden and J. Harold Ellens, have compiled a series of essays from a variety of authors dealing with such topics as "Recovering Pastoral Care," "The Bible Role in Pastoral Care and Counseling," "Forgiving and the Christian Life," "The Minister as Moral Counselor," "The Psychodynamics of Christian Conversion," "Faith and the Problem of Death," "The Family as a Context for Change and as a Changing Context," and "Pastoral Care and Social Change."

The insights from Lewis Smedes and LeRoy Aden on forgiveness in counseling are worth the price of the book. They make a convincing argument that forgiveness and redemption are qualities different from the self-fulfillment and self-actualization philosophies promoted by secular psychology.

The authors write from different theological backgrounds. In dealing with the psychodynamics of Christian conversion, Ellens uses a comparative study with structuralist models of psychology that tends to sound less than evangelical.

The plea of this compilation is for a balanced approach to counseling by using the tools of psychology within the framework of a biblical understanding. It may not be the most inspirational reading, but the message is important and merits the exploration of the book.

—Jim Sukraw
Pittsburg, Kans.

SAFE IN THE WORLD, by Martin Lloyd-Jones (Good News Publishers, 1988), 157 pp. (PA089-107-4937; \$10.95)

The subtitle of this delightful book is *The Assurance of Our Salvation*, and even though the material is a compilation of material from a 1952 sermon series delivered at Westminster Chapel, it remains timely.

The reader will note a thin veil of Calvinism concerning eternal security, but nothing as you might suspect. Lloyd-Jones never departs from the theme that security is found in intimate relationship with God.

The chapter on True Joy contained some of the best material I have ever found on the subject of joy, and he lifts the Christian life out of "dos and don'ts" to the high plane of "glorifying God."

The preacher's push to knowing and communing with God who keeps us safe gives the book a devotional quality that makes *Safe in the World* an uplifting and refreshing book. It didn't take long to read, and it is the kind of book I know I will want to read again.

—Terry W. Douglass
Colorado Springs

WHEN CHILDREN SUFFER: A Sourcebook for Ministry with Children in Crisis, ed. Andrew D. Lester (Westminster Press, 1987), hardback, 210 pp. (PA-066-421-3278; \$14.95)

The purpose for compiling such a resource is clear: to provide the pastor with an overview of working with children who are facing difficulties in their lives. It is the editor's and contributors' belief that pastors often ignore the needs of children and are ill-equipped even if they do desire to work with them. This book argues on behalf of children and then gives tools for working with the young parishioner.

The book is divided into three areas: a discussion of the basic needs and development of school-age children, ministering to children in specific types of crises, and resources for ministry with children in crisis. The first segment of

this book is basically introduction. An understanding of children in general is needed before one can work with specific problems that children are facing. The second segment is perhaps the core of the book, discussing specific crises that confront children. The list includes: children of divorcing parents, bereaved children, the hospitalized and terminally ill, abused children, the physically and learning impaired, and children suffering from stress and anxiety. The last portion of the book recommends ways to help a child's faith, diagnosing the child's problem in relation to the family, the use of the extended family, and referring.

There is much for which to commend this book. It is an excellent summary of working with children—an area in which most of us may feel inadequate. It gives keen insights into the thought processes of a child, citing specific cases at times, and provides positive steps in working with the problem at hand. At the end of each chapter, there is a list of additional reading resources, should the need arise. Though they do exist, the weaknesses are small compared to its strengths. One is that perhaps the attempt is to cover the whole field of crises in one book. The result is that some things are assumed, others rushed. It is also easy to believe a person is reading a psychology text rather than a book on ministry. The "God dimension" is quite weak at points. The reader may find it difficult at times to accept some of the authors' assumptions, as well.

It does seem that this book would help the minister to see the real need for ministering to the children of one's congregation. While it is easy to be consumed with ministry to adults, yet when we realize the potential years a child represents, it can give us a fresh perspective.

—James W. Thompson
Portland, Mich.

JESUS AND MARX: From Gospel to Ideology, by Jacques Ellul, trans. Joyce Main Hanks (William B. Eerdmans, 1988), paper, 187 pp. (PA080-280-2974; \$12.95)

This book will not appeal to every pastor. Those who wish an introduction to the thought of Ellul will find major themes with which the provocative French theologian has dealt over a number of years, and those who want to understand liberation or Marxist theology will find enlightenment.

Ellul concentrates on three types of Marxist-Christian thought: service theology, materialist theology, and inductive theology. A theology of service stresses that to follow Jesus means to show mercy in a way that rehabilitates on a social and economic level those who are rejected and despised; true service turns people to God more than words can ever do. Materialist theology professes to offer a "scientific" understanding of Gospel texts, viewed through the glasses of its social setting. Inductive theology, another attempt to be scientific, steers clear of principles and proceeds on the basis of trial and error to search for coherence and generalization, with an emphasis on practice.

Ellul repeatedly lays bare the underlying presuppositions of these Marxist theologies. A sample list of unstated assumptions includes: (1) The essence of Christianity amounts to helping the poor. (2) Socialism is identified with human good. (3) Communists are on the side of the poor and always defend them. (4) Action is all that matters (and this action is usually conceived as political in nature). These assumptions may help to explain why Marxist thought holds appeal for many Christians in developing countries, but Marxist "praxis" leads to other results. The key question for liberation theologians turns out to be not "liberation from what?" but "liberation for whose benefit?" Ellul points out that Communist revolutions regularly result in a new master or oppressor with more human misery than the worst forms of colonialism ever produced.

Ellul's book provides for the interested pastor an excellent analysis of Marxist-related theologies that attempt in some sense to be Christian. All of these theologies err because they bypass what is central for revelation—faith in Jesus Christ. This book reminds

us how easily service in the name of Jesus can slip into materialistic concerns. To give a cup of cold water in His name is a part of the New Testament message; it is not the whole. Compassionate ministry must always point to faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

—Charles R. McCall
Mount Vernon Nazarene College

DANCING WITH BROKEN BONES, by David Swartz (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988) (PA089-109-1483; \$6.95)

Dancing with Broken Bones is a challenging, spirit-stretching book based on King David's cry for forgiveness in Psalm 51. Throughout the pages of this book the reader is reminded of the enormity of sin and the brokenness that must accompany its realization in order for healing to take place. Swartz discusses conflicts that arise in the church because of members who have not become broken over their sin and thus have not been restored.

Swartz takes an in-depth look at the despair that David felt as he realized the suffering he had brought the Lord, and the concentrated effort he made to find forgiveness.

Each chapter of this book takes a different portion of the psalm, studying it thoroughly. Contemporary examples abound illustrating the steps David followed from the realization of sin to his repentance and his commitment to God's service. Then, Swartz makes practical applications, showing the reader how to apply these steps in his own life. The picture of "dancing with broken bones" shows the pain caused by sin and the confrontation and jubilation that results in restoration to fellowship with God and the return to "active duty."

Dancing with Broken Bones provides the reader a window through which we can see David's heart. But then, the window subtly becomes a mirror. We suddenly catch a glimpse of ourselves and maybe a little understanding into our own reactions and relationship to God. And therein lies the strength of this book.

—Ken M. Douglass
Osborne, Kans.

The Case of Jo Dropout

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church, concerned about appearances, Jo's inability to sense "belonging," and her unwillingness to "try harder." At home, he grew more violent and ultimately resorted to physical abuse. Jo left him and left the Church of the Nazarene.

Good-bye to the Church of the Nazarene: That Church Can Make You Dysfunctional: (*Perceptions of Nazarenes by Jo's peers in the helping community*)

Many of Jo's friends and support network affirmed her decision to drop out. Her group of professional peers believed that the "cardinal doctrine" and the heavy judgment messages were potentially harmful. Here are some of their responses or observations she had made concerning these messages.

I used to go to bed every night as a child, terrified that I would die during the night and go to hell. I hate Sunday night to this day. **ex-Nazarene clinical psychologist**

My sister still gets depressed nearly every Sunday night. Though she is no longer a Nazarene, she still struggles with the terror of dying and going to hell. Rationally, she knows better. But emotionally, she struggles. When she was a child, she frequently screamed hysterically, usually on Sunday nights after an evangelistic service. It is still hard for her to grasp the security of God. **Jo talking about her sister**

The sickest patients I work with are Nazarenes. I think it has to do with their understanding of perfection. **Jo's psychotherapist friend**

I have never seen such a disturbed group of "normal" kids. By that I mean, these were not psychotic or even seriously disturbed kids. They were just typical Nazarene college students. It must have something to do with that which the church teaches. **Psychologist**

I, too, have now seen several current Nazarene students in therapy, or rather I should say I

tried to see them. They didn't stick. I could not connect with them. There was nothing there inside of them to connect to. No available core of realness. No ability to look at themselves openly. Just words they learned in a class to describe something they didn't understand. They, like my husband, have very strong defenses and very strong denial and a very strong need to be perfect. **Jo**

So, Jo has left the church. But life hasn't necessarily been happy ever after. She continues to work through hosts of issues relative to life as an ex-Nazarene.

You Can Take the Girl out of the Nazarene Church, but It's Tough to Take the Nazarene Church out of the Girl: Jo's Sentiments on Leaving

While some of my friends were ejected from the system catastrophically (fired), others slipped away quietly in disillusionment. I quit three years ago, feeling more comfortable in being identified with the sinners than with the Pharisees. Unfortunately, I have left the church, but the church hasn't left me.

By that, Jo confessed that she was having great difficulty in reframing her understanding of God, the person of Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit, Scripture, grace, sin, and her response to it all, an integrating process that "Nazarene-ness stifles, prevents, or retards."

Jo admits that she is both angry and yet grateful: Angry that she has had to work through this process that demands separation, which in itself is a kind of dying.

I would have preferred not to go through that part.

Really, though, I don't know if the Nazarene church should change. I do know that it was appropriate for me to change.

I suppose that I would like for the church to be able to accept that some folks must leave and should be able to do so without being pigeonholed as less spiritual. As for me, I had to. For my

patients' sake, I couldn't remain blind.

THERE'S GOT TO BE A MORNING AFTER:

After Jo Dropped Out

Though it was not commonly known that Jo and her husband separated, no one from the church of which they had been an integral part and members for six years made any kind of contact with them. The pastor, with whom Jo's husband had had breakfast on a nearly weekly basis, didn't phone, nor did anyone identified with the Sunday School or choir.

Jo admits that she was a little surprised that there were no inquiries, but quickly added, "It probably wouldn't have made any difference anyhow. No one could do anything about the system that contributed to the problem, and most of the folks we knew weren't aware there was a problem."

Anxiety-Producing Themes: Some Contributing Factors to Jo's Decision

Having read and reread Jo's "case," and having had countless hours of conversation with her, there appears to be several working assumptions about the Church of the Nazarene that finally made her withdraw from it necessary. A brief review of four of these may prove helpful before making some final comments about reinvestment.

1. **She perceived the church to be predominantly legalistic in her growing-up years.** Accordingly, salvation is a result of our goodness or at least avoidance of sin. "As long as we looked OK and talked OK, we could act like the devil."
2. **She believes legalism promotes judgmentalism.** Here are a few of her comments on the subject:

I guess I am objecting to an overall attitude of judgmentalism. It's an attitude that keeps you at a distance. You can't get close to people and really love them if you are judgmental

about them. Judgment separates. I think the Nazarene structure is great for people who have difficulty with intimacy, spontaneity, vitality, and exuberance for the abundant life. A legalistic, externally oriented system is antithetical to those things. I heard judgment. I didn't hear that you could never get away from His love. What I could never be free from was His judgment.

3. **She senses that Nazarenes have difficulty being honest about their own "stuff."** After hearing a sermon on sanctification, Jo recalls,

I remember writing in my journal, "Lord, is that what it is all about?" I happened to be at the home of my in-laws on that same day and had attended church with them. I tried to initiate conversation about the sermon, but my mother-in-law made short work of it.

"What's there to discuss?" Jo's mother-in-law went on to add, "I have not sinned nor have I been angry since I was 12 years old, for it was then that I was sanctified."

The same dear sister went on to describe her youngest daughter as being obviously carnal. Jo assesses the same person as "being the only one in the family who was able to be assertive and not always so . . . nice." Describing her feelings about the meal, Jo said, "I left the table with feelings of desperation, inadequacy, and guilt while being more confused than ever."

4. **She was convinced that lack of authenticity fueled denial, projection, and alienation.** She writes:

Because the church chooses to maintain an ostrich position, there is not an openness of attitude that allows people to come forward with either their sinfulness or their pain, or their brokenness or their

everyday struggles, or their need for help. To do so is to acknowledge, in some instances, their own sin; and that is one thing that Nazarenes can't do. And so they are cut off from others, God, help, and, most importantly, themselves.

That feeds yet another problem.

If you are in the habit of denying reality, you quite naturally have to do something with your junk [evil]. So the easiest thing to do is to project it in on someone else, the bad guys (drinkers, smokers, dancers . . . anyone but me).

Projection can lead to alienation.

The Nazarenes deal with conflict by excluding people who are different. Maybe not directly, but certainly indirectly, by making them feel unloved or unwelcome. Difference simply isn't tolerated, it's obliterated.

I believe these anxiety-producing themes were at work in Jo for 20 years before she made her decision to leave. They are precisely the issues with which she is working during reentry.

OCTOBER 19 IS OVER: TIME TO REINVEST

Having left the Church of the Nazarene, Jo has joined a nondenominational church of 4,000. She isn't "real" involved, but she does belong to a prayer group that meets monthly. All of her friends are "dynamic, committed Christians who live with a clear sense of commitment. I consider myself the least spiritually mature of the whole bunch."

Now I struggle to free myself from damaging concepts while I continue with my covenant to grow up emotionally, all the while asking God to create in me a loving heart. I am growing. It is painful. But it is joyous. For the first time in my life, God has become my Friend.

Editorial

Continued from p. 1

resemblance to Jesus. And there is an occasional "glimpse of glory"! I'm just a parish priest, but I agree with Joseph Parker: "Sunday is my festival day. I love Sunday. All the days of the week lead up to it, and I hold high festival with my God and my people every Sabbath!"

Author John Gossip served as pastor of St. Matthew's Church in Glasgow. One week was filled with parish emergencies. He had spent hours in hospitals with sick parishioners. He had stood by the bed of the dying. He had immersed himself in the suffering and heartbreak of his people. The pressure of many

things had made it difficult to prepare his sermon as thoroughly as he should. William Barclay heard Dr. Gossip say, "You know the stairs up to the pulpit in St. Matthew's? You know the bend on the stair? Jesus Christ met me there. I saw Him clearly as I see you. He looked at the sermon in my hand. 'Gossip,' He said to me, 'is this the best you could do for Me this week?' Thinking back over the business of that week, I could honestly say, 'Yes, Lord, it is my best.'"

And Gossip said, "Jesus Christ took that poor thing that Sunday morning, and in His hands it became a trumpet."⁴

"Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant . . . For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 3:5-6; 4:5, NIV).

—Randal E. Denny 

NOTES

1. Thomas F. Chilcote, Jr., *The Excellence of Our Calling* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1954), 50.
2. Jerry Vines, *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 76-77.
3. James D. Berkley, ed., *Preaching to Convince* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Christianity Today, 1986), 155.
4. William Barclay, *A Spiritual Autobiography* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 13.

Where Did the Converts Go?

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needs. Probably one of the most important is represented in personal follow-up of new Christians and new attenders. The first deals with the development of babes in Christ from the time of their new birth until they grow and provide for themselves.¹⁰ This process sometimes takes from 20 weeks to two years.¹¹

Charles "Chic" Shaver lists four basic steps in follow-up: (1) sharing an assurance verse, such as John 6:47; (2) presenting a spiritual birth certificate; (3) obtaining his promise to go to church and make public testimony of his newfound relationship with Christ; and (4) obtaining agreement to begin Bible study, such as *Basic Bible Studies*.¹² There is so much to be learned, and many times the new convert has very little if any Bible knowledge. Much guidance and support are needed if new Christians are to become incorporated into the body. Laymen trained in follow-up and nurture can move the new Christian from the delivery room and into Christian maturity, where they are less likely to die of crib death.¹³

New attenders also need follow-

up. This may involve discipleship. We cannot take the view that "if they are interested they should be able to take the initiative. . . all they have to do is walk in, and they'll find we'll welcome them."¹⁴ Visitors should receive follow-up visits and calls to assure their incorporation into a body of believers.

They also need to feel accepted and trusted. This means several things. We will listen and hear and make them feel trusted to "give an opinion on intensely internal matters of the fellowship."¹⁵ It means we trust them enough to give them jobs or roles related to the main goals and purposes of the whole congregation, and appropriate to their spiritual gifts.

Fellowship represents a very important need of those who have recently received Jesus Christ as personal Savior. They are in the process of cutting ties with old friends and another life-style. This can be less difficult if the gap is filled with caring, Spirit-filled Christians. Further, James F. Engel, in *Contemporary Christian Communications*, says: "Unless the fellowship in the Christian assembly is far superior to that which can be found anywhere else in society, then the Christians can talk about the transforming love and power of Jesus till they are hoarse,

but people are not going to listen very hard."¹⁶ This is why fellowship is so vitally important.

Fellowship can be provided in many ways, but the most effective is probably small-group involvement. This includes Sunday School classes, Bible studies, circles of concern, prayer groups, sports, etc. The basis for this is that, as churches grow, they cannot remain as one group and effectively assimilate new people.¹⁷ So small groups often best meet fellowship needs.

Another need of the new Christian or new attender might be to understand the stated goals of the local church. If there are no stated goals, it may leave them with questions as to why they should be involved. Even though the local church may have specific spiritual goals, they must be focused and "honed" as to what God is specifically directing this congregation to accomplish within the community. Clear vision and focus for the various ministries will evolve as the leaders of the church communicate clear goals for the congregation. Assimilation follows. If the church can gather around itself enough people with the same goals and stand united with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, they can witness the local church coming alive. This also means the lo-

cal church will probably not involve itself in too many outside ministries.

Financial participation in the church also strengthens incorporation. It is true that "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21, NIV).

A final need relates to moving people closer to Christ. Everything that occurs in the church should move people closer to Christ. Sometimes leaders of the local congregation are tempted to measure success by the percentage of people attending the church. The real question should be, "What is God doing in the lives of the people?" This alone should determine the success and livelihood of local church ministry.

In summary, there are several basic needs that should be met in the lives of people one is striving to incorporate into a local church. If these needs are at least partially met, a new convert or new attender will probably be interested in identifying with the local congregation.

SPECIFY SPECIFIC ELEMENTS/INGREDIENTS

Some incorporation needs are more applicable than others. The following ingredients necessary for incorporation are listed in three groups according to efforts of pastor, individual members, and congregation as a whole.

First, what specific elements can be identified as incorporation that require the pastor's attention? At the top of the list is follow-up. Henrichsen says, "If the first step in the disciple-making process is evangelism, then the second is follow-up."¹⁸ Waylon Moore, in *New Testament Follow-Up*, says, "The pastor must be an example; he must set the pace."¹⁹ The pastor's role in follow-up is underscored in *Conserve the Converts*, where one pastor testifies to about 75 percent assimilation of converts in two different churches where he directed the follow-up ministry.

Though the pastor must be personally involved in follow-up, he cannot do it all. This means that at some level he must train others. Moore states, "The pastor cannot be a parent for every new believer, but he

can be the example of a spiritual parent to the whole church. It is his responsibility to see that each child in the faith is cared for by someone."²⁰ He further states, "Although Jesus ministered to thousands, it was to a special group of disciples, the Twelve, that He gave most of His time, teaching them and training them."²¹

E. M. Bounds, in *The Preacher and Prayer*, says, "Preachers are not sermon makers, but men-makers and saint-makers."²² Personal follow-up and training others in follow-up seem to be important pastoral ingredients in incorporation.

The pastor's second role in incorporation is related to his overall view of the church as no one else sees it. He must develop an ability to plug the right people into the right spots. Elton Trueblood says of this role that he is "to watch for underdeveloped powers, to draw them out, to bring potency to actuality in human lives."²³

Along with plugging them into the right spots, there needs to be continual training. Robert E. Coleman, in *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, states:

All too many times one has been brought to the place of service only to be discharged with no further training or inspiration. The result is that his activity becomes localized in a feverish round of excitement. There is no growth. The potential ability resident in the worker is not developed, and before long a promising leader is spoiled for want of supervision. Success is lost on the eve of victory. What once looked so good eventually becomes a stumblingstone to the best.²⁴

Finally, tenure and longevity of the pastor seems to make a tremendous difference in the incorporation process. Countless studies demonstrated very clearly that pastoral leadership is a critical factor in church growth. Lyle Schaller states, "And still others cite long tenure as the reason the minister is such a cohesive force."²⁵ Changing ministers every three or four years hinders assimilation because "the most productive years of a pastorate seldom

begin before the fourth or fifth or sixth year of a minister's tenure in that congregation."²⁶

Follow-up by individual members is also at the top of the list. Gary W. Kuhn, in *The Dynamics of Personal Follow-Up*, says, "Studies have shown that less than 1 percent of evangelical church members are involved in personal follow-up."²⁷ But we also note in Waylon Moore's book that since a minister should probably spend most of his time teaching and training a few, much follow-up is left to the laity.²⁸ As a pastor I have discovered that this follow-up is critical.

Individual members incorporating new people should care enough to sit by them at church and make sure they are introduced to as many visitors as possible each week. Members should take responsibility for calling or visiting new people apart from the organized calling program of the church. Inviting new people into their homes regularly also contributes significantly to incorporating them. The little things count with new attenders and converts.

Finally, the congregation as a whole must give priority to organized follow-up of new converts and attenders. In my church we had combined evangelism/calling teams. Our process of new convert follow-up began within a 24-hour period with *Basic Bible Studies for New/Growing Christians*. We met with the convert on a weekly basis for approximately eight weeks. At the end of this training we presented a certificate for the completion of the studies. We then assigned spiritual parents to lead the growing Christian in a study of the *Gospel of John*. A next step could be leading the new convert together with other new converts through Charles "Chic" Shaver's 12-week study, *Living in the Power of the Spirit*.

An opportunity for financial commitment is also an important part of incorporation. The congregation is responsible for good stewardship of the money that is given and for presenting specific needs to the congregation. I have noticed that financial giving is often a predominant indicator of incorporation. This is a

Pontius' Puddle



difficult area to measure when there is no way of knowing for certain just how much each individual is giving, but it seems safe to say that once people begin giving, they are usually fairly well incorporated into the life of the church.

Incorporating new attendees requires that specific goals be identified by the congregation as a whole. Win and Charles Arn, in *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*, say, "A clear statement of the goals and priorities the church holds as central to its purpose, will provide an important point for members—especially new members—to rally around. For many newcomers these goals are the only thing they have in common with other members."²⁹ As a pastor, I streamlined my vision/goals, knowing that clearly stated goals have an important role in determining who becomes involved.

Finally the congregation as a whole must provide small groups within the large group where people can build relationships and fellowships. They should provide as many options and opportunities for fellowship as needed.

In summary, efforts are needed at several levels to effectively incorporate new converts and attenders. The pastor's most essential areas for incorporation are in follow-up, training, placement of people, and longevity. Individual members are important to incorporation through follow-up and a caring attitude. Finally, the congregation as a whole must be included in follow-up, responsible stewardship, clearly stated goals, and small-group involvement.

MEASURING THE DEGREE OF INCORPORATION

Several methods are used to measure the degree of incorporation in a local church.

The first is general, based on the assumption that if people are being incorporated, growth will be observed at several levels within the church.

A pattern of growth is one measure of incorporation; however, a more specific measurement is needed to effectively identify the need for improvement. To this end, a survey has been prepared. The results tend to indicate that people who attend Sunday School are more apt to be incorporated into the local church. A third measure of incorporation is a family/participation survey. Specific knowledge gained from this survey will help area leaders and the church as a whole in deciding where and how to involve people.

Finally, a model of incorporation can be in one area or in homogeneous (alike) groups within the local church. It can be a subjective measure of incorporation gained by watching the group. This group may embody many of the principles of incorporation already discussed and, therefore, be a good proving ground for what does and does not work in incorporating individuals.

These indicators point to several things that would lead to greater success in incorporation. As the local church begins to grow, small-group Bible studies provide a climate for involvement and relationship building. Other types of small-group activity can provide fellowship, but nothing substitutes for Bible study.

NOTES

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TABLE 1
MEASUREMENT

- 1. Importance of Being Nazarene**
"How important is the following?"
 - a. Being a member in the Church of the Nazarene (as a denomination)
 - b. Being a member in your own local congregation
 - c. Wanting your children (or if you were to have children) to stay in the Church of the Nazarene
- 2. Years of Membership**
"How long have you been a member in the Church of the Nazarene (the denomination, not necessarily your present congregation)?"
- 3. Attendance at Services**
"About how often do you do each of the things listed below?"
 - a. Attend Sunday School
 - b. Attend Sunday Morning Worship Services
 - c. Attend Sunday Evening Services
 - d. Attend Midweek Evening Services
- 4. Devotional Practices**
"About how often do you do each of the things listed below?"
 - a. Contribute a tithe of your income to the local church
 - b. Read the Bible
 - c. Pray privately
- 5. Personal Evangelism**
"About how often do you do the following?"
 - a. Talk about religion with non-church members
 - b. Try to lead someone to Christ
 - c. Share with another church members the problems and joys of living a Christian life
- 6. Social Relationships**
 - a. How often do you participate in church social activities?
 - b. Think for a moment of your five closest friends. How many of them attend your congregation?
 - c. How well do you think you fit in socially with the group of people who attend your church?
- 7. Distance of Residence from Church**
"About how many minutes does it take you to travel to church from your residence?"
- 8. Religious Experience**
"To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I am sure I am sanctified?"
- 9. Gender**
- 10. Age**
"How old were you on your last birthday?"
- 11. Education**
"How much formal education have you had?"
- 12. Income**
"What was your total family income before taxes in 1984?"

TABLE 2
PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS AMONG ALL VARIABLES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Years of Membership	—											
2. Attendance at Services	.14 ^c	—										
3. Devotional Practices	.20 ^c	.48 ^c	—									
4. Personal Evangelism	.18 ^c	.35 ^c	.50 ^c	—								
5. Social Relationships	.23 ^c	.57 ^c	.36 ^c	.37 ^c	—							
6. Distance of Residence from Church	.10 ^b	-.10 ^b	.05	-.01	-.09 ^b	—						
7. Religious Experience (Sanctification)	.18 ^c	.34 ^c	.47 ^c	.45 ^c	.32 ^c	.02	—					
8. Gender	.06	.09 ^a	.13 ^c	.06	.03	-.03	.04	—				
9. Age	.53 ^c	.09 ^a	.31 ^c	.31 ^c	.20 ^c	.09 ^a	.22 ^c	.04	—			
10. Education	-.08 ^a	-.04	-.09 ^a	-.16 ^c	-.09 ^a	.08 ^a	-.08 ^a	-.07	-.33 ^c	—		
11. Income	-.03	.05	.01	-.08 ^a	-.02	.08 ^a	.01	-.10 ^b	-.19 ^c	.34 ^c	—	
12. Importance of being Nazarene	.22 ^c	.19 ^c	.18 ^c	.28 ^c	.30 ^c	-.14 ^c	.22 ^c	.06	.24 ^c	-.27 ^c	-.16 ^c	—

^asignificant at the .05 level

^bsignificant at the .01 level

^csignificant at the .001 level

TABLE 3
STEPWISE REGRESSION

Step	Variable*	Total R Square	Significance
1	Social Relationships	.0986	.001
2	Education	.1505	.001
3	Personal Evangelism	.1785	.001
4	Years of Membership	.1929	.001
5	Distance of Residence	.2082	.001
6	Religious Experience	.2160	.01

*No other variables met the .05 significance level for entry into the model (attendance, devotions, gender, age, income).



THE ARK ROCKER

A WOMAN'S PLACE

Nothing is quite as satisfying as having one of your kids follow in your footsteps. So naturally, I was thrilled when mine entered the ministry. Finishing medical and theological training, this talented child of mine became a medical missionary after ordination. Under normal circumstances, this bright young preacher would have had it made after completing a couple of terms on the mission field: speaking engagements, camp meetings, offers of pastorates. But that's not my kid's case. Why? Because my scion is a daughter.

On the days she puts on that nurse's cap, life goes well. Doctors smile benevolently (on the days their golf games went well), patients croon about the cool hands of this "daughter of Eve" upon their fevered brows, and everyone at the gas station rejoices when she manages to disentangle her stethoscope from the hose as she pumps gas. Pastors invite her to speak about nursing people on distant shores. Men who would fight to the death to preserve the pulpit for men only gladly throw them open to hear of nursing exploits in faraway places. It's a wonder that she ever takes that cap off, it accords her so much goodwill.

In fact, she really didn't want to take it off at all. But God told her, "Change course." He called her to preach, of all things. She couldn't imagine God making such a "harebrained" request. I laughed and assured her, "Our church has always had women preachers. Nearly a third of our first pastors were women—some pastoring some large churches. It's a glorious calling, and everyone will stand behind you." I just didn't realize quite how far behind her they were going to want to stand.

Once she removed the cap, she became an overnight enigma. Gentlemen callers looked slightly seasick and ran for the door. The post office thought she had gotten married, as mailing houses sent mail to "Rev. and Mrs.," even though she placed orders in the singular. Surely the "Rev." must have a wife! What she actually gets called has become one of the interesting facets of her life. The only place I've known her to be referred to as "Rev." is on the return address label she puts on her correspondence. Even at district meetings, when a dozen pastors are introduced as "Rev.," she is invariably introduced as "Miss." A few have ventured to say "the reverend miss"—a mystery to me; I've never heard one of her male colleagues introduced as "the reverend mister." Oh well, it's only a title. And if that were all that was at stake,

it would hardly be worth the time of day.

But women in our pulpits have become an endangered species. People tell me there is no prejudice against women, at least none they've noticed. But if you don't look for it, you're not likely to find it. On the other hand, it's a little hard for me to fail to notice when groups get up noisily to leave—not at prayer time, not during the songs, but just as she walks to the pulpit. It's hard for her to explain why she doesn't wish to attend the ladies' luncheon when the pastors are meeting together. "No thank you. I am not the wife of the preacher. I *am* the preacher. I want to eat with the preachers."

So many thoughtful people have called after services to assist her with the exegesis that she's "obviously" having trouble interpreting.

One district cancelled her camp meeting slot because she was a woman and "relatively unknown." I was baffled. How was she to become known if she continued encountering districts that were "just not ready for women preachers yet"?

Then there was the morning we breakfasted with the elite of "Mecca" and their area clones. She fit in so well they forgot she was there as they began to discuss "Miss Whacko," who pastored the little hick church in the boondocks. Everyone got a bellylaugh at her expense, till someone, choking on a biscuit, noticed that the lady preacher wasn't laughing.

"Dad," she asked later, "if she was really a crock, I can understand that; ladies can be crocks, just as men can. But if she *is* a crock, why doesn't her bishop deal with her? And if she *isn't* a crock, what kind of a chance does she have with a boss who finds her such good joke fodder?" I just looked at her sadly, remembering the hurt we shared when no one could remember there was a woman among the men at her ordination: "Now, men . . ."

Last week I strained my back while doing my pastoral duties (scraping the old paint off the church, mowing and raking the lawn, etc.). My preacher daughter came over to take care of me. "Dad," she asked, "why have no women ever been appointed to serious posts of responsibility if they are so well thought of?" I sighed and asked for a couple aspirin and a pillow adjustment. She bent to the honorable task of healing bodies and wondered why it should seem dishonorable to want to heal souls.

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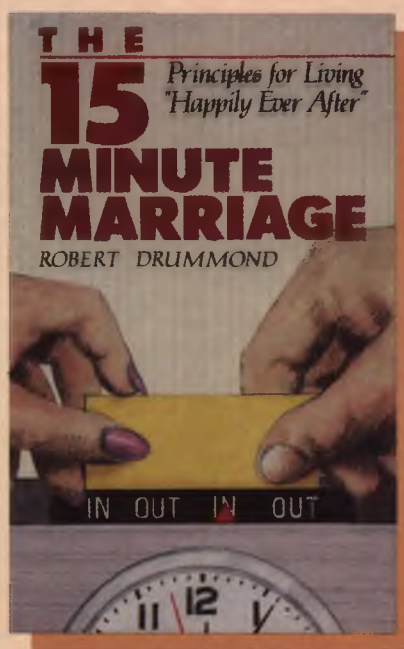
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