



**My father's living will**  
When Dad died he left us with much more than memories.



**Unmasking male depression**  
The symptoms are different but the effects are just as devastating.

# CHRISTIAN Odyssey

August/September 2006

Exploring Life and Faith



## Heaven's above —or is it?

Scientific discoveries have made us rethink our ideas about nearly everything on earth. Why not heaven too?

5

# Letters to the Editor

Your magazine stands out in excellence in two ways: 1) as a quality magazine of beauty, 2) with articles of quality for people who are serious about growth and learning.

**PR email**

The new name “Christian Odyssey” certainly denotes the purpose of the magazine by taking the reader on many voyages. The magazine is very attractive with full color and well-planned layout. *Christian Odyssey* invited me to browse; then browsing led to reading articles.

I haven’t read all of the articles, but the ones that I have read were easy to read, interesting, short, and to the point. Thanks to all involved in producing *Odyssey*! Please continue to take us to many places as we journey with you.

**ML email**

*Christian Odyssey* is like a “breath of fresh air” to our denomination. It is a magazine we can be proud of and would be happy to share with others outside our denomination! The tangible quality of paper being used and the color photos enhance

the message of the written material, which points us to Jesus and his grace and mercy.

**LP California**

Just received the new edition of *Odyssey*. Great issue! I’m really pushing it as an evangelistic tool for our folks. We plan to link our local church website to your website.

**GH Ohio**

I really enjoy reading *Christian Odyssey*, but I was disappointed to be unable to read large sections of the magazine because I couldn’t see the material. Perhaps if I mention a few items, you’ll understand what I mean.

The “Mary Magdalene” article was impossible to see because the type was so light. The “Letters to the Editor” had the same problem. The questions in “The Faith of an Atheist” were in light blue type, which made them even harder to read. The shine on the paper didn’t help either. Please have mercy on us older folks with less than perfect eyesight and consider making all the type more readable because we look forward to reading all of the magazine.

**MP California**

*Thank you for your constructive comments. Other older readers have made similar comments. We hear you loud and clear and are sorry you had difficulties. There are many aspects that must be taken into consideration regarding the “look” of a magazine. But anything that gets in the way of its primary purpose—to be read—we’ll throw overboard. With respect to our older readers, we’ve decided to use a slightly less glossy paper. We’ve also eliminated the typological elements that you have said give you difficulties. See what you think. And if you still find it difficult to see, let us know.*

*We are never offended by helpful and constructive criticisms about any aspect of Christian Odyssey. Keep them coming.*

Letters for this section should be addressed to “Letters to the Editor.” Send your letters to Worldwide Church of God, PO Box 5005 Glendora, CA 91740-5005, or by electronic mail to [john.halford@wcg.org](mailto:john.halford@wcg.org).

The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your initials and edit the letter for clarity and space. We welcome your comments.

## In Other Words

# Don’t just go—leave a good legacy

By James R. Henderson

**H**ave you ever heard of the phrase “a parting shot”?

It is a term from archery and is a distortion of “a Parthian shot.” It was a battle strategy, sometimes used in mock retreat, where mounted archers would turn around and fire a volley of arrows at the enemy.

A parting shot can have a negative connotation, as when King David killed troublemakers before Solomon was inaugurated as king.

However, there are positive applications.

I know of a woman who, for personal reasons, had to leave her church area and live in a remote country area. Before she left, she bought for the congregation a sound system that is used to this day.

A man decided to leave in his will a legacy to his church. Not just as an act of thankfulness, but to show that he is still joined with them in the battle for truth, still supporting their mission.

A minister was re-assigned and determined to tackle a cultural issue that had been hurting his parish for some time so that his successor did not have deal with this issue.

In her last year of school a teenager decided to “come out” as a Christian and invite her classmates to an informal church meeting.

Paul, before he died, wrote his final thoughts to Timothy and Titus in order to strengthen their leadership.

Jesus himself gave the greatest parting shot ever—the Holy Spirit.

Parting shots are not just about what we might do before we die, but they are also about how we end phases in our lives.

What about you? Have you come to the end of a phase of your life, of a job, of a responsibility?

If you have the opportunity to do good, why not do it? What are some positive parting shots you could fire? ●

# CHRISTIAN Odyssey

August/September 2006 Vol. 2 No. 6

Circulation 14,000

*Christian Odyssey* is published 6 times a year by the **Worldwide Church of God**, PO Box 5005 Glendora, CA, 91740-5005. Copyright © 2006 Worldwide Church of God. All rights reserved. *Christian Odyssey* is also available on the Internet at [www.christianodyssey.org](http://www.christianodyssey.org)

**Executive Editor**

Mike Feazell

**Editor**

John Halford

**Managing Editor**

Mike Morrison

**Senior Editor**

Paul Kroll

**Circulation**

Celestine Olive, Scott Wertz

**Publisher**

Worldwide Church of God

**President:** Joseph Tkach

**Notice:** *Christian Odyssey* cannot be responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photographs. Subscriptions are sent automatically to contributing members of the Worldwide Church of God. Address all communications to **Worldwide Church of God**, PO Box 5005 Glendora, CA, 91740-5005. Postmaster: Please send address changes and Form 3579 to Worldwide Church of God, PO Box 5005 Glendora, CA, 91740-5005. Unless noted otherwise, scriptures are quoted from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

**Contributions**

*Christian Odyssey* gratefully accepts contributions to help meet publication costs. If you would like to help us bring the good news of the gospel of grace to others, send your contribution to Worldwide Church of God, PO Box 5005, Glendora, CA, 91740-5005.

## 5 Heaven's above – or is it?

Scientific discoveries have made us rethink our ideas about nearly everything on earth. Why not heaven, too?

## 9 My father's living will

When Dad died, he left us with much more than memories.

## 12 Send us some children

When you are down to nothing, God may be up to something.

## 14 Perichor...what?

God wants us to feel we are "one of the family."

## 17 Unmasking male depression

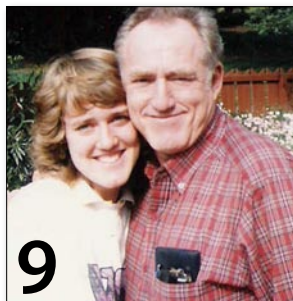
The symptoms are different but the effects are just as devastating.

## 20 A cup of cold water

Why Good Samaritans need to be careful.

## Features

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 2 Letters to the Editor  | 21 I've Been Reading |
| 2 In Other Words         | 22 Bible Study       |
| 4 Editorial              | 23 Lectionary        |
| 8 One Pilgrim's Progress | 24 Hmm...            |
| 11 Bystander             |                      |
| 16 Church History Corner |                      |



# Praying for the peace of Jerusalem

By John Halford

**A**s we go to press, the Middle East is once again engulfed in war. What will the situation be by the time you get to read this?

That is anybody's guess. But it is not anybody's prophecy.

Whenever events start heating up in that unhappy and unstable part of the world, prophecy buffs and pundits start quivering. Is this it? "It" being the series of events that some believe will lead directly to the return of Jesus Christ. Well—let's hope they are right. But don't get your hopes up. The prophecy buffs have never have been right before.

For the last 2,000 years, self-appointed Christian prophets have been appropriating world events to trumpet their personal interpretations of prophecy. It is a dismal record of pride, false expectations and shattered dreams. You'd think they would have learned from history to be cautious—and that we'd have learned to ignore them.

Yeah—but this time they may be right? And maybe not. Maybe there will be another major war and Christ still will not come. Or maybe things will once again settle down to the uneasy tension that passes for "peace" in this troubled region.

"Careful now," I can hear some readers saying. "Remember what it says in 2 Peter, chapter 3."

Yes, I know. It says, "In the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation'" (verses 3-4).

That's why I'm not scoffing. Prophecies are in the Bible, and they do mean something. Many of them seem to have very specific references to events that lead up to Jesus' return. At least, that is one way of looking at them. But not the only way. One thing is certain: no one can know for sure until God is ready to make the meaning plain.

So let's not scoff, but let's not panic, either. Peter's epistle was written to help us keep our balance, not to send us careening off center with speculation and irresponsible knee-jerk reactions whenever hostilities flare up in the Middle East. If there is one thing that trying to figure out "where we

are in prophecy" should have taught us, it is that we don't—and can't—know.

Even the most "timely" prophecy does not cancel out the timeless instructions of the Bible. Just before the warning about scoffing, 2 Peter says: "I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles" (verse 2). The epistle reminds us that the return of Jesus will come suddenly, unexpectedly, taking everyone by surprise. For those who are not prepared, it will seem like a catastrophe. And indeed there will be "winners and losers." But the winners will not be those who



have been able to sort out the "coded messages" of prophecy. It will be those who by patient, consistent and diligent discipleship have shown that they truly want the life of the kingdom of God and its righteousness.

In some ways I hope that the "end time" panic merchants are right this time, because I'd like to see the end of the suffering and repeated cycles of war and destruction. I love that vision of Isaiah, who saw Jerusalem not as an epicenter of contention and strife, but a source of peace and happiness (Isaiah 2:2-4). I'm not sure exactly what it means, or when it will happen. But whatever it is and whenever it is, it is something to look forward to.

In the meantime, we'd do well, as the psalmist said, to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6). Because, whether this is "it" or not, people are getting killed and maimed, lives and property are being wrecked and yet another generation is growing up knowing only this seemingly endless, bitter cycle of misery. ●



# Heaven's above—or is it?

By John Halford

**S**hortly after you die, you will find yourself in a queue outside the pearly gates, waiting for an interview with St. Peter. If you pass muster, you will be invited in, issued with a white robe and a regulation harp, and assigned your own cloud. As you begin to strum, you may recognize a few (perhaps not as many as you'd hoped for) of your friends, and probably many people you tried to avoid in your lifetime. And so begins your eternal life.

You don't really believe that, do you? Mercifully, you don't need to, because it isn't true. But what do you think heaven will be like?

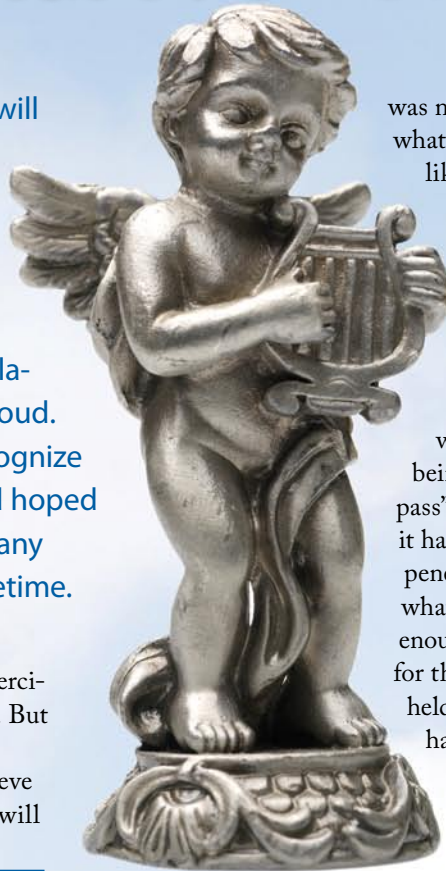
Most of us who believe in God also believe there is some kind of afterlife, in which we will be rewarded for our faithfulness or punished for our sins. That much is true—it is why Jesus came for us, died for us and lives for us. The so-called Golden Rule reminds us that “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

But what does that mean?

If the reward of the righteous is anything at all like the popular images, well, we may hate to admit it, but the other place sounds like it bears a second look.

## Thinking about heaven

In this article we'd like to get you thinking about heaven, perhaps in ways you never have before. Please understand that we are not being dogmatic. That would be foolish and arrogant. Our only reliable source of information is the Bible, and that is surprisingly vague about what comes next. But the Bible does promise that if we put our trust in God, we will receive many benefits in this life (along with challenges) and we can expect benefits to continue forever in a world to come. Jesus was quite clear about that. But he



was not so forthcoming about what that world to come will be like (Mark 10:29-30).

The apostle Paul wrote, “We don't yet see things clearly.

We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist.” (1 Cor. 13:12,

Message Bible). Paul

was one of the few human beings to be given a “visitor's pass” to heaven, and he found it hard to describe what happened (2 Cor. 12:2-4). But whatever it was, it was real enough to change his priorities for the rest of his life. Death held no fears for Paul. He

had seen enough of what came next to actually look forward to it. But most of us are not like Paul.

“Why allow our view of heaven to be limited to yesterday's worldviews? What can our enhanced understanding tell us about life hereafter?”

## More of the same?

When we think about heaven, we have no alternative but to imagine it in terms of what we know. For example, medieval artists painted an earthly paradise, filled with details of their contemporary ideas of physical beauty and perfection. (Although where on earth did they get the idea that cherubs resembled naked, aerodynamically improbable babies?) Styles, technology and tastes change, and medieval ideas of paradise don't really help us imagine a utopia today.

Modern writers use more up-to-date imagery. C. S. Lewis's imaginative classic *The Great Divorce* describes an imaginary bus trip from hell (which he pictured as a vast and dreary suburb) to heaven. The purpose of the trip was to give those in “hell” a chance to change their minds. Lewis's heaven takes some getting used to, and many of the sinners don't like it,

preferring the hell they know. Lewis stresses that he has no special insights into the nature of eternal life, and intended that his book should be read strictly as an allegory.

Mitch Albom's fascinating *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* also makes no pretense to theological accuracy. He sets heaven in the context of a seaside fairground where the main character had worked all his life. But Albom and Lewis and others like them may be on to something. Heaven may not be quite so different from the environment we experience here below.

Jesus, when describing the kingdom of God, often said it was “like” aspects of life as we know it. Not exactly the same, but sufficiently similar to draw an analogy.

## Then and now

For most of human history, we had little scientific understanding of the nature of the cosmos. If they thought about such things at all, people believed the earth was flat, and the sun and moon went around it in perfect concentric circles. Heaven was somewhere above, and hell was below. The traditional ideas of pearly gates, harps, white robes, wings and an interminable praise and worship service are what you'd expect from sincere people trying to interpret what little the Bible says about heaven in terms of the world as they understood it.

Today we know so much more about the nature of the physical cosmos. We know that the earth is a micro-speck in an enormous and apparently expanding universe. We know that what seems like solid reality is, at a fundamental level, a wispy web of energy, bound together by forces so strong that for most of history we did not even suspect that they existed. We know that perhaps as much as 90 percent of the universe is made up of “dark matter”—about which we can theorize with mathematics, but cannot see or measure.

We know that even such apparently indisputable ideas as the “passing of time” are relative. Even the dimensions that define our ideas of space (length, width, height and time) are just visible and comprehensible aspects of a much more involved and intricate reality. Although it is impossible to imagine how they work, we are told by some astrophysicists that there may be at least seven more dimensions. These scientists speculate that those extra dimensions are as much a part of reality as height, length and breadth and time. They operate at a level that our finest instruments cannot measure, and even our minds can but ponder them briefly before becoming bewildered and disoriented.

The scientific breakthroughs of the last few decades have shattered traditional understanding of just about everything. So what about heaven? Do we need to look again at our ideas of what life might be like in the hereafter?

## Hereafter

That's an interesting word. *Here*-after. Not *there*-after or *where*-after. Is it possible that eternal life could be spent in a rather familiar environment, doing things we have learned to enjoy, with people we know and with bodies that we recognize? Could it be that what comes next will be an extension of the best of life as we know it, but without negative stress, anxiety or suffering? Well—and read this carefully—the Bible does not say it will not be like that. (I'd better run that by you again—the Bible does not say it will not be like that.)

American theologian Randy Alcorn has spent years studying the concept of heaven. In his book *Heaven*, while carefully avoiding sensationalism and fantasy, Alcorn subjects every biblical reference that alludes to life after death to careful scrutiny. The result is a fascinating portrait of what the afterlife may be like. He writes:

“We get tired of ourselves, of others, of sin and suffering and crime and death. Yet we love the earth, don't we? I love the spaciousness of the night sky over the desert. I love the coziness of sitting next to Nanci on the couch in front of the fire, blanket over us and dog snuggled next to us. These experiences are not heaven—but they are *foretastes* of heaven. What we love about this life are the things that resonate with the life we are made for. The things we love are not merely the best this life has to offer—they are previews of the greater life to come.”

So why allow our view of heaven to be limited to yesterday's worldviews? Let's speculate about what our enhanced understanding of our environment might tell us about life in heaven.

## Heavenly bodies

The Apostles Creed, the most popular Christian statement of faith, affirms the “resurrection of the body.” You may have repeated it hundreds of times. Have you ever thought about what it means?

It is popular to think of the resurrection in terms of a “spirit” body, a wispy, ethereal, unreal, ghostlike sort of form. But that is not a biblical idea. The Bible indicates that a resurrected human being will have a real body. But that body will not be physical as we understand physical.

Our concept of physical (or “real”) is bound by the four dimensions with which we experience reality. But if indeed there are many more dimensions, then our definition of what is “real” is woefully inadequate.

After he had been resurrected, Jesus had a real body. He could eat, walk, and appeared quite normal. He could be touched. Yet he was able to step in and out of the dimensions of our “reality” at will, appearing to walk through a wall like Harry Potter at the railroad station. We interpret that as unreal, but perhaps it is quite normal

for a body that can experience the full spectrum of reality.

So can you look forward to living forever in a form that is recognizably *you*, with a real body that is not subject to death, sickness and decay, and is not dependent on air, food, water and the circulation of blood for its existence? It certainly seems so. “Who knows how we’ll end up!” says the Bible. “What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we’ll see him—and in seeing him, become like him.” (1 John 3:2, Message Bible).

Imagine life with your mind—it would still be *your* mind—with the junk cleaned out and the priorities reordered, free forever to plan, dream and create. Imagine an eternity reunited with old friends and the limitless potential to make more. Imagine relationships with others, and with God, without anxiety, tension or upset. Imagine never having to say “good-bye” to people you love.

## Not so far

Far from being trapped forever in an interminable church service, eternal life seems to be a greatly enhanced version of the best of what we know now.

There is much more “out there” than we can discern with our limited senses. Occasionally, God opens the door just a crack to show us a glimpse of a greater reality.

St. Paul told the superstitious people of Athens that God was “not far from them.” (Acts 17:24-27). Heaven is certainly not close in any ways we can measure. But it may not be merely “a happy land, far, far away.” Could it indeed be all around us in ways we don’t have the words to describe?

Let your imagination run free for a while.

When Jesus was born, angels suddenly appeared to the shepherds in the hills (Luke 2:8-14). It was as if they stepped into our world from the realm that they inhabited. Is that also what happened in 2 Kings 6:17 when Elisha’s frightened servant suddenly saw legions of angels appear? Stephen, about to be stoned by an angry mob, was given a glimpse of sights and sounds that are normally beyond human experience (Acts 7:55-56). Is that how John saw the visions of the book of Revelation?

Randy Alcorn points out that “just as blind people cannot see the world, even though it exists all around them, we are unable to see heaven in our fallen condition. Is it possible that before sin and the Curse, Adam and Eve saw clearly what is now invisible to us? Is it possible that Heaven itself is but inches from us?” (*Heaven*, p. 178).

These are fascinating speculations. But they are not fantastic. Science has shown us there is much, much more to the Creation than we can observe and experience with

our present physical restrictions.

This earthbound human life is a greatly limited expression of what we will eventually be. Jesus came to us as one of us, subjecting himself to the limitations of a human being, including the ultimate fate of all merely physical life forms—death! Just before his crucifixion, he prayed, “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” And remember, he also prayed, “Father, I want those you gave me to be with me, right where I am, so they can see my glory, the splendor you gave me, having loved me long before there ever was a world.” (John 17:5, 24, Message Bible).

## The last enemy

The promises of the new Heaven and Earth include “death is gone forever.” In the developed world, we’ve figured out how to live a decade or two longer. (Although sadly, we haven’t done very well in figuring out how to

“Imagine relationships without anxiety, tension or upset. Imagine never having to say ‘good bye’ to people you love.”

use the extra time.) But although it might be possible to postpone our appointment with the grave, death is still the unavoidable enemy.

As Alcorn points out in his fascinating study of heaven, “We shouldn’t glorify death—Jesus didn’t. He wept over it (John 11:35). For every beautiful story of people peacefully slipping into eternity, there are stories of confused and shrunken people, wasting away mentally and physically, leaving behind exhausted, confused and grief-stricken loved ones. Death is painful, and it’s an enemy. But for those who know Jesus, death is the *final* pain and the *last* enemy.” (p. 451).

## Wait. There’s more!

There is much more we could talk about. Providing we keep a sense of balance and don’t go off on tangents, to explore the possibilities of our lives after death is an exciting study. But my computer’s word count is reminding me that this article is still subject to the limitations of time and space.

So let’s close with a final, truly exciting quote from Randy Alcorn: “With the Lord we love and the friends we cherish, we’ll embark together on the ultimate adventure, in a spectacular new universe awaiting our exploration and dominion. Jesus will be the center of all things, and joy will be in the air we breathe.

“And right when we think ‘it doesn’t get any better than this’—*it will*” (p. 457). ●

# Just a nobody?

By Mike Feazell

**S**o you think you're "just a nobody"? It doesn't matter to God what you think about yourself. It's what he thinks that counts, and he thinks you're his special operations agent.

Take the kid on the shore of the Sea of Galilee I'm going to introduce you to.

In Jesus' day, kids were on the low end of the totem pole. As low as women were in that culture, children were even lower. But when the time came for someone to step forward with the seeds of one of Jesus' greatest miracles, our Savior called on a "mere" kid, a "nobody."

It wasn't by accident. Jesus was making a point, and it was a point intended for you and me. Because when it comes to confidence in serving God, most of us figure we've got nothing worthwhile to offer.



"Well, there's a kid here with five barley loaves and a couple of fishes. That's not quite going to cut it for five thousand mouths, though, is it?"

That's what Jesus was waiting to hear. "Make the people sit down," he said. So the disciples found a huge grassy area and directed the crowd to settle in. Then Jesus took the loaves and fishes that the boy "happened" to bring along and was willing to turn over to the Master. Jesus gave thanks for the meager offering and passed it out, feeding everyone until they were full.

When everyone had eaten enough, Jesus told the disciples to pick up the leftovers. He didn't want any part of that tiny offering to go to waste.

The kid didn't have much, and he didn't do much, but what he had and what he did played a pivotal role in what Jesus had decided to do. In terms of social standing and in terms of prestige, notoriety or position, the boy had none. But Jesus knew him and knew what he had to offer. Not much by human standards, but plenty enough to be a part of the Lord's great work of love in the world.

Maybe you figure that you don't have much either. Maybe you figure that whatever you have makes no difference in the great scheme of things.

**"Maybe you figure that whatever you have makes no difference, but what you consider unimportant Jesus considers precious."**

But Jesus used that boy and his knapsack of bread and fishes on the lakeshore to tell you otherwise. It's Christ's work that

A large crowd was following Jesus because they saw that he was healing sick people (read the story in John 6:1-15). Needing a break, Jesus took the disciples up the mountain to get away for a while, but the crowd kept coming. So Jesus turned to Philip and asked him where they were going to buy bread to feed all those people. He was actually teasing Philip with the question, because he already knew what he was going to do, and it wasn't to wipe out the inventories of all the Gergasene bakers.

"Are you kidding? We haven't got close to that kind of money between us," Philip must have sputtered.

Andrew chimed in, maybe with a little sarcasm,

matters, and he wants you involved in it. What you consider small and unimportant he considers precious, and he can use it to do great things.

So don't hide behind the hot dog stand when you could step up to bat. Jesus wants you in the game, and he can turn your awkward swing into a base hit if you'll only give him the chance. Trust him. You're his special operations agent.

And it's all because he loves you. He wants you there alongside him in what he's doing because he really does like you and enjoy your company. And even if all you can do is hand him a drink of water once in a while or simply say, "That's really cool, Lord," you are important to him. You're not a nobody to Jesus. Never were. Never will be. ●





# My father's living will

By Lila Docken Bauman

*"Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills."*—Genesis 49:26

**L**osing your father never comes easily. He may have lived to a gray old age, or he may have faded from your life before you knew him. But the loss of him forever transforms you. Through some miracle I don't yet understand, embedded in that loss is a blessing from God that can come no other way.

I anticipated my own father's death for many years, knowing his failing heart could not sustain him for long. As it turned out, he lived until 81, longer than statistics predicted for him. But as he took his final breath, a voice protested inside my head: "It's not enough time!"

There is never enough time with your dad. There remains too much you didn't get to share with him.

After Daddy died, however, all the things he left behind pushed themselves into my awareness, tingling with his presence. I suddenly saw a complete life I hadn't noticed before, brimming with unfinished possibilities. He left clues of himself everywhere—in his much-scribbled Bible, in his poetry, in the childish joy of his grandkids, whom he loved without restraint.

The biggest surprise has been what he left living inside of his family. I have not read Daddy's legal will, but I see his "living will" pouring out its bequests upon us faster than we can gather them up. I want to share his living will with you, not only in tribute to my father, but in tribute to all fathers, and to those children who may not have yet claimed their inheritances.

## Daddy's ministry

My dad, Art Docken, served as a minister for over 40 years. He had a pastor's heart, and stuck close to that core. I remember many nights hearing the car pull out at

2 a.m. He was not the kind of man to wait until morning to respond to someone calling for prayer or help. One parishioner 20 years his senior called my dad "Daddy" because he always felt mentored and nurtured by him. My dad was a shepherd who loved his sheep—who loved people—with his whole heart.

Daddy included the whole family in his ministry when he could, at a time when church pressures often kept pastors away from home. For church events Daddy had deacons available to set things up. But with a twinkle in his eye he pulled us from school on those days so we could help him out instead. We thought it was great fun.

Perhaps the biggest legacy from Daddy's ministry was his openness—his lack of guile or hypocrisy. He was at times too blunt; as a man of sharp discernment he never sugarcoated his numerous opinions or criticisms. But anyone he dealt with knew he was playing straight, knew that what he said was what he meant.

From a daughter's perspective, I saw that the man preaching from the pulpit was the same man who loved my mother, loved us kids, mowed the grass, helped us with our homework,

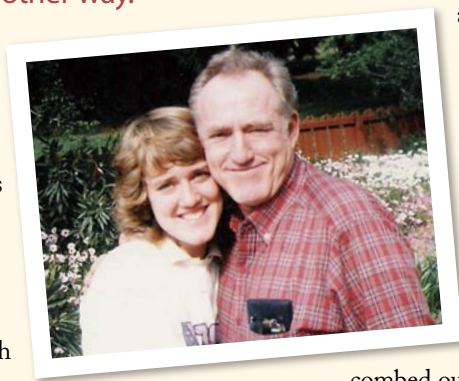
combed out our tangles, watched old movies in the middle of the night, and strove privately to live up to his public words.

After retirement he volunteered for ministries and developed ways to share his faith. He created a digital slideshow about Jesus' life and ministry and gave it away, never considering trying to market it. He started a book for his grandchildren about the miraculous grace of God. He remained consistent up to the day he died.

Not that he looked for acknowledgment. Unimpressed by position or politics, he sacrificed his own status to protect his family from those pressures. He gave the same respect to support staff, strangers and children as he did to those with prestige. It taught us powerfully about how God loves the world.

## His passion for life

My dad was a creative and sensitive person who relished adventure. And he loved being a father. Although his job allowed few vacation days, he turned business trips into family retreats. He embraced childhood, and while



overly strict in some ways, he indulged us shamelessly in others. How many nights did my siblings and I sneak outside at 11 p.m. to greet a new snowfall in our bare feet, hearing Daddy tell Mother, “Oh, let them have fun for a while. They’re only kids once.”

Daddy spoke from his experience of exploring and traveling during his youth. He understood that one of the best classrooms is life itself, and he made sure we enjoyed access to as much of it as he could.

When I was 14, my parents took my 13-year-old sister, Carrie, four-year-old brother, Will, and I along on a preaching tour through the Philippines. It didn’t matter that our school threatened to fail us for missing a month of classes—

“Forgiving Daddy relieved the pain of the grudges we carried. But the process produced an unexpected effect for which I thank God every day.”

how could my dad *not* take us on this adventure? (We earned straight A’s, by the way.)

Toward the end of our trip, his decision teetered on the foolhardy as we embarked on an eight-hour drive through rebel-controlled jungle to reach the tiny village of Don Carlos in Bukidnon. The driver insisted that we kids duck when a car passed so that bandits could not see our blonde hair.

After two breakdowns, we arrived in the village in the middle of the night with nothing available to quench our thirst but local beer. Our hotel room was a concrete cell with cots, a primitive toilet, and a spigot and bucket. Its walls, infested with ants and a massive spider, vibrated with the snores of a dozen other guests. We awoke at 4 a.m. to the sounds of roosters and a herd of pigs being maneuvered into the open market next door.

Later that day we met and worshipped and ate with Christians who had never before seen blonde kids, and whose joy and hospitality transformed our lives. Will developed a scorching fever during that trip, but even he agrees with Carrie and me that we wouldn’t trade the experience for anything.

## His faith

Daddy’s faith undergirded every detail of his life. He never wasted a chance to remind us of God’s unshakable trustworthiness.

My sister Judith recalls the one and only time she leaped from a high dive. Terrified of heights, she climbed the ladder and tipped herself into the open air, clinging to Daddy’s repeated promise that he would be right there with her when she hit the water. He was.

“I have never gotten back on a high dive board again,” Judith says, “but I have never forgotten what faith is—that

terrifying leap into the unknown, holding tight to that absolute trust that God will not let you sink. That’s come in handy over and over in my life. I’ll never forget that.”

Daddy mentored our faith at every step and prepared us for our own relationship with God. As a minister, he understood the sacrifices that accompany God’s calling.

My sister Abby decided to take a year off from college to teach as a volunteer in Amman, Jordan. As she prepared for the trip, she saw worry cloud my mom’s eyes. She told Daddy, “I’m not going to Jordan. I can’t put Mother through that.”

“If God is calling you to do a job,” Daddy answered, “you’ve got to do it. He will take care of the details. He’ll take care of Mama. Besides, she would worry about you no

matter where you were.” So Abby went, and her experience enriched the whole family.

A couple years later, Daddy wrote in a letter to me, “God wants you to be happy. Tell him your desires, and he will work his purposes through the

talents he gave you. Just cut the rope, and let him guide your boat away from shore. You’ll never regret it!”

## The legacy of forgiveness

I idolized my dad, as kids often do, but did not blind myself to his shortcomings. He made mistakes we had to work to forgive, and his own example of forgiving others made this easier.

My dad’s job frequently required him to extend himself beyond what was humanly reasonable, and he sacrificed many things in the process. Losing his health and time with his family were the worst.

He endured periods of great sorrow in his ministry, facing moments of slander, malice and betrayal from some of his closest friends. Although it hurt him deeply, it never shook him. “Why are you worried?” he would say. “God knows. We are *all* his children.”

Now that we are adults, my siblings and I have had our own letting go to do. It was not easy growing up as minister’s kids under constant public scrutiny, and Daddy was a lot stricter than he needed to be at critical periods in our development. We battled a lot with frustration and guilt.

But Daddy mellowed out as he grew older, and to his credit he prayerfully acknowledged his past extremes. He and my mother rejected the legalism we grew up with and embraced God’s grace. This provided us a space in which to reconcile and grow as a family.

We expected that forgiving Daddy would relieve the pain of the grudges we carried, and it did. But the process also produced an unexpected effect for which I thank God every day.

In forgiving our dad, we opened our laps to receive blessings he had been waiting to load upon us. Freed from

## The beautiful anointing

By Joyce Catherwood

(Matthew 26:6-10; Mark 14:3-10; John 12:1-7)

I stood silently in the doorway of the common room where a special meal was being served in honor of Jesus. The conversation at the table was animated. Everyone was still celebrating the astounding resurrection of my brother, Lazarus.

I was waiting for the right moment to anoint Jesus with costly spikenard. I had carefully planned this for days, because on several occasions Jesus had confided in us that he was going to die a gruesome death by crucifixion. No one really believed him, but I did, and I was deeply affected and disturbed.

Finally, the time seemed right. It wasn't easy to enter a room full of men. My heart was pounding as I timidly approached Jesus. First one guest, then another looked up at me. I broke the neck of the alabaster jar on the stone floor. The sound reverberated through the house. The fragrance of perfume filled the air. I poured the spikenard on Jesus' head. Everyone looked at Jesus' face to see his reaction. He just closed his eyes, as his travel-weary and fatigued expression began to melt away.

I emptied the last of the luxurious ointment, every drop in the jar, on his feet. I untied my hair and used it to gently dry each foot. It was as though Jesus and I were the only two people in the room.

But I was rudely jerked back to reality by the voice of Judas, who indignantly complained about the waste of expensive perfume, insisting that I should have used the money instead to help the poor. Then some of the other men joined in and harshly rebuked and criticized me.

My heart sank. There I was in the presence of men with my hair untied. I had interrupted their meal. I felt so foolish having spent all that money on spikenard. I began to cry. Huge teardrops fell on Jesus' feet and I awkwardly tried to wipe them off with my hair.

Overwhelmed with shame and embarrassment, I was about to run out of the room when I heard Jesus say, "Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done such a beautiful thing to me." And in front of all those men, he said the poor would always be among us, but he would not always be there. He said the perfume was used appropriately—to prepare him for his burial. And then he said: "You can be sure wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

I was speechless. Jesus not only understood what I was trying to do, he had also praised my act of love. I glanced over at Judas, and his face was flush with resentment. He got up and left. Later I learned he had gone to the religious leaders and arranged to betray Jesus.

Days later, my heart was broken and I wept bitter tears as Jesus was tortured and crucified. But my sorrow was soon turned to the greatest joy when he was raised again to life and I saw him and spoke with him.

Now, whenever I look back on that special meal and remember Jesus' words and the kindness in his voice, I am so glad that I followed my heart and poured out my adoration on our Lord, giving him solace and easing his fears as he faced the horror and desolation of the cross. ●

the snags of the past, we were able to share the time of his life when he had become more of the person he had longed to be. Had we not released our old disappointments, we would have completely missed the man Daddy had become.

I know now that Daddy did what he could with what he was given in a culture where faulty legacies about manhood and fatherhood continue to be passed down. When I looked for them, I found glimpses in my dad of the hopeful and curious boy he once was—and always remained, deep down.

If I could offer a little advice, find that kid in your own dad. Then nurture that kid in the children you know, in honor of your father, so that they don't end up scarred by the same burdens you've seen.

Most dads have left very apparent blessings. When you search through the boxes of his life, you'll find them. Even if you don't know your dad, he gave you life, and in his old age would feel proud of your talents and choices, which are yours to make every day. Anticipate that reunion with him when all mysteries and barriers fade.

This is what Daddy taught us: Forgive, be forgiven, and get on with life embraced by God's love and faithfulness.

During his recent hospitalization, after he had survived his first few surgeries and was barely a day off the ventilator, he whispered: "No grudges. Only peace. All is well."

Daddy narrowly survived a traumatic triple bypass in December, and after three follow-up surgeries in seven weeks, he insisted on going home. He accepted the hospice care and declined steadily until his death in March.

During one visit while he still had some strength, Daddy and I discussed the details of one of his unfinished projects, which I promised to complete for him. We both understood that his condition would likely not improve.

As I kissed him goodbye that day, I impulsively pressed his palm to my head, as he had often pressed my cool hand to his own brow while he was hospitalized. Daddy immediately grasped my head with both his hands, and prayed his blessing on me. I shall never forget the love, acceptance and exhortation that flowed from Daddy's hands and heart at that moment. That blessing healed me of all worry and doubt, and gave me permission to go on without him.

But that prayer was not his legacy. He left *that* everywhere else, embedded in all our lives and memories and faith and choices. It was his living will to us, his children, who can now freely pour those blessings from Daddy onto others. Unlike his physical belongings, the bequests of his living will increase and multiply in the giving.

And those blessings are greater and more lasting than all the bounty of the distant mountains, and of the age-old hills. ●



**Dr. Lila Docken Bauman** teaches media, culture and communication courses at St. Louis University. She is married and has a 3-year-old son.

# “Send us some children”

## *A story of transformation*

By John Peterson

**O**ne gloomy Sunday morning in February 2003, I looked out over my “congregation” in Lexington, Ohio—that week it was just three elderly folks and myself—and faced facts. This church was dying. “Lord God,” we prayed, “if we are going to survive, we must have children. Send us children.”

This simple prayer began a chain of answered prayers that has transformed our moribund little congregation into a thriving group of people working together to serve their local community. Here is how it happened.

next week she brought two of her friends.

Two weeks later this same couple drove into the parking lot with five children crowded into their small Hyundai. The very same day a visitor came to the service. He saw the crowded car and remarked that we needed a van. We acknowledged the need and informed him that acquiring one did not seem possible. He said that he had a passenger van that he was willing to donate to us.

After receiving the van and preparing it for our use, we began to drive to Marion to pick up the children and take them home after church (two 65-mile round trips). The number of young people began to grow. Most of them were inner-city kids with serious “issues.” Our prayer changed from “send us children” to “Lord God, please help us love these that you are sending us.”

We found that we could not change them all, so



As we prayed we were moved to take a new look at Matthew 19:14. It occurred to us that we could “passively” forbid the children to come to Jesus simply by not seeking them. So as we continued to pray for children to love, we also asked for guidance, because we did not know how to look for them.

Three weeks later, two members from Marion (a city 32 miles away) brought their granddaughter to church. This was a new day for us. The whole congregation lavished their love on this precious girl. We each introduced ourselves and invited her to join us for lunch at a nearby restaurant. At the restaurant she truly seemed to enjoy the kindness and attention. The

we focused on a core few and spent extra time helping them see a brighter future in Jesus. These began to minister to each other. Time passed and we felt led by the Holy Spirit to move the congregation from Lexington to Marion, where all of the youth lived.

A search showed that there was a meeting hall available at the Southland Mall. The location was ideal, and the mall manager said we could use the facilities occasionally, but not on a regular basis. But the manager had another suggestion. The mall had a spare storage unit that had until recently been used as a store room, and was now vacant. The rent would be “only” \$2000 a month.

We explained that our small congregation's budget could allow for only \$700 a month, and that included \$150 for utilities. The mall manager looked dubious, but agreed to think about it. He phoned John a few days later with another offer. They could rent the spare unit for \$550 a month plus \$150 for utilities.

This could only have been the provision of God.

“Our prayer changed from ‘send us children’ to ‘Lord God, please help us love these that you are sending us.’”

We refurbished the storage unit into a pleasant church sanctuary. Slowly, people started coming—some returning to worship with us after having left some years before. And some began bringing children. One couple brought their grandchildren, who had been abandoned by their parents.

God was answering our prayer for children. We were getting children who needed love—hurt kids, damaged kids, disturbed kids who had known only rejection, kids

of children, jotted down the web address, and contacted the pastor. Anna just happened to be a qualified Christian teacher who was looking for a church that could use her skills. And another prayer was answered.

Today Heart of the Cross has come a long way from being just a gathering of a few elderly folks. Today when the weekly sermon is given, our listeners are still middle

aged or elderly, although there are many more than three. But from the back of the hall comes the sound of children happily engaged in a youth class. Smaller children are playing

on equipment. In an adjacent room a group of teens is engaged in a lively Bible study.

Our services sparkle with activity and energy. Some of the children do have behavioral problems, but all respond eventually to love and genuine concern, which some had never really experienced before. We understand that children begin to form their worldview early, and we try to provide an environment of love and acceptance.



who had contemplated and even attempted suicide. One little boy was so traumatized that he would not speak. But he can sign, and has learned to proudly sign “Jesus loves me” with a big grin.

Sunday morning is now a gathering time of some unlikely church members, but God continues to pour out his precious Spirit upon us as we worship him. Our congregation has grown steadily, but we realized that we lacked the giftedness to really educate the children. We needed a properly qualified teacher. Another answer to prayer was needed.

A friend had painted the church's website address on the side of our van. One day Anna Jones saw the van full

A Thursday night service for teens is well attended with some of the youth bringing their school friends.

Four times a year, we close our service with a “Pass the Light” ceremony. As we sing “Go Light Your World,” each member holds a candle. Starting from the front, they light their neighbor's candle, until the whole room glows with several dozen little lights. It is far from being an empty ritual. It symbolizes what this dynamic little congregation is all about.

This pastor has no doubt about what has happened. We asked God to send the suffering little children to us, and he did. We are living proof that “when you are down to nothing, God is up to something.” ●

# Perichor...what?

A discussion with C. Baxter Kruger, founder of Perichoresis, Inc.

**Christian Odyssey:** Most of us can't even pronounce *perichoresis*, much less spell it. What does it mean?

**Baxter Kruger:** Some years ago a woman walked into my office around Christmastime with a stack of newsletters in her hand. She was crying, and she slammed the newsletters down on my desk and said, "I just feel like a pile of junk!"

I said, "What is wrong?"

She said, "I've been reading these newsletters from these people from all over the world, and they and their children are all doing all these great things for God, and it just hit me what a worthless life I have. For Pete's sake, I'm married and I've got three kids. When I'm not grocery shopping, I'm cooking the groceries, and when I'm not cooking the groceries I'm cleaning up, and when I'm not doing that I'm trying to find clothes for my children and keep this mess of a house presentable. And sometime in there I'm trying to find time for my husband. I don't even have time to read my Bible. What do I have that I can do for God?"

I stopped her, and I said, "Wait a minute, hang on here a minute. Yesterday you spent two hours driving

about all his sheep? He put his concern for this sheep (your daughter) in your heart. You see, you are participating in nothing less than Jesus' life and burden. He was tending to his sheep through you. What is greater than that?"

In the light of the fact that Jesus Christ has laid hold of the whole human race, cleansed us in his death, lifted us up in his resurrection and has given us a place in his relationship with his Father and Spirit in his Ascension, we've got to rethink everything we thought we knew about ourselves and others and our *ordinary* human life.

The simple truth is there is nothing at all ordinary about us and the life we live. Caring for others, from orphans to our friends and the poor, our love for our husbands and wives and children, our passion for music and beauty, for coaching, gardening and fishing; these things do not have their origin in us.

They are not something that we invented. It is all coming from the Father, Son and Spirit. When this dreadful secular/sacred divide is exploded, we can see and honor life as it truly is—the gift of participating in the life and relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit.

“The Triune God meets us not in the sky or in our self-generated religions, but in our ‘ordinary’ human existence.”

**CO:** So we're really talking about God meeting us in our day-to-day lives?

**BK:** Exactly. Through the work of Jesus, we have been *adopted* into the Trinitarian life. The concept of *perichoresis* helps us understand what our adop-

tion means for us. We could define *perichoresis* as "mutual indwelling without loss of personal identity." In other words, we exist in union with the Triune God, but we do not lose our distinct personhood in the process. We matter. We are real to the Triune God.

around Jackson searching for a coat for your daughter. A winter coat, and not just any winter coat but one she would like, one that would be large enough to put away for next year but not look like it was bought this year. And one that was on sale. And you did it, you found it, and she's thrilled."

The woman said, "What's that got to do with this?"

I said, "Where did that concern for your daughter come from? Did you wake up yesterday morning and decide you were going to be a good momma?"

She said she had been thinking about the coat for a week.

I said, "Isn't Jesus the good Shepherd who cares

Only the Trinity could have union *without loss* of personal distinction. If you have union without distinction, you tumble into pantheism, and we would be united to God in such a way as to be completely absorbed into him. There would no longer be a distinct "us" to feel and taste and experience the Trinitarian life.

If you have distinction without union, you end up with deism, where God is just up there watching us

from a distance, and we never see our humanity as included in the Trinitarian life. Motherhood and fatherhood, work and play and music then appear to be merely secular, non-divine aspects of our human experience. Deism leaves us with a Christ-less humanity, and forces us to search beyond our humanity for connection with God.

In Trinitarian theology we say “no” to both pantheism and deism. We have union but no loss of personal distinction, which means that we matter and that our humanity, our motherhood and fatherhood, our work and play and music form the arena for our participation in the Trinitarian life of God. The Triune God meets us not in the sky or in our self-generated religions, but in our “ordinary” human existence.

**CO:** So the gospel is about God knowing us and us knowing God.

**BK:** Exactly. Let me give you a quick story. I like stories better than long and convoluted theological explanations. Many years ago when my son was six (he’s 18 now), I was sitting on the couch in the den sorting through junk mail on a Saturday afternoon. He and his buddy came in and they were decked out in their camouflage, face paint, plastic guns and knives, the whole nine yards. My son peers around the corner of the door and looks at me, and the next thing I know, he comes flying through the air and jump on me. We start wrestling and horsing around and we end up on the floor. Then his buddy flies into us and all three of us are just like a wad of laughter.

And right in the middle of that event the Lord spoke to me and said to pay attention. I’m thinking, it’s Saturday afternoon, your son comes in and you’re horsing around on the floor, it happens every day all over the world, so what’s the big deal? Then it started to dawn on me that I didn’t know who this other kid was. I had never met him. He had never met me. So I re-wound the story and thought about what would have happened if this little boy would have walked into my den alone. Remember, he didn’t know me and I didn’t know him, and he didn’t know my name and I didn’t know his name. So he looks over and sees me, a complete stranger, sitting on the couch. Would he fly through the air and engage me in play? Would we end up in a pile of laughter on the floor? Of course not. That is the last thing that would have happened.

Within himself, that little boy had no freedom to have a relationship with me. We were strangers. He had no right to that kind of familiarity and fellowship. But my son knows me. My son knows that I love him and that I accept him and that he’s the apple of my eye. So in the knowledge of my love and affection, he did the most natural thing in the world. He dove into my lap. The miracle that happened was that my son’s knowledge of my acceptance and delight, and my son’s freedom for fellow-

ship with me, rubbed off on that other little boy. He got to experience it. That other little boy got to taste and feel and know my son’s relationship with me. He participated in my son’s life and communion with me.

Then it dawned on me that that’s what *perichoresis* and our adoption in Christ mean. Jesus is the one who knows the Father. He knows the Father’s love and acceptance. He sees the Father’s face. Jesus has freedom for fellowship with his Father. And Jesus shares his heart with us. He puts his own freedom for relationship with his Father in us through the Spirit, and like that little boy we get to taste and feel and experience the relationship Jesus has with his Father. He shares it all with us. He unites himself with us, and we get to experience his divine life with him. He shares with us his own knowledge of his Father’s heart, his own knowledge of the Father’s acceptance, his

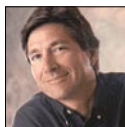
“We are now free to let go of our racial and personal prejudices, and to love and accept one another.”

own assurance of his Father’s love, his own freedom in knowing the Father’s passionate heart. He reaches into his own soul, as it were, and pulls out his own emotions, and then puts them inside of the whole human race. We’re all included in the Son’s relationship with the Father in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

**CO:** Then we never have to worry about whether God accepts us and loves us?

**BK:** Never. What does the understanding that we are accepted into the mutual indwelling and communion with God remove from our hearts? Fear and hiding. So because of Jesus’ knowledge of the Father’s acceptance, which he shares with us, we now are free to let go of our racial and personal prejudices, and to love and accept one another, which leads to the freedom to know and be known, which leads to fellowship and mutual indwelling.

This is what the kingdom of the Triune God is all about. The kingdom is simply the life and love, the communion, the fellowship, the camaraderie and joy of the Father, Son and Spirit, being shared with us and coming to full and abiding and personal expression in us, in our relationships with one another and in our relationships with the whole creation, so that the whole earth is full of the Son’s knowledge of his Father in the Spirit. As to why we don’t experience our life in Christ more fully, that is a question for another day. ●



**C. Baxter Kruger** is Director of *Perichoresis, Inc.*—*A Trinitarian Ministry*. Dr. Kruger’s resources can be accessed at [www.perichoresis.org](http://www.perichoresis.org).

# Persecution, penance and “the lapsed”

By Paul Kroll

For the first 300 years of the church’s history, believers faced many local and empire-wide persecutions of varying intensity. One of the most terrifying struck in A.D. 250. This was the “Decian Persecution,” named after the Roman Emperor Decius Trajan (249-251), who instigated it.

Decius, a pagan, believed that the gods were unfavorable to Rome because the empire’s citizens were not suitably worshipping them. The survival of the empire was in the balance, in his way of thinking. He considered Christians—and anyone else—who didn’t worship the gods to be atheists and guilty of high treason.

Decius issued a decree commanding all people throughout the empire to sacrifice to the gods and to the emperor. Those complying would receive a *libelli*, a certificate attesting to this fact.

Decius certainly didn’t want to turn Christians into martyrs, so comparatively few were actually killed. The goal was to force them to recant their faith and return them to the pagan fold. Arrest, exile, confiscation of property, threats and even torture were employed to force Christians to abandon their faith. The bishops and officers of the church were hit especially hard, with a number of martyrdoms in their ranks.

Many Christians steadfastly refused to go along with Decius’ demands and confessed Christ even under brutal torture. They were given the honorary title “Confessor” by the church. However, multitudes of Christians did sacrifice to the gods and the emperor. Some bribed authorities to obtain fraudulent certificates stating they had sacrificed, when they had not. The Christians who complied with Decius’ order were excommunicated from the church as apostates and collectively called the *lapsi*, or those who had lapsed from the faith.

The persecution under Decius was short-lived. He died in battle just two years after attaining office. A decade later, Gallienus (260-268) was on the emperor’s throne. Under his reign the church enjoyed the first of about 40 years of freedom from persecution. Many of the lapsed Christians then wanted to be readmitted into fellowship with the church.

This situation created a great controversy. Should the lapsed be readmitted at all? Or, readmitted conditionally—after a time of penance and “proving” their loyalty to Christ and the church? Must the lapsed be rebaptized before being readmitted? What about those who had renounced their faith, but then reaffirmed it even while the Decian persecution was in progress?

Enter Novatian (c. 200-258), a prominent Roman presbyter and theologian. He insisted that no lapsed person should be readmitted to the church. Novatian contended that the lapsed had forfeited grace through a denial of Christ. The schismatic group he formed posed another problem when certain of its members later wanted to be readmitted to the church.

Enter Cyprian (248-258), the respected bishop of Carthage. Cyprian and his supporters held that the lapsed should be received back into full fellowship and communion, but only after an interval of probation and penance. Cyprian also insisted that those individuals who had been baptized by priests of schismatic groups, like Novatian’s, would have to be rebaptized by priests of the church.

Cyprian convened several North African church councils between the years 251 and 256 to decide the issues. On September 1, 256, the North African synod voted unanimously that any individuals baptized by heretical or schismatic groups would have to be rebaptized before being granted full fellowship with the church.

Enter the bishop of Rome, Stephen (254-257). He ordered that the lapsed or heretics should be accepted into the church *without* a second baptism. Cyprian resisted this order for some time, but finally yielded.

Such thorny and divisive questions of how to deal with the lapsed led to the establishment of “a rigorous and fixed system of penitential discipline,” wrote Philip Schaff in his monumental 1910 *History of the Christian Church*, page 189. Thus, persons who had been excommunicated because they had lapsed, and were now seeking re-entry, became “penitents.” They had to undertake a series of acts of penance before being readmitted.

The controversy over how to handle the lapsed had long-lasting repercussions for the church. As church historian Justo González points out in his *The Story of Christianity*, page 90, “It was out of that concern that the entire penitential system developed. Much later, the Protestant Reformation was in large measure a protest against that system.” ●

1. Decius was succeeded as emperor by Gallus (251-253) and then Valerian (253-260). While there were changes in the level of persecution, and temporary easing at times, those were still years when it was not safe to be a Christian.
2. The 40 years of rest was followed by the last and most violent persecution, under Emperor Diocletian (284-305).





# Unmasking male depression

By Archibald D. Hart

In this article, I would like to explore what I consider perhaps to be one of the most significant challenges facing us today—the issue of male depression. Do men get depressed? They certainly do, though you wouldn't think it, to listen to many of them. Because male depression is widespread, deeply misunderstood, and too often misdiagnosed, it is a topic that desperately needs our attention.

As I reflect on over 30 years of clinical experience, I am appalled at the realization that I have misdiagnosed male depression many times. Of course, it was not really my incompetence that was to blame. The truth is that there's been a "cover up."

For many decades, perhaps centuries, society has seen depression as a woman's condition. As a result, the symptoms of depression have become "feminized" and we have become indoctrinated with the idea that depression is a "woman's problem." We have become so accustomed to seeing how depression manifests itself in women that we are unwilling to diagnose men as depressive unless we see the same symptom pattern in them. It is no surprise, then, that many men, although deeply depressed, go untreated.

## How to recognize male depression

The problem is that the symptoms of depression commonly seen in women are less common in men. Women are diagnosed mainly by exploring their *feelings*. Men are better diagnosed by paying attention to their *behavior*. Or, to put it more succinctly, *women feel their depression; men act it!* Women get sad and try to "connect" with friends or seek to take care of someone else—called the "tend and befriend" response—while men give vent to depression through frustration and anger. They become irritable and moody. They don't connect, but withdraw, retreating into their cave while they give their loved ones the "silent treatment." It is this "masking" of depression that characterizes male depression.

Let's look at a typical example that illustrates how men experience depression. Stan is an up-and-coming insurance broker. This past year, because of the slump in the economy, he is failing to make the sales goals that his superiors have set for him. When he gets the news that he will not receive his anticipated year-end bonus and is reprimanded and given a warning that his job may be on the line if he doesn't improve, he doesn't go home sad, tearful and grieving (which is what a healthy response to such a loss should be). He certainly doesn't seek out his



“Changes in how a man expresses hostility and anger may be possible evidence for underlying depression.”

wife to see if he can share his disappointment with her.

No, Stan barges in the front door, throws his briefcase across the floor and screams at the kids who are making too much noise for his liking. He heads for his recliner in front of the TV, reaches for the remote and tries to escape his problems. From previous experience, his wife knows that she had better not ask him how his day has gone. Nor is it an opportune time to tell him that the washing machine is making strange noises. And it is because Stan doesn't "connect" with his feelings of depression at this time that he exacerbates it—he creates a chain of further losses and alienation, called a "depression spiral." It may take weeks before he comes out of this spin.

On almost every radio program I have ever done on this topic, I have talked to at least one wife who can accurately describe the classic symptoms of male depression: "He becomes irritable, short-tempered, withdraws into a shell, refuses to talk. When he responds he overre-

acts—whether it be to the news, his dissatisfaction with his meal or the kid’s noise.” A lot of spousal abuse could have depression as the cause or trigger. Essentially, any change in how a man expresses hostility and anger needs to be looked at as possible evidence for an underlying depression.

## How men mask depression

Masked depression is one of the most prevalent disorders in modern American society, yet it is perhaps the most neglected category in psychiatric literature. Our modern world is full of ways men can run away from their depressive pain and hide. The reason is that depression can be *overt* or *covert*. In overt depression, the symptoms include the traditional sadness, lethargy, negativity and mood changes. These are the hallmarks of classical depression—female, that is. For men, depression is usually more covert.

After all, we raise boys to be strong emotionally and not to be “sissies” who cry. It’s not surprising, then, that when depression strikes the typical male, it doesn’t connect so much at the feeling level, but at the behavioral. It is not that sad feelings aren’t there. If you dig deep enough you will find them. Rather, these feelings are shoved out of the way by distracting behaviors, or numbed by some preoccupation. It is these distracting behaviors and preoccupations that “mask” male depression.

What are the common masks? I have space to discuss only four of them here, but they will help the reader get an understanding of what men do with depression.



### 1. Anger, rage and pent-up resentment

This mask is the dark side of male depression, and I have already alluded to it. It brings pain and hardship to a lot of loved ones who must live with a depressed male. It

is obvious that as the incidence of depression has increased, mostly due to the increase in the stress of modern life, so has the incidence of male rage. Road rage, airplane rage, work rage, even rage on high school campuses (the Columbine syndrome) is everywhere.

I suspect that much of it has some depression as its root cause. Why do I say this? Because I have seen it in myself, for one thing. I have also seen it in many of my clients. Shortly after the Columbine shooting, it was discovered that at least one of the two young men was on an antidepressant. Workplace rage, in which a supervisor or colleague is killed, is always precipitated by a major loss, such as being fired. And the experience of loss is a major cause of psychological depression. When the depression is successfully treated, the rage and anger subsides. Men need help in dealing with loss in more effective ways.

### 2. Workaholism

Work can be a major distraction when it totally engrosses you. Here we have both a cause and effect for depression. Over-work, particularly when it is demanding (and what work isn’t?) is the most significant cause of stress in our society. In some societies, people literally work themselves to death. The Japanese have a label for it—“Karoshi.” We call it workaholism and have turned it into a respectable mask for men. But whatever the name, it still devastates the serotonin neurotransmitter system in the brain, causing depression. But work not only causes depression, it also serves as a mask for depression.



### 3. Avoidance of intimacy

The last thing a depressed male wants to do is “connect” in any intimate way. Sex, for the typical male, is not necessarily an expression of intimacy, so sex is not always excluded. The depressed male becomes cold and indifferent to his wife, family and friends. He withdraws and clams up. If this isn’t bad enough, he takes it one step further and begins to search his environment for reasons for his down feelings (he hardly ever calls it “depression”), and this could result in a lot of fault-finding and blaming his immediate family.

### 4. Sexual compulsions

If there is one biological and psychological mechanism with the power to relieve depression’s pain, at least temporarily, it is sex. Except in severe depression, most melancholic men don’t totally lose their desire for sex. Observing many of my male clients, I have come to the opinion that many of those obsessed with sex are so because sex provides them with some pleasurable relief from their low mood—it becomes a way for the male to medicate himself.



### Stress as a cause of depression

I cannot cover all the causes of depression here, but Christian leaders will find that some understanding of the causes of depression will be helpful as they try to help others overcome it. Earlier I mentioned that a significant

loss in a person's life can cause depression. The more significant the loss, the greater the depression. This form of depression is called "reactive depression" and is a form of grief. Usually, medication is not of any help, and the man needs to be helped in the grieving process. Getting fired from a job can be just as devastating to a man as the death of a parent or close friend.

Genetic factors can also cause depression. Here we see severe depression in several members of the same family. Fortunately, this form of depression is probably the easiest to treat, since antidepressant medications are specifically designed to counteract the effects of the gene on the brain's neurotransmitters or chemical messengers. Hormonal and thyroid problems (common in women) can also cause depression. Something called the "serotonin/depression dance" explains why women get depressed whenever their estrogen levels drop (each month, after childbirth and with the onset of menopause). The drop in serotonin causes depression. Here, too, antidepressants can work wonders.

But these causes don't explain the epidemic of male depression we are now seeing. The only explanation is that stress is the culprit, and in some respects stress will also exacerbate female depression.

How does stress cause depression? The stress hormones, called "glucocorticoids," are the culprits, especially one called "cortisol." It targets at least two areas of the brain: the synapses, where it reduces the number of neurotransmitter receptors, and the hippocampus, where it disturbs the brain's capacity to renew its cells. That's the bad news about stress. The good news is that the condition is reversible by lowering your stress and, if necessary, by using the same antidepressants that are effective in genetic forms of depression. However, when combined with psychotherapy, you have the greatest chance of beating it! And don't forget the need many depressed men have for spiritual guidance as well. Depression can make it feel that God is far removed from you.

So my message is clear here. We have to help men become more aware of when they are depressed and encourage them to seek the appropriate help. Men typically don't seek help. They see depression as a sign of weakness. But their cowardice in not dealing with their depression is the real weakness!

## Living with a depressed man

It is unfortunate that many depressed men, including those who are Christian, refuse to go for treatment. Some who seek treatment don't respond satisfactorily. And even when treatment is successful, a depressed male can still be very difficult to live with! Wives, mothers and daughters of

depressed men need all the help they can get to pull themselves through such difficult times.

Why is it so much more difficult living with a depressed man than with a depressed woman? Husbands of depressed women can at least escape in their work or retreat to a hobby or golf course. Wives of depressed husbands have nowhere to hide. Many quit their jobs just to take care of their husbands. Also, men are the ones who are supposed to be strong, not weak, and wives often struggle with this "reversal" of strength and dependence, finding that the adjustment is not easy for them to make. They "hate" having to be strong for both of them!

Depressed men also frustrate and alienate those they love the most. It's almost as if they have a need to blame someone for their depression, and the one who loves them the most is

“Our modern world is full of ways men can run away from their depressive pain and hide.”

the easiest to target. So the more you love your husband, son or father, the greater is the potential that he will hurt you. Those who glibly say; "Don't take it so personally" don't really understand what's going on. It's easier said than done.

What is the most important thing a woman can do for the depressed male in her life? Without a doubt it is *to communicate love and acceptance with all the power she can muster*. It may take a supernatural intervention, she needs to rely on God for the grace and patience that will be needed. It is helpful to emphasize to her loved one that he has not intentionally chosen to be depressed. There may be a few rare exceptions, but most men would gladly give up their depression if they could. The women involved need to understand that the male's "bad" behavior is coming from his depression, not himself.

With God's help, unconditional love can make a difference in the long run to both partners and other family members. And even though he may never show any appreciation for this love at the time, the day will come when the wife or mother will look back with great satisfaction over how they handled the situation. For her, as with other challenges in her life, God's promise to Paul applies as well: "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness*" (2 Cor. 12:9).

For more help on how to deal with the depressed man in the life of a wife or mother, I refer you to my book *Unmasking Male Depression*, published by Word Publications (2001).



**Archibald D. Hart** is Senior Professor of Psychology and Dean Emeritus, Department of Clinical Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena.

# A cup of *cold water*

By Sheila Graham

**A**s she hurried toward her car, focused on her errand from the law firm she worked for, she couldn't help but notice the dirty, disheveled and obviously homeless man. "Could you give me some water, please?" he asked.

No time, she thought. Sorry about that, but I've got to run. But as she got in her car, she was struck by the thought of what she had done, or rather, had not. It wasn't as if it would have been dangerous for her to help the man. Plenty of people were around—people who also looked the other way.

"Lord," she prayed, her heart aching, "Forgive me and, please, give me another chance to give a thirsty person some water."

Have you ever missed an opportunity to help someone in need? I know I have, and my conscience has bothered me just as it did my daughter, Eileen. Well, maybe not as much as hers. She has a tender heart.

Of course, there's another side of the story to consider. I've written articles citing safety concerns, especially for women stopping to help indigent people who ask for help. I haven't changed my mind. A homeless person

What a good excuse not to help—treat the homeless as criminals. Yes, some of the homeless are convicted criminals. But many are not. They may have made mistakes and simply have a harder time coping with life, but that is not an excuse for us to turn our backs on them.

## Another good Samaritan

A biblical instance of someone asking for water also involves a Samaritan, in this case, a Samaritan woman. One day, when Jesus was tired and thirsty, he stopped at a public well and asked a Samaritan woman for a drink (John 4:1-30). She must have been startled by this request from a dusty traveler. He was obviously a Jew, an enemy of the Samaritans. Why should she bother helping him? She could have ignored him and gone on her way, but she didn't.

More likely out of curiosity than concern, she responded to this stranger, and because of that, she was one of the first witnesses of his messiahship. They discussed some of the religious issues that separated their two peoples. "The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ), 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you'" (John 4:25-26).

Not only did Jesus reveal he was the Messiah, he used this woman to witness to the people of her town. She told her townspeople of Christ, and "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done'" (verse 39). A huge blessing for her and her whole town, and all because she took the time to respond to a stranger asking for a drink of water.

So where is the balance? Well, it's not to stop your car every time you see a person standing on a street corner with his or her hand out and give out money. Shelters with food stations are available in most cities, and some people do work the system. God expects us to use our minds, and, it is hoped, that we apply some level of discernment in how and when to serve the poor. I've interviewed officials from big city to small town police departments, and they all tell me much the same: It's not safe to be a Good Samaritan in this day and age.

What would Jesus do if he saw a bleeding person trying to flag him down? Would he have latex gloves available so he wouldn't be exposed to AIDS or HIV? Would he have the proper medical supplies handy? Would his

**“Jesus could handle any situation. We're not Jesus. We need to be concerned, for our safety.”**



assaulted a young friend of mine as she walked to work. The consistent advice from the police is that a woman alone should never stop to help.

But, "on the other hand," as Tevye of *Fiddler on the Roof* would say, Jesus' story of the good Samaritan should ring in our ears when we see someone in need (Luke 10:29-37). It is one of the best-known parables, and Jesus' point was clear. We are responsible to help those who cannot help themselves.

We shouldn't reason ourselves out of serving when we are able. Jesus said the poor are always with us. What a truism that is. As we've seen in the aftermath of the devastation left by hurricane Katrina and other Gulf storms, the poor are still very much with us. And homelessness is an even greater problem.

insurance cover a lawsuit if he inadvertently furthered an injury to a person? Would he be ready to face an assault if it turned out to be a set-up?

OK, Jesus could handle the situation no matter what. But we are not Jesus. We need to be concerned, not just for our own safety, but also for our families.

Today, many of us carry cell phones. And if not, we're usually not far from a pay phone. We can call 911 and get professional medical help to injured persons very quickly. This is what police officials highly recommend. A California police officer advises that a woman by herself should never stop to help someone on the side of the road.

When I asked Police Chief Carl Dunlap, of Gainesville, Texas, what a woman should do if, for example, she saw a woman with little children waving at her from a stalled car, he said: "Your first thought should be for your own safety. A lot depends on the circumstances. What might not be OK in Dallas might be all right in rural areas. What we usually recommend for women in the situation you mentioned is roll down your window a little and talk to them. Offer to go get someone to help. Don't unlock your doors and don't get out of the car.

"It's a judgment call for anybody, not just women," Chief Dunlap said. "You've heard the horror stories of people stopping to help and a guy jumps out of the bushes to assault them. It makes anyone leery of stopping."

If you see someone in trouble, consider your personal safety, but also consider how you might safely offer help. We don't need to reason ourselves out of serving when we are able. There will always be people who need our help. But we must be careful.

## Another chance

It was almost a year later as she hurried toward the door of the building housing her law firm, when Eileen saw him—a little old man in ragged clothes looking way out of place among the lawyers crossing the marbled floors of the lobby in their tailored suits and Italian leather shoes. She wondered how he had gotten past the security guard. "Lady, could you give me some water, please?" he asked.

Suddenly she remembered her prayer. She stopped and said: "You wait right here. Don't go anywhere. I'll be right back." She ran to the elevators and up to her firm's office kitchen. She found a cup and filled it with water. Down she came again, hoping security hadn't forced the old man to leave.

Sure enough, he was still there waiting for her. Though a guard was watching the proceedings with a frown on his face, she gave the grateful man the water.

Don't beat yourself up if you have neglected to help someone when you had the chance. Plenty of opportunities are out there. Do as Eileen did, pray for another chance. You won't be disappointed. ●

**Sheila Graham** is a freelance writer and speaker on religious topics, including the role of women in the church, women of the Bible, the family, the environment and other Christian-related subjects. She holds degrees in religion from Azusa Pacific University's Haggard School of Theology and from Claremont Graduate University



## I've Been Reading...

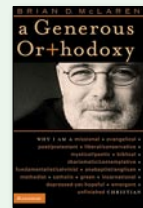
### *A Generous Orthodoxy*

by Brian McLaren

Reviewed by Fraser Henderson

The word *orthodoxy* raises either hopes or disparaging mutters in the church today. To some it is regarded as a heavenly designed set of doctrines to be sought after. To others it is the buzz word of schisms and petty arguments. In contrast, the word *generous* has rarely ever been applied to things Christian. It is a word that doesn't roll off our tongues as often or as easily as we might like. The result of placing these two together in a book title seems paradoxical, and to endeavor to attempt an amalgamation of the two may seem futile, foolish, even arrogant.

This is why Brian McLaren's epilogue to his book must be taken to heart before we judge and criticize what he has attempted to do in its contents. McLaren argues that in retrospect the book would have better been titled *Notes Towards a Generous Orthodoxy*. He does not presume to give answers or doctrines in their final state. Such a game plan for every possible event, he argues—with the exception of those doctrines where we exalt Jesus as Lord—contradicts a truly "generous" orthodoxy. Rather,



The word "generous" has rarely ever been applied to things Christian.

he draws together liberal, conservative, Roman Catholic, and many other traditions to demonstrate how we can focus on being part of God's creative work, here and now.

Three years ago I would have identified McLaren's book as a work on how to compromise (I use this word in its most negative sense), how to join the liberal post-modern element that threatens our precious remnants of Christendom. What I see now is a call to dialogue, and a refreshing taste of a promising future, one within which I see the work of the living God being celebrated and brought about.

McLaren's book is not futile, it is not foolish and it is certainly not arrogant. *A Generous Orthodoxy* is a search for God and his will while observing humility and patience with every possible godly encounter. The only assumption the book makes is that some Christians might be willing to listen, to consider the culture we find ourselves lost in and, rather than seeking a way out, engage and love a broken world in which God is building his kingdom. It leaves us with an aching question—will we stand aside and watch and wait for this kingdom or will we now roll up our sleeves and be the blessing we were meant to be? His Kingdom. It leaves us with an aching question - will we stand aside and watch and wait for this Kingdom or will we now roll up our sleeves and be the blessing we were meant to be? ●

# Making grace look good:

## A study of Titus 2

By Mike Morrison

**I**n the second chapter of Titus, Paul tells us that people often judge the gospel by the way we live. Do we make the gospel look good, or do we give people a reason to complain? The gospel teaches grace, and grace teaches us something about the way we live.

### Self-control: a good example

Paul tells Titus, “You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.” He then describes teachings that are reliable: “Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance” (Titus 2:1-2). Titus is working with believers who need some guidance about their behavior.

Paul begins with three virtues praised by Greek philosophers—not going to extremes, acting respectfully and having self-control. He then gives three virtues important in Christianity: having right beliefs, showing love, and maintaining these qualities even when it is difficult.



“Believers should perform their jobs well so that people will listen to what we say about Jesus.”

For women, Paul gives slightly different advice: “Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good” (v. 3). These vices are not typically associated with women today, and Paul could easily point these teachings at men—they are appropriate for all Christians.

Paul expects older women to be able to teach: “They can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands” (vv. 4-5). Paul does not tell Titus to teach the young women directly, but he asks the older women to lead them.

Paul lists a number of roles that women had in first-century society and then explains why Christian women should perform them: “so that no one will

malign the word of God.” Christianity has several beliefs and practices that unbelievers do not like, and Christians cannot do everything that unbelievers want. But in many customs, Christians can conform, and this is what Paul wants.

If people are going to criticize, let it be for essential matters, not for unnecessary differences. If we break social customs, people will be more skeptical about everything we say, so we want to keep our differences to a minimum. Paul is concerned about how our behavior might affect the gospel.

“Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good” (vv. 6-7). Titus will teach not just by words, but also in what he does. Even his style of teaching is important: “In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned.” Why? Because our reputation as bearers of the gospel is important: “So that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.” People will disagree with our beliefs, but we do not want to give any extra offense.

Paul then comments on one more social group: “Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so

that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive” (vv. 9-10).

Paul is advising believers to perform their social roles well—he is not necessarily saying that those social roles are good. But we can with some modification apply what Paul says to employment situations today. Believers should perform their jobs well, being cooperative, trustworthy, and respectful to everyone.

Why? To make the gospel attractive, so that people will be more likely to listen to what we say about Jesus. The way we live, the way we work, the way we treat our families and neighbors, all make a difference in how receptive people will be to the message we share.

### Grace-based behavior

Paul then gives a theological reason for teaching

## Lectionary readings for August–October 2006

people to be well-behaved: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (v. 11). Or the Greek could also be translated, “The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all” (NRSV). Not everyone has seen it yet, but salvation is available to everyone on the basis of grace.

And what does this grace do? “It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age” (v. 12). Grace—if we understand it correctly—teaches us to reject sin and to do good. As children of God, we want to be like the Son of God, but we cannot do this on our own strength. It is only by God’s grace that we are enabled to do what he wants.

This is a good way to live “in this present age,” but the rewards are not necessarily seen in this age. Therefore, “we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (v. 13). Here, Jesus is clearly called God, and Paul says that we await his return.

What did Jesus do? He “gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (v. 14). He redeemed us from sin. But Christ has a purpose for us beyond that: He wants to purify us, to eliminate the sin, and to create in us a desire for good behavior.

So Paul summarizes his point: “These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you” (v. 15). Jesus wants people who are eager to do good, so Titus, as a messenger of Christ, should encourage good behavior and speak out against bad behavior. He should not do anything that would cause people to despise him, because they would then despise the Savior he represented. As Titus reads this letter to his congregation, Paul is also speaking to them: “Titus is going to have to correct you on some of your behavior. But he is simply doing what I would have done, and doing what grace tells you, if you are willing to hear what it says.” In the same way today, we should not despise those who exhort us to resist sin and do good. ●

### Questions for discussion

- What virtues are most needed in our culture? (v. 2)
- What behaviors today, although not sins, might cause people to despise the gospel? (v. 5)
- Paul said that slaves should submit (v. 9). Was it therefore wrong for Christians to try to abolish slavery in the 19th century?
- Grace means that we are not penalized for sin; how then does it teach us to avoid sin? (v. 12)

**M**any churches assign passages of Scripture to be read on each Sunday: passages from the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the epistles. This is called a lectionary—from the Latin word *lectio*, meaning “reading.” The readings below are based on the Revised Common Lectionary, which is used by many churches. (Catholic, Lutheran and Episcopal churches may use a slightly different lectionary.) Sermons are often based on the readings. We are now in year B of the three-year cycle.

Readers have told us that they find it helpful to use this lectionary as a basis for their personal Bible reading and study. Here are the assigned scriptures for August–October 2006.

#### Aug. 6

Exodus 16:1-15  
Psalm 78:23-29  
John 6:24-35  
Ephesians 4:1-16

#### Aug. 13

1 Kings 19:4-8  
Psalm 130  
John 6:35-51  
Ephesians 4:25-5:2

#### Aug. 20

1 Kings 3:3-14  
Psalm 111  
John 6:51-58  
Ephesians 5:15-20

#### Aug. 27

1 Kings 8:22-43  
Psalm 84  
John 6:56-69  
Ephesians 6:10-20

#### Sept. 3

Deuteronomy 4:1-9  
Psalm 15  
Mark 7:1-23  
James 1:17-27

#### Sept. 10

Psalm 125  
Isaiah 35:4-7  
Mark 7:24-37  
James 2:1-17

#### Sept. 17

Psalm 19  
Isaiah 50:4-9  
Mark 8:27-38  
James 3:1-12

#### Sept. 24

Psalm 54  
Jeremiah 11:18-20  
Mark 9:30-37  
James 3:12-4:8

#### Oct. 1

Esther 7:1-10; 9:20-22  
Psalm 124  
Mark 9:38-50  
James 5:13-20

#### Oct. 8

Genesis 2:18-24  
Psalm 26  
Mark 10:2-16  
Hebrews 1:1-12

#### Oct. 15

Psalm 22:1-15  
Amos 5:6-15  
Mark 10:17-31  
Hebrews 4:12-16

#### Oct. 22

Psalm 91:9-16  
Isaiah 53:4-12  
Mark 10:35-45  
Hebrews 5:1-10

#### Oct. 29

Psalm 126  
Jeremiah 31:7-9  
Mark 10:46-52  
Hebrews 7:23-28

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**

Worldwide  
Church of God

Printed in  
the U.S.A.

Hmm...

I sometimes marvel that God chose to risk his revelation in the ambiguities of language. If he had wanted to make sure that the truth was absolutely clear without the possibility of misunderstanding, he should have revealed his truth by means of mathematics. Mathematics is the most precise, unambiguous language that we have. But then, of course, you can't say "I love you" in algebra.

**Eugene Petersen**  
*Eat This Book*, p. 93

Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.

**Albert Einstein**

*Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtaetr in waht oerdr ltteres in a wrod are, the olny iproamtnt tihng is taht the frsrit and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it whotuit a pboerlm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Azanmig huh?*

The example of Jesus, as he engaged his culture with the kingdom, is exemplary for emerging churches. The gospel, as he announced it, was to participate with God in the redemption of the world. It is this gospel that emerging churches embrace.

**Emerging Churches,**  
**Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger**, p. 235

What really counts in life is that at some time you have seen something, felt something, which is so great, so matchless, that everything else is nothing by comparison, that even if you forgot everything, you would never forget this.

**Søren Kierkegaard,**  
*Journals and Papers*

I realize, as I read and reread the Bible, that many passages don't fit any of the theological systems I have inherited or adapted. Sure, they can be squeezed in, but after a while my

theology looks like a high school class trip's luggage-shoestrings hanging out here, zippers splitting apart there, latches snapping, clothes pouring out on the floor like a thrift store horn of plenty.

**Brian McClaren,**  
*A New Kind of Christian*, p. XVIII (intro)

When one door of happiness closes another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us.

**Helen Keller**

*The fear of the number 666 is known as hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia.*

### Great truths that children have learned:

- No matter how hard you try, you can't baptize cats.
- When your Mom is mad at your Dad, don't let her brush your hair.
- Never ask your 3-year-old brother to hold a tomato.
- You can't trust dogs to watch your food.
- You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.
- Don't wear polka-dot underwear under white shorts.

## Ambassador College of Christian Ministry

[www.ambascol.org](http://www.ambascol.org)

### Want to enrich your personal walk with Jesus?

How would you like to increase your understanding of Scripture?

- Learn more about God?
- Deepen your prayer life?
- Invigorate your personal Bible study?

Would you like to be better equipped for the Christian life? Better equipped for service?

Ambassador College of Christian Ministry (ACCM) offers on-line learning opportunities that enable you to study at your own pace, in a flexible learning mode.

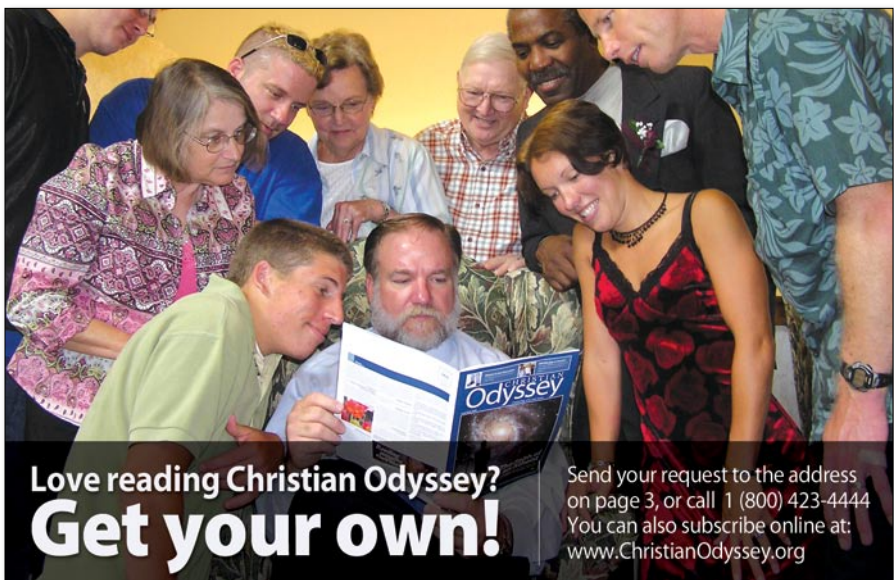
ACCM also offers face-to-face courses via learning weekends.

The call to discipleship is also a call to lifelong spiritual formation—to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Why not see how ACCM can help you do just that?



[www.ambascol.org](http://www.ambascol.org)



Love reading Christian Odyssey?  
**Get your own!**

Send your request to the address on page 3, or call 1 (800) 423-4444. You can also subscribe online at: [www.ChristianOdyssey.org](http://www.ChristianOdyssey.org)