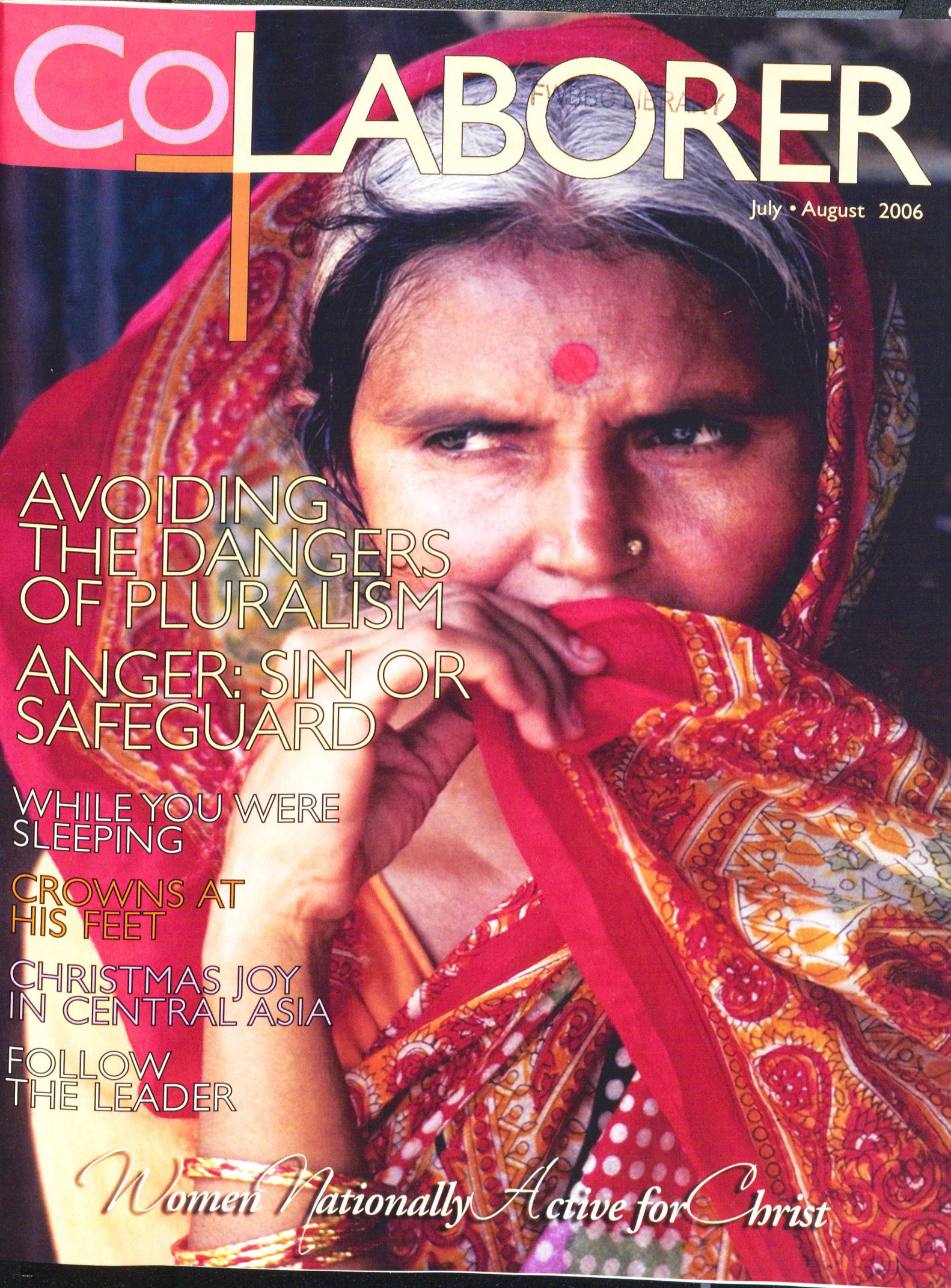




CoLABORER

July • August 2006

AVOIDING
THE DANGERS
OF PLURALISM
ANGER: SIN OR
SAFEGUARD

WHILE YOU WERE
SLEEPING

CROWNS AT
HIS FEET

CHRISTMAS JOY
IN CENTRAL ASIA

FOLLOW
THE LEADER

Women Nationally Active for Christ



Sarah Fletcher

Hinduism, Buddhism, nihilism, agnosticism, atheism—even satanism. Daily my teens encountered these belief systems throughout their high school years in Nashville, TN, the buckle of the Bible belt. Most of these adherents attend or once attended a church; nearly all are disillusioned. The Presbyterian who is also a Buddhist, the Catholic agnostic, the Baptist who helps her dad teach Sunday school at a Universalist church—confused yet confident, these students wrestle with truth. Most accept a piece of this belief, a tenet of that, tailor-making their own religion. Ask them to define their belief systems and they will tell you. They have

thought them through and framed them for their postmodern world. This world where any and all beliefs except biblical Christianity find acceptance is the world Christ calls us to win.

"But that's not *our* world," we might soothe our souls and say. Not our world? Watch the nightly news; read the latest teen magazine; scan the church directory in the phone book. Urban or rural, our influences prove identical. None would deny that Hollywood heroism and pluralistic thought have seeped into the farthest backwoods—even into our Christian homes.

However, the greater tragedy is not in the presence of pluralistic influence, but in the lack of our defense. George Barna's latest report reveals that only 9% of born-again Christians claim a biblical worldview. Unbelievable? Just ask women in your church to define their worldview. Poll teens in your youth group concerning their thoughts on ethics and truth. You may be shocked and surprised.

If we are to share Truth with the world, we must know that Truth; we must own our beliefs. Owning our beliefs involves more than accepting a treatise, or amen-ing a sermon. It demands serious thought. Do we know why we believe what we do?

The Apostle Paul faced a similar world in his day. Athens, Corinth, Rome—these were centers of pluralistic thought, also adverse to Christianity. Yet, Paul stood unashamed of the gospel of Christ. He knew whom he had believed and was persuaded that God is able.

Paul also knew the theological and philosophical trends of his day. He could match the minds in the marketplace. Can we say the same? We often cringe and cry foul when media portrays Christians as uneducated, dogmatic dimwits. But does this insinuation challenge us to greater depths of study, to examine our methods of ministry to effectively reach our world? As in Paul's day, many will refute and refuse our message. Yet may they go away, longing for such a faith.

If we take an honest inventory, all of us can admit to worldly influence. Because we live in this world, none of us are immune to its mindset. That's why Paul admonished believers to renew their minds. To renew our minds we must use our minds. Actively thinking and meditating upon God's truths, we can know and reason and own our beliefs.

However convoluted, confused and concocted, the rising generation claims ownership of their beliefs. Still, in those beliefs remains a search for truth. May we who have found Truth, own it, live it and be ever ready to share.

**FOLLOW YOUR
HEART TO
BIRMINGHAM**

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*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

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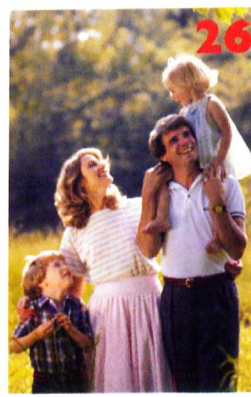
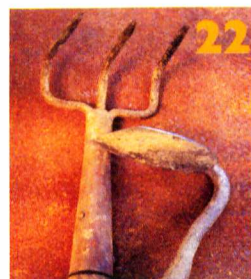
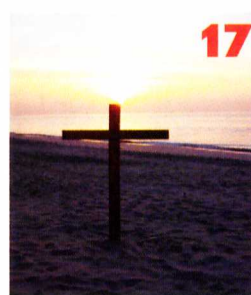
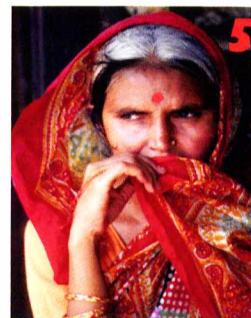


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Set Your Hearts

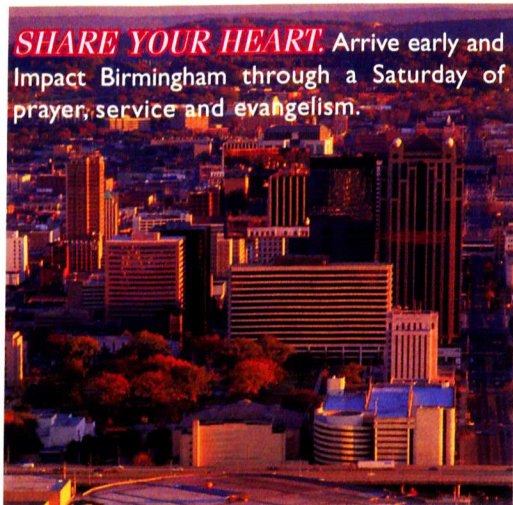


71st WNAC NATIONAL CONVENTION

Birmingham Convention Center

Birmingham, Alabama

July 17&18, 2006



SET YOUR HEART toward home. Jennie Blair, pastor's wife and busy stay-at-home mom will share unique challenges moms and grandmothers face raising children in a postmodern world. Offering practical tips within a biblical framework, this seminar will help you develop a godly foundation on which children can build their lives.



Jennie Blair
Oklahoma

INTRIGUE YOUR HEART. Like surprises? Don't miss WNAC's Monday Grab Bag seminar. New missionary appointee Angie Outlaw promises to give you hearty ideas and helpful teaching tools designed to give children a heart for the world.



Angie Outlaw
Tennessee

ENLARGE YOUR HEART. Steve and Becky Riggs have ministered in France for almost a quarter century. Presently in ministry transition, they know the struggles and blessings of following God's will and pursuing His heart. Let God stretch your vision as they speak during Tuesday morning's worship session.



Steve and Becky Riggs
France

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART. A 1975 mission trip began a life adventure for Icy Mae Frederick. This Free Will Baptist woman from Alabama listened to her heart and went alone to Haiti where she has ministered to thousands. Hear her amazing story at the WNAC Fellowship Luncheon. Tickets for the meal are \$25.



Icy Mae Frederick
Alabama

2006 Local WNAC Delegate Card

This certifies that _____
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Church/City/State _____

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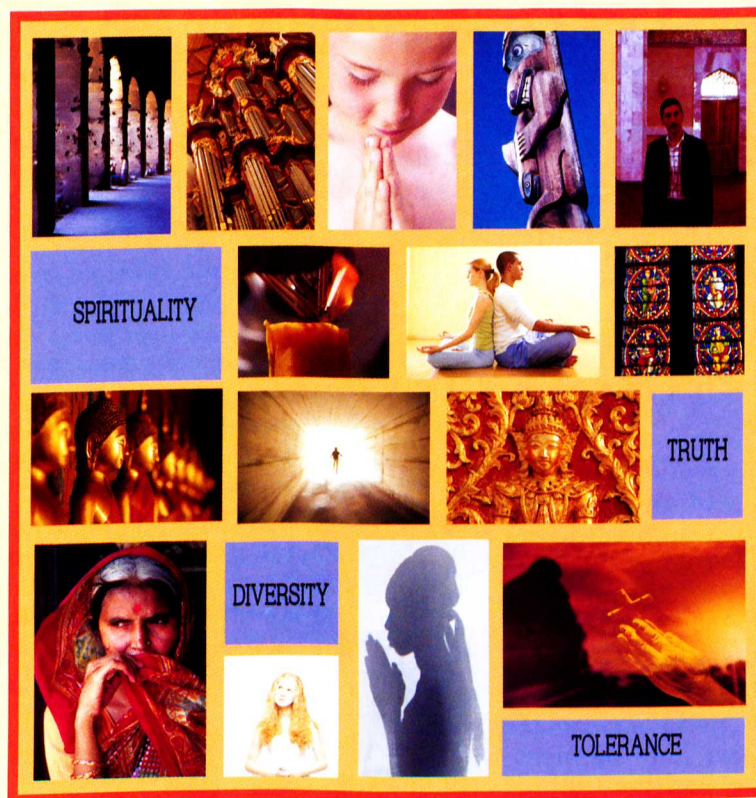
Important: This card properly signed and accompanied by a **\$10 representation fee** entitles a local delegate to register for voting privileges.
Only one delegate per church.

Sessions and seminars are free and open to all women.
Register online: www.nafwb.org (April 3-June 16).

FOLLOW YOUR HEART TO BIRMINGHAM

Avoiding the Dangers of Pluralism

by Jacqueline Rasar



What is pluralism? **H**ow can we recognize pluralism in our society and its influence in our lives? **W**hat can we learn from Scripture to help us keep a singular focus? **H**ow are singular hearts crucial to living godly lives? **W**hat does it mean to live as a Christian in a pluralistic society?

Pluralism Defined: A Shift Away from Scripture

What is pluralism? When we hear the word *plural* we might think of phrases like "more than one" or "many." This thought process is right on track with a basic definition of pluralism. Pluralism has to do with beliefs about ultimate reality or ultimate truth. Pluralism is a concept which states that there is more than one kind of ultimate reality.

We live in a multicultural world, easily observable in our very diverse American society. We recognize diversity in food, music, language, and dress, to name a few. However, pluralism goes deeper than these examples of diversity because it reaches to the belief system of a person. Pluralism impacts everything—our values,

lifestyles, worldviews, and religious commitments. We live in a world where there are many opposing ideas about how and why we exist as human beings.

Freedom is a catalyst for pluralism. The founding fathers of America banned the establishment of a single religion in the Bill of Rights because they wanted freedom of religion as opposed to the religious persecution which many had endured. As waves of immigrants swept through the country, many differing worldviews became a part of American life. Religious historian Charles H. Lippy credits this to the rapid

growth in education and population in America following World War II. People began to move around the country for occupational and educational opportunities; hence, people began to change churches and denominations for convenience. Doctrine was viewed with less importance. The only problem with this trend was that the gospel and the truth of Scripture were watered down. The ultimate result, therefore, was pluralism, the belief that more than one view, though possibly contradictory and incompatible with our own, is acceptable, desired, and also true.

Due to the ethnically diverse nature of America, a pluralistic environment has developed before our very eyes. Pluralism flourishes because religious freedom is a part of our diverse nation. Though religious freedom has created fertile ground for pluralism, we must acknowledge that this same freedom also guarantees our right to freely worship as Christians.

Since the time of Adam and Eve and the fall of the human race into sin, every person is born with a sinful nature. Therefore, the ideas and beliefs of such fallen people are not always consistent with the truth of God. If someone has a pluralistic worldview then she believes that any religion is true for the person believing it. The terminology *true* is not always used by people who hold pluralistic worldviews. Sometimes they use phrases like, "*it makes sense for her*" or "*she was raised to believe this way.*"

This is such a drastic shift away from the truths of Scripture. In a pluralistic setting, Scripture has no authority because truth depends on the person reading the Bible rather than what the Bible has to say about truth. Consequently, a person gets to decide if the Scripture is true for her or not. The reality of sin in the world, namely humankind's sinful nature, has led to the deceit of pluralism.

In the midst of this deception, we can learn to live a singular life—one view as opposed to many—a view based on the ultimate truth of Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is a sharp two-edged sword that can pierce through the lie of pluralism.

Biblical Basis: What can we learn from Scripture about being singularly focused on God?

One of the best passages from Scripture relating to the problem of pluralism and how to combat its effects in our lives is found in Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Deuteronomy 6:4-6 reads, "*Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this today shall be in thine heart.*"

The entire book of Deuteronomy suggests worship of Yahweh alone. The covenant God made with Israel commands that they have no other gods. This same command applies to believers today because we are the children of God. Jesus quotes the command in Matthew 22:37-38 as a reminder that we are still called to love the Lord with our entire being.

First, to love the Lord suggests the idea of loyalty to God alone. The command to be loyal to God requires the banishment of all other gods. Secondly, *oneness* is part of God's nature. He cannot contradict Himself nor can He have opposing views. Thirdly, God has power to deliver us from sin. This includes deliverance from our flawed views of reality. We respond to God's deliverance through obedience to His command to love Him with our entire being.

How are our hearts crucial in living a life focused on God? This element of obedience brings us to the fourth point—loving God with our heart, our mind, and our strength. We have been commanded to be

POPULAR WORLDVIEWS

Naturalism

Hinduism

Buddhism

Confusianism

Shintoism

Judaism

Islam

New Age

devoted to the one true living God with our every being, including every detail of our lives. We express our love for God and our gratitude for His love through our obedience to Him.

Old Testament commentator, J. G. McConville, explains that loving God with all our heart refers not to a physical organ, but to our entire being, our life, our will. It is a command to be completely devoted to Christ in a single-minded way "With all our strength" refers to our abilities and our resources.

This command speaks of obedience in an inward and an outward form. Inward obedience is something we can pass on to the next generation. The internalization of God's command to love Him results in the outward requirement of living life in a singular way. McConville also concludes that the result of inward and outward obedience is harmony between the law of God and our lifestyle.

Finally, this great commandment is for all people, for all generations, for all times. Obedience to God is not a one-time requirement, but rather, a sustained obedience. We recognize this element of sustained obedience from the exhortation to hear and keep this command. We have all failed at keeping this command of God because sin is a part of human nature. We can give thanks to God for His provision of salvation through Jesus, in which He promises to forgive us. Our God is a God of love and He gives immeasurable blessings to us. We also learn from Scripture that to fear God and to keep His commands results not in a life without trials, but in a life with blessings (Deuteronomy 6:24, 25).

Pluralism's Influence in Daily Life: How have pluralistic influences impacted the lives of women?

When our focus shifts from salvation through Jesus alone to merely loving our neighbor, we open the door to pluralistic thought. In his book, *Pluralism Comes of Age: American Religious Culture in the Twentieth Century*, author Charles Lippy contends that when members of a church are more concerned with social causes than preaching the gospel, a pluralistic mentality may develop. These focal points send up caution flags. Women can be easily caught in the trap of working in the church, yet their motivation for such work is not necessarily for the glory of God. We are commanded to serve and to be involved in the world, but we must protect our worldview as we minister in the world.

Pluralism successfully sneaks into our daily lives. We find hints of pluralistic influences in our literature, media and music. How can we combat this deceptive philosophy? First, we must choose to stop accepting the opinions of others when they skip over and rub out certain necessary truths unique to fundamental Christian faith. Second, we must be sensitive to the frequent references to God in our culture, namely by celebrities. It's common for celebrities to thank and acknowledge God in public arenas; it's uncommon for these same individuals to live God-honoring lives. In reality, many of these people actually acknowledge a god rather than God.

When we do not withstand opposing and conflicting views, we are giving in to this pluralistic mentality. Non-acceptance of opposing worldviews leads to a discussion of tolerance. Christians are often labeled as intolerant. This is almost a para-

KNOW YOUR -ISMS

How many of the following beliefs or belief systems can you define or identify? Match the term with the letter of the best definition.

(The first one is done for you and the correct answers are listed at the bottom of the page.)

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>R</u> agnosticism | A. individual rights and interests are supreme |
| 2. _____ animism | B. universal salvation; denial of any sin |
| 3. _____ atheism | C. belief in many gods; the universe is God; |
| 4. _____ conceptualism | D. emphasizes practical value of philosophy |
| 5. _____ dualism | E. centralized state control of wealth and property |
| 6. _____ fatalism | F. utility of actions determines moral value |
| 7. _____ humanism | G. world can be explained in terms of natural forces |
| 8. _____ individualism | H. animals have divine attributes and qualities |
| 9. _____ naturalism | I. human interests and the human mind are paramount |
| 10. _____ nihilism | J. denial of all reality and meaning; life ends in death and nothingness. |
| 11. _____ pantheism | K. reality (truth) consists of several kinds or entities |
| 12. _____ pluralism | L. true knowledge is always uncertain |
| 13. _____ pragmatism | M. indifference to pain or pleasure |
| 14. _____ skepticism | N. universe is controlled by one good and one evil force |
| 15. _____ socialism | O. events are fixed and humans are powerless |
| 16. _____ stoicism | P. there is no God. |
| 17. _____ synergism | Q. even inanimate objects have a soul |
| 18. _____ universalism | R. uncertainty concerning the existence of God; unable to know spiritual truths |
| 19. _____ utilitarianism | S. universal truths exist as mental concepts |
| 20. _____ zootheism | T. embraces multiple belief systems |

1-R; 2-Q; 3-P; 4-S; 5-N; 6-O; 7-I; 8-A; 9-G; 10-J; 11-C; 12-K; 13-D; 14-L; 15-E; 16-M; 17-T; 18-B; 19-F; 20-H.

Some definitions adapted from The Phrontistery: <http://phrontistery.info/>.

dox. As believers, we recognize that the gospel is for sinners. If we do not share the gospel with sinners, we are not being obedient to God. We encourage all people; regardless of religious background, culture, gender, age, and social status; to learn about the truth of God. In this sense, Christians are extremely tolerant. However, when it comes to accepting opposing worldviews as truth, we should wear the label of intolerance with righteous humility and a loving spirit.

Practical Applications: What does it mean to live the Christian life in a pluralistic society?

How can we live as Christians in the midst of temptation and worldly influences? As human beings we are made up of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. All of these elements are intertwined in our life experience. I find it helpful to divide practical applications for life into these three categories.

Thoughts: Think critically about what we read, watch, hear, and observe in our daily lives. After all, our life is supposed to be a daily walk with God. How is the Holy Spirit convicting and shaping us in regard to our thoughts? Are we "...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5)?

Feelings: What does it mean to love? Love is a complicated feeling that includes multiple qualities such as joy, sorrow, security and trust. Think about the people we love. How can we incorporate these emotions into our relationships with God and other people? One way to develop a heart of compassion for those in our lives and community who do not know Jesus as their personal Savior is by grieving the reality of God's judgment. When we truly love our neighbors with our hearts, the result will be compassion for them. Similarly, when we truly love God with our hearts, the result will be devotion to Him.

Actions: Here are some practical ways we can avoid pluralism by our actions: make wise choices based on biblical principles; avoid compromising activities; read the Bible (memorizing verses about oneness, i.e. Deuteronomy. 6:4, 13; 1 Corinthians 14:33); pray that God would guard our thoughts, feelings, and actions; and seek to fulfill the Great Commission through teaching and discipling elements of evangelism.

Personal Evaluation. Define your worldview.

Is your worldview singularly Christian or have you given in to some of the deception of pluralism? Is your heart and mind focused in your devotion to God? Which principles will you embrace to help you live more singularly? To live a singular life is to truly live.

Sources used in this article include: *Pluralism Comes of Age: American Religious Culture in the Twentieth Century* by Charles H. Lippy and *Apollos Old Testament Commentary: Deuteronomy* by J.G. McConville.

DEFINE YOUR WORLDVIEW.

Christian Author James Sire presents seven questions which all humans will come to terms with during their lifetime. Answers would define a person's worldview.

1. What is prime reality—the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, i.e., outside of ourselves?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of history?

James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* quoted in *The Truth about Worldviews--*

DO YOU HAVE A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW?

Answer the following questions, based on claims found in the Bible and which George Barna used in his recent survey concerning the worldview of Christians:

1. Do absolute moral truths exist?
2. Is absolute truth defined by the Bible?
3. Did Jesus Christ live a sinless life?
4. Is God the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe, and does He still rule it today?
5. Is salvation a gift from God that cannot be earned?
6. Is Satan real?
7. Does a Christian have a responsibility to share his or her faith in Christ with other people?
8. Is the Bible accurate in all of its teachings?

2003 survey by Barna Research Group. www.barna.org. Questions reprinted from "What is a Worldview Anyway" by Del Tackett www.family.org/fomag/cl/a0033123.cfm.

Jacqueline Rasar is a psychology professor at Free Will Baptist Bible College, Nashville, TN, who attends Cross Timbers FWB Church. Originally from Decatur, IL, Jackie's favorite verse is Philippians 2:13: "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."



Ever since my kids were old enough to talk, I have been trying to communicate to them the importance of having a relationship with Jesus, yet I often wonder how much of what I tell them is really getting through.

When a Muslim family moved into our neighborhood, our family began to pray for them, seeking ways we could minister to them and share Jesus with them. Their three daughters are close in age with our kids, and they often come over to play.

One day the girls were in the bedroom dressing up as princesses, and I overheard my five-year-old daughter Alaska say, "Hey, guys, you wanna know what God did?" Alaska proceeded to tell them all about how God created the world, starting with the heavens and the earth, and each little thing, and then she continued on with the story of Adam and Eve's sin. "And since all of us are sinners," she went on, "God sent His Son Jesus to die for all of our sins, so that we could be forgiven and go to heaven to live with Him. All you have to do is believe in Him and He will forgive you."

By this time I was standing outside the door eavesdropping shamelessly. Then I heard Alaska say, "Ok, so who wants to pray to God right now?" When no one responded, she said, "Well, why don't you go home and talk it over with your mom and ask her to pray with you?"



I was so proud of Alaska that day. I had no idea she knew the creation story that well or understood the plan of salvation as clearly as she did, but I'm realizing that what we put into our kids, no matter how young they are, is never wasted.

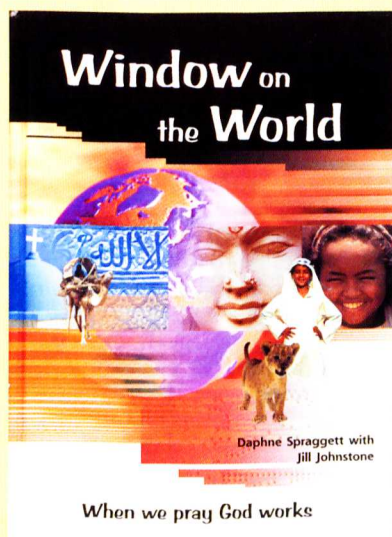
As for our Muslim neighbors, I was a bit nervous about what the mother would think. I was afraid she'd accuse me of putting my daughter up to something. Yet,

Alaska did this solely on her own because she cared about her friends.

About two weeks later I was over at my neighbor's home. The mother turned to me and said, "I've been meaning to ask you something for a while." I thought, "Uh-oh, here it comes!" You could have knocked me over with a feather when she went on to say, "Could our family come to church with you sometime?"

I'm thankful for my daughter's amazing faith—especially when I have very little faith of my own. God is working in my life and teaching me so many things through my five-year old.

Tina Matteson grew up as an MK in Greece. Today she, her husband Pete, and their three children travel, raising support for Greater Europe Mission through musical concerts. The Mattesons are members of Donelson FWB Church, Nashville, TN.



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WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING

by Eddie Payne

What is happening? How did our homeland become the pluralistic, morally permissive, inclusive culture in which we live today? One thing is certain. The changes did not occur overnight. Let me illustrate from a bicultural vantage point.

The 1960s

Ivory Coast became home for the Payne family in 1964. Our first term overseas lasted five years. Communication was limited and restricted to hard-copy letters, most of which were handwritten. News of family disasters in the homeland came by telegram and took several days to arrive. Visits home during the term were not even considered a possibility.

TIME magazine: European edition, became our printed link with the *other* world. BBC World News and Voice of America informed us by short-wave radio. Otherwise, we were isolated in our primitive, preliterate culture. We could have been on another planet.

We sailed back to the USA on a freighter carrying coffee and cocoa beans and liquid latex from Liberian rubber plantations. We had no choice of arrival point. Tickets read only "First East Coast USA Port." We were debarked on an old rickety wooden dock at the Firestone factory in Fall River, MA. I rode a bus to Providence, RI, rented a car, and we started our three day trip to Tulsa, OK. Our youngest daughter was terrified of Caucasian people; she knew only a few. Re-entry orientation was that trip on

paved roads filled with insane drivers, our shock at inexpensive gasoline, and the wide choice of restaurants. We were a clone of the Beverly Hillbillies—without the millions.

Reverse Culture Shock

My most intensive culture shock occurred during our first furlough in the USA. The hippie revolution was well in gear. A trip to California and a visit to the Berkley campus set the tone for realizing the radical changes taking place.

Occult shops promoted eastern religions and African animistic artifacts. Social upheaval with the Black Panther movement, the Watts riots and beginning generational rebellion opened my eyes to the mosaic of our evolving culture.

The downward spiral was underway and few seemed aware of how much change had already trickled into our conservative cultural stream.

The 1970s

When we came home in the 1970s, evangelical Christianity was becoming more suspect in our homeland. The few open efforts to censor religious expression gave a false illusion that all was well. Behind the scenes the ACLU and fellow conspirators were working to undermine the moral fiber of the youth of America in the guise of guaranteeing their rights. Abortion, use of drugs, and other aberrations of normalcy were encouraged at an ever earlier age. Protest followed protest as antiestablishment icons led armies of young people to rebellion.



Early 1960s



Late 1960s



1970s



1980s

Materialism under the banner of a better life for our children eroded the foundations of family as both parents increasingly worked outside the home. Children home alone experimented with what was formerly taboo and fell captive to their choices. Priorities were changing and concern for godly pursuits eclipsed in the shadow of the *for me* generation. Problems which formerly were associated with the non-Christian population now were more frequent in all churches.

Our daughters were home schooled during our years overseas. In 1976, we chose to live in a city which had a reputable Christian school to help them adjust to a culture becoming more pagan as time passed. It was a good choice.

An expanding flood of immigrants, legal and illegal, brought their religion, language, values, and potential political clout to an ever more pluralistic society. The trickle became a flood of radical change.

The 1980s

Each cycle of our missionary service brought us back to an increasingly altered society. Tolerance and acceptance for every belief system except Christianity was now shouted from the authoritative bastions of educational institutions, liberal government personalities, and those seeking radical restructuring of the social order. Christian expressions were increasingly banned as too controversial and offensive. Formalities in public schools which included Christian participants became few in number. The voice for righteousness and truth was becoming lost in the rumble of pluralism and syncretism. Most evangelicals were caught napping if not actively engaging in the new social order.

Our overseas missionary service ended in 1989.

To The Present

Teaching college students was my second major culture shock. Christian kids were unfortunately

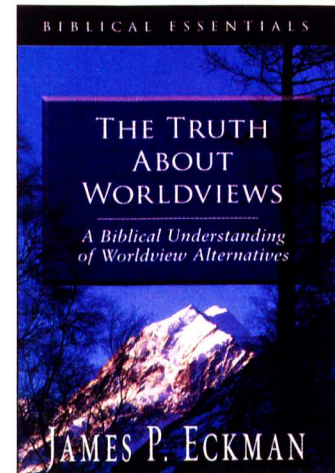
almost clones of society in general. The desire to not be perceived as weird coupled with the prevailing cultural climate had cloned our offspring. The climate in churches is becoming a reflection of society in general. Abortion, immorality, addictions, divorce, and a myriad of other moral and social dysfunctions are pandemic and thus viewed as nearly impossible to alter. Many have met defeat by attempting to legislate morality. Others pretend it does not exist. Our captivity to an ongoing subversive process is nearing completion.

When the final Christian symbol is erased from governmental and educational institutions, when the value of life is determined by choosing to kill the unborn and the elderly who are no longer useful, when churches huddle to worship unsure of their very existence, then maybe we will catch on.

Post-modern America with her amoral pluralistic syncretism will become another footnote in the annals of *has-been* Christian societies. I believe history confirms this prognosis.

While it is true that cultures and societies implode and vanish in the dusty annals of human history, Christians need not feel they are hopeless victims. Individual and corporate righteous choices may result in opposition, persecution, and even death, but we ultimately win. As we exercise our gift of free choice, we may convince others to tenaciously embrace biblical truth which alone brings regeneration and renewal (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Eddie Payne lives in Nashville, TN. Retired after 44 years of missions ministry, he is currently developing a training program to mobilize laypersons for reaching people groups of the world living among us. Wife Sandra now enjoys being an at-home wife, mother and grandmother. Daughter Laura (Stafford) is active in her local church in TN. Debbie (Anderson) is a FWB missionary to Cote d'Ivoire. Five of the Paynes' seven grandchildren have already taken mission trips, three with E-TEAM.



Whether the mention of worldviews leaves you totally confused or highly interested, *The Truth About Worldviews* by James P. Eckman may be just the book for you.

Short, concise, and in simple language anyone can understand, the author offers insights into the postmodern world in which we live. This ETA book presents basic structures and beliefs of these major worldviews: Naturalism; Hinduism; Buddhism; Confucianism; Shintoism; Judaism; Islam; the New Age Movement. Each chapter suggests bridges for evangelism of people caught in the traps of these various religions. The author also gives a brief history and overview of the three major church branches (Protestant, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox) and summarizes the beliefs of three major cults.

Great as a resource for yourself or your church, this book will also help you define, formulate and logically explain a biblical worldview.

ETA/Crossway Books—\$11.99

AVAILABLE FROM WNAC

Think on these things...

by Vanessa Vargo

Watching the news or reading the newspaper today, with all the overwhelming bad news can surely be discouraging. It's enough to make a person lose her faith in humanity and become depressed or negative, or both.

Instead, remember what the Scripture says to do. *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"* (Philippians 4: 8).

While it is important to know what's happening in the world today, we can find balance focusing our thoughts on the lovelier things in life.

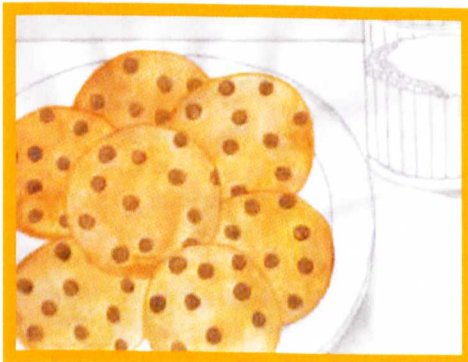
Think about all the times justice is served; be glad when you hear a good report of something positive. Lift up your eyes and thank our Heavenly Father when you find virtue in someone or something.

Smile while you work and be thankful that you have a job. Spend time with your loved ones and your family. Go to any store and browse through the seed packages and pick out some flowers you like. Go home and plant the flowers and watch them grow. You will be uplifted every time you turn the curtain back, look out your window and see them growing.



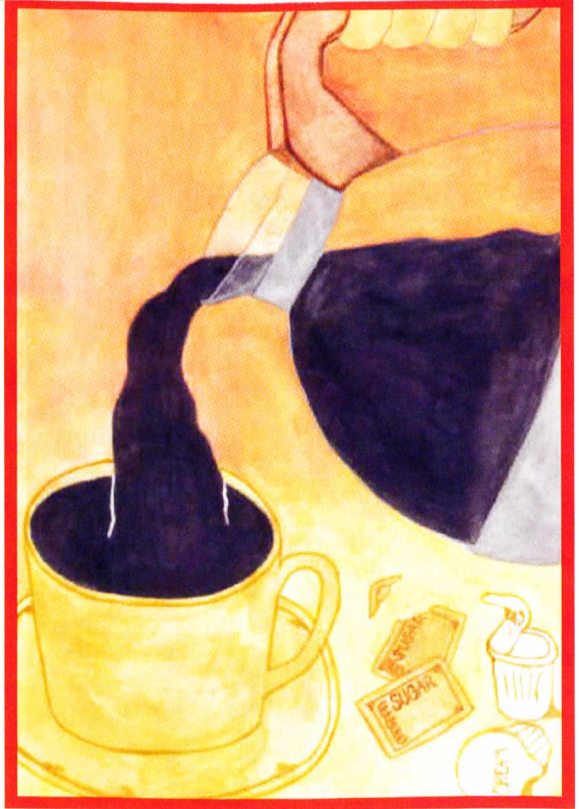
Make a pot of specially flavored coffee, like caramel chocolate or something. Slowly sip and drink that cup of coffee and take in the good taste. Slow down, clear some things off of your busy schedule and take it easy once in a while.

Take a day off and take a long walk in a beautiful clean park. Do something that you've always wanted to do but never had the time. Baking cookies is one of the good pleasures of life—taking the taste test, smelling the aroma of fresh cookies in the oven.



Read your Bible and attend church. It's always uplifting to sing praise songs to our Lord. Open the door for a stranger and be patient while you drive. Give out compliments when you see something you like. Sit down and hand write a thank you note or card filled with your appreciation for someone who was kind to you and then mail it. Be courteous and a joy to be around.

Notice all the beauty that surrounds you in your day-to-day life: a beautiful church or a stained glass window; a little stream of water run-



ning downhill through the thicket of woods; the warmth of the sun on your skin, green-green grass growing right in your own yard; pretty wild flowers growing along side a highway; a nice warm gentle summer rain falling; an uplifting song playing on the radio or in your CD deck; the smell of freshly baked goods; or the wonderful silence of night when everyone has gone to sleep and everything is quiet.

Focus on the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of a good report. Keep your chin up, keep smiling and be positive.

Yes, there is bad in the world and apparently it's all around us. But we can all individually make a difference for the better. As Christians, we are to be a light in a darkened world. So, let us shine as brightly as we possibly can.

A new subscriber to **CoLaborer**, Vanessa Vargo lives in Granite City, IL, and is an active single at Grace Baptist Church. Vanessa works as a watercolor illustration artist and writes conservative columns for newspaper and webprint. Illustrations on this page are some of her original art.





SIN OR SAFEGUARD



ANGER FOR OUR GOOD? by PATSY FLEMING

"Patsy, I think you are very angry," said Rita.

Rita was my counselor. She was helping me work through the trauma of sexual abuse.

"Me? Angry? I don't think so," I replied. I didn't feel angry.

During that same period of time, my son Kenn said, "Mom, you look angry."

I was surprised; I didn't feel angry. I went and looked in a mirror. Yes, the harshness of anger was there; a prohibiting scowl that said keep your distance and tread softly. I felt again the sting of angry remarks that had poured out of my mother in her later years. I bowed my head and prayed, "O Lord, please don't let me grow to be a bitter, angry, old woman. Change me. Teach me Your way."

ANGER UNDERGROUND

How could I be angry and not feel it? My anger had gone underground. I had learned to stuff it down inside of me for such a long time that I didn't even recognize this God-given emotion when it happened.

I am still in the process of learning to reclaim this gift of God and using it to help me grow in the image of God. I would like to share some principles I've discovered about this denied emotion. Perhaps you will be able to identify with some of them. I pray that our God will grant healing in His body, the Church.

ANGER UNDER SCRUTINY

Society has generally accepted anger when expressed by men. On the other hand, women have often been

denied the luxury of honestly expressing anger. In the church, anger has been labeled taboo for just about everyone. It's considered sinful. However, anger is a God-given emotion. Unfortunately, most of us have never learned how to deal with it.

ANGER UNDERSTOOD

To understand anger, we must identify its source. What is causing or has caused our anger? We must also determine whether our anger is a safeguard or a sin. In other words, is it positive anger that gets us somewhere or negative anger that turns into the sin of bitterness and defiles many?

**TO UNDERSTAND
ANGER
WE MUST
IDENTIFY ITS
SOURCE.**

ANGER SOURCES

When I was growing up, my mother never expressed her anger. She was passive—victimized by my alcoholic father. Daddy was verbally and physically violent toward my mother. His out of control rage terrorized me and I learned that anger is to be feared. Many men and women control and manipulate others through fear by their anger and aggressive behaviors.

As an adult before I met Jesus Christ, my anger would stay beneath the surface except for an occasional fit of rage in which everything came pouring out of me all at once. My fury was unleashed and the results were very destructive to those around me. My verbal weapons hit their target and wounded deeply. These words could never be taken back. This was sin.

Anger in my life came from being neglected as a child and watching and hearing the violence between my parents. Nothing was ever discussed in our home, so I did not learn how to process my feelings. I was powerless to help myself or to change anything in my environment. My survival was totally dependent on my parents.

I learned my patterns for dealing with anger at home. My mother taught me to deny anger at all costs and to stuff it inside with food. My father taught me that men are powerful and hurt you when they are angry.

FOUR FACES OF ANGER



RAGE—intense, explosive uncontrolled anger, lost tempers
sudden anger that must be controlled



WRATH—anger wanting revenge, desiring retaliation or holding a grudge. Breeds an unforgiving spirit.
sinful anger that must be condemned



RESENTMENT—anger stemming from a grievance. Doesn't blow up, but rather clams up.
stubborn anger that must be conquered



INDIGNATION—anger rising out of injustice or mistreatment. Aimed at a problem not a person.
sanctified anger that must be channeled

—Bill Lobbs, www.nuggetsoftruth.com

I decided at a very young age that I would stay safe and never make anyone angry or express anger myself. My goal was to control the people in my life by pleasing them so I would stay safe. This was my experience: I knew no other options.

I concluded that I must be a very bad person because of the way I felt towards my father. I was so angry that I wanted him to die. I continued to harbor malice against him in my heart. Anger was stored inside of me. This is the type of anger Jesus refers to in Matthew 5:20-21.

ANGER WITHOUT SIN

The Old Testament says, “Stand in awe [be angry] and sin not. Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still” (Psalm 4:4). Paul repeats the admonition in the New Testament, “Be ye angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26, 27).

Apparently, God gave us the emotion of anger for a purpose. He wouldn't tell us to do something if it were impossible. We can feel angry and yet not sin. In fact, all feelings are internal cues, providing us information and motivating us to take appropriate action in our relationships. Jesus' own example of appropriate anger motivated Him to action. He drove the merchants from the temple of God (John 2:13-17).

What can we conclude from this incident? When we become angry, we must examine the situation and listen to the information this powerful feeling is giving us. We need to take appropriate action immediately. If we choose to stuff our feelings inside and deny them, our anger turns to bitterness and we sin.

If someone has taken advantage of us, we must learn to use the energy that anger provides to set boundaries in order to protect ourselves or make our needs known. Personally, I am learning to communicate more honestly with my family, and my social, church and work communities.

ANGER STIRRED BY SELF AND PRIDE

Anger is often stirred when we feel our rights have been violated. Many times this type of anger arises out of selfishness and pride. For example, on mornings when I am in a big hurry and I don't allow enough time for travel at a safe pace to work, I may react in anger when someone cuts me off in traffic. It's an instant reaction and I want to retaliate. Sin is always crouching at my door. I find myself having to learn patience in traffic. Again I ask the Lord to forgive me and I then thank God for keeping both of us safe.

Anger that is stuffed down or denied does not go away. It will come out indiscriminately and almost always inappropriately. Words said in anger can be very destructive. Unresolved anger is the root cause of many physical ailments and a large contributing fac-

THREE WAYS WE HANDLE OUR ANGER

**REPRESS
IT
SUPPRESS
IT
EXPRESS
IT**

tor to depression. It even leads some individuals to become physically abusive. We give place to the devil and continue to sin until we have dealt with our anger.

ANGER ADMISSION

Anger is a regular part of our lives. Before we can learn to use anger constructively as God intended, we have to first admit it is there. God's Word says, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Psalm 37:8). We must resolve any old anger issues. James tells us to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to get angry. (James

1:19-20) Our anger can never make things right in God's sight. The Book of Proverbs tells us to wait for the LORD to handle the situation when we've been wronged (Proverbs 12:16).

Before I could work through the stockpiled anger inside of me, I had to be able to get to it. (Remember, I didn't *feel* angry.) While in counseling I came to understand that throughout many relationships and situations my reponse has been anger.

My first step toward healing and forgiveness was recognizing my anger and realizing that it had become a big problem, affecting all my meaningful relationships. Over time with the help and support of my counselor, I was able to identify the events connected to my anger, to grieve the losses, to express my feelings and to forgive—both the offender and myself.

ANGER EXPRESSION

At first, the thought of expressing anger caused me great anxiety because I had seen the violence of anger at home. I'd felt the terror of Daddy's fist striking my mother's pretty face. As an adult, I'd also been victimized by domestic violence. I was afraid that if I expressed anger, I would go crazy or perhaps physically hurt someone.

Instead I found that anger can be a constructive force.

- It alerts us that something is wrong.
- It protects us against pain and injuries.
- It is a defense against physical, emotional and spiritual threats.
- It protects our sense of identity and well-being.
- It's a confession that we've been hurt and are in need.

Anger can also be a destructive force in our life. It is a way of fighting back against pain and injustice. But we

How can we deal with our **ANGER**

1. Do we have a right to be angry?

Jonah did not.
Jesus did.

2. Is our anger directed toward a person?

**We have only one option:
FORGIVE.**

STEPS:

Identify the source/factors of our anger.

Grieve any losses that have resulted.

Express feelings in a controlled setting/manner.

Forgive the person and ourselves.

3. Is our anger directed toward a specific injustice or evil?

**We can righteously
TAKE ACTION.**

STEPS:

Confirm the biblical basis for your grievance.

Pray concerning the path you should take.

Seek godly counsel and enlist others.

Watch your passions; guard your testimony.

are often uncomfortable with and afraid of anger—so we deny it. Denial (lying to ourselves and others) can cause us to hang on to anger until it turns to bitterness and undermines our relationships.

Sin or safeguard? Friend or foe? Anger can be both. Let's come out of denial and stop lying to ourselves and to others about anger. Let's learn together how to handle it God's way. He has given His life and the Holy Spirit to help us. He is our Way Maker. Let Him teach us the truth about anger—anger that gets us somewhere. It was His idea.

Patsy Fleming is a professional counselor from Nashville, TN. Saved as an adult, she enrolled in a Bible college and later graduated from seminary. A California native, she is the mother of one son, Kenn (wife, Lisa) and proud grandmother of three boys: Mason, Parker and Reese. Patsy leads Celebrate Recovery, a biblically based, twelve-step program in her local FWB church.



FORGIVENESS

THE GREATEST TEST by Joan Wilkes Shield

Everyone at some time has to deal with a wounded spirit. Our spouse says something that hurts our feelings. An employer fails to recognize our achievements. A friend takes advantage of us. The stories may be different, but the effect is the same—hurt feelings and an unforgiving spirit. Forgiving people who hurt us is one of the most difficult challenges Christians face. But an unforgiving attitude is something that must be addressed. It will not go away if we ignore it.

What does the Bible say about forgiveness? Luke 6:37 says *"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."* Passage after passage tells us that if we are to expect forgiveness from God then we must forgive others.

When asked by Peter how often we should forgive someone for sinning against us, Jesus said in Matthew 18:22 *"...I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."* This does not mean exactly 490 times, but rather, limitless times.

Not forgiving on our part hurts no one but ourselves. The other party may not even be aware they have hurt us. They may go on, oblivious to what they have done to us unless we tell them. An unforgiving attitude affects us emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Our resistance to forgive can lead to adverse emotional effects. It can deepen into bitterness and anger and spiral us into depression. These feelings can also affect our physical bodies generating high blood pressure, ulcers, and digestive problems. Some experts believe that a lack of emotional wellbeing contributes to serious illnesses such as cancer and heart disease.

Even more important than the physical or emotional, is our spiritual wellbeing. The Holy Spirit cannot move freely in our lives when a wall of unresolved hurt blocks His way. We are commanded to forgive before we pray (Mark 11:25). Our prayer lives cannot be what God intends if we do not forgive. Neither will our witness. How can people clearly see Jesus in us when we harbor an unforgiving spirit?

So, what can we do? If we want to be close to God and be used by Him as fully as possible, we must choose to forgive. Only when we are honest with ourselves and admit our hurts and feelings, can we begin to grow.

Why were we hurt to begin with? Was our ego injured? Were we belittled in some way? Perhaps we are just self-centered. Self-centeredness is not the same thing as selfishness. The most generous person around can still be self-centered, making self her God—only *her* feelings are important.

Are we moody? Are we prone to take things wrong? Is there something in our past that we have failed to turn over to God? In hanging on to this issue, have we opened ourselves to hurt after hurt?

Perhaps we lack self-esteem due to wounds of our past. All these hurts we thought were behind us may still be very much in the forefront of our lives. If we can determine why we were hurt and deal with the root cause, then we will be stronger and less likely to suffer hurt in the future.

Christ set the example. He faced rejection, hatred, mockery, physical pain, and even death. Yet, dying on the cross He cried, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."* Can we do any less?

I'm reminded of a couple whose daughter was viciously murdered.

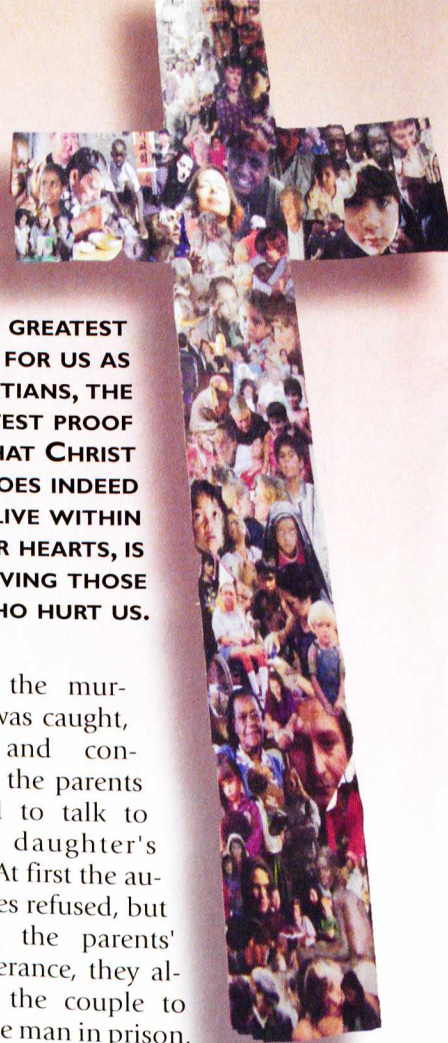
**THE GREATEST
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When the murderer was caught, tried and convicted, the parents begged to talk to their daughter's killer. At first the authorities refused, but noting the parents' perseverance, they allowed the couple to visit the man in prison. Instead of showing anger and hatred, these parents told him simply that they forgave him. They continued to visit and eventually led this man to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. What an enormous test for their faith. They truly exemplified Christ in forgiving their daughter's murderer. It wasn't easy, but they knew they had to forgive.

The greatest test for us as Christians, the greatest proof that Christ does indeed live within our hearts, is forgiving those who hurt us. It doesn't matter how great or small our hurt or whether our offender ever acknowledges a part in our pain. We must forgive.

As long as we deny others forgiveness, Satan maintains a stronghold in our lives. On the other hand, we can claim victory, defeating Satan, if we follow Christ's example and forgive.

Joan Wilkes Shield lives in Florence, AL. She is active in the Midway FWB Church, Leighton, AL.



FREE WILL BAPTIST LADIES IN PANAMA celebrated 18 years of God's faithfulness at their annual retreat in March 2006.

In 1989, a handful of women dreamed of organizing a retreat for all FWB women in Panama. Odds were against it ever coming to pass because Panama was going through the most difficult political and economic crisis in its history. Many had lost jobs and no one had extra money. The thought of women taking the little their families had and paying to attend a retreat (when most did not even know what a retreat was all about) was considered foolish at best.

The ladies prayed for God to supply money specifically for the women's retreat. And He did. God supplied in 1989, and He continues to supply in miraculous ways.

Each year the ladies choose a retreat theme and invite speakers. Mabel Willey and Mary Ruth Wisheart spoke at that first retreat. Most years the speakers are ladies from the churches in Panama. This year four women: Brenda Bunch, Keyla Delgado, Maribel Perurena, and María Alemán, developed the topics, "Listening to God's Call," "Works Without Faith is Dead," "What Do You Want Me to Do?" and "Serving God in Love."

In their creative Panamanian ways, women organized the special weekend. Attendees were divided into five groups with each group representing a woman of the Bible. Throughout the two days of retreat, the groups participated in various competitions.

In the first competition, Friday evening, each team presented information about the group's name, using drama or other means. (The Ruth group used the character of Naomi to share its name.) The drama was good, but the biblical explanation was great. What fun to watch and what a blessing to realize how much Scripture these women know.

It was still dark at 5:30 a.m. Saturday morning when we arrived at the beach. Ladies began singing praise and worship songs. The worship atmosphere was almost incomprehensible as women faced the ocean and watched the sun come up behind the cross.

Another retreat highlight was the ceremony for past presidents of the National Women's Group. Several attended and marched in as their names and years of service were called. When all presidents were up front, someone draped them with ribbons (as in a beauty pageant). Another person gave each one flowers. I (Brenda) was privileged to place crowns upon them. This was such a special moment for me—like looking through the eyes of Christ, seeing how much they loved Him and how they had served Him in this capacity. These women were beautiful.

A lady representing Christ walked in, allowing women to reflect upon His greatness. During a special song, the leaders gave their crowns to the Christ figure, casting them at His feet. This emo-



tional experience served as a clear reminder that though each serves the Lord in a different capacity, ultimately it is *all* for Him. What made this year's retreat a success? Women fasted and prayed beforehand. There was little publicity, but those who went were ready to worship and be fed. Their hearts were prepared in a special way for this weekend.

Retreat is a special time for Panamanian women, but it's not the only time they work to advance the Kingdom. Throughout the year the women sponsor evangelistic outreaches, give to missions and work untiringly in their local churches. Culture and language aside, they are not a lot different from Women Active for Christ in the United States. One day in heaven we will all praise Him together in every language but in one voice. We will then willingly and lovingly cast our crowns at His feet.



Crowns at His Feet

Brenda Bunch and Judy Lytle have both served as FWB missionaries in Panama.

by Judy Lytle and Brenda Bunch

SPRINGBOARD

LEADERSHIP

BEGIN preparation now for WNAC Emphasis Month. The skit: "Set in Our Ways, p. 83 in the Program and Plan Book, is easily performed in any setting. Ask your pastor or church leadership for opportunities to share and garner support for the ministry of WNAC.

REGISTER now for the 2006 WNAC National Retreat at Ridgecrest, NC, September 21-23 (1-800-588-7222). Encourage women to attend this event.

REMEMBER that individual WNAC membership fees are now \$15. This is the national fee. Individual district or state fees may vary.

ENERGIZE your WAC this summer. Enthusiasm often wanes when groups do not meet regularly during summer months. Here are a few suggestions to help encourage and keep your women in touch with WNAC. Print an excerpt from the July-August issue of CoLaborer in your church bulletin or as a handout, encouraging them to read. Pass around a basket of good Christian titles for vacation reading. Since many go on vacation, encourage women to bring back an item of spiritual interest to share at the September meeting. Organize two-by-two action groups (two women who partner together in service, visitation, or other outreach). Using Luke 10 as a model, plan a time of sharing and rejoicing at the summer's end.

finding us on the web
just got easier...
www.wnac.org
Email: info@wnac.org

STUDY

SHARE the book reviews on pp. 9, 11. Encourage all teachers to buy *Window on the World* as a resource.

CHALLENGE women to formulate and write out their worldview, based on the questions on p. 8.

ENCOURAGE women to do the Bonus Word study on p. 30.

SERVICE

PARTICIPATE in Impact Birmingham, Saturday, July 15. Find information on p. 22 and on the WNAC website.

SPONSOR a shower (money or gifts) for a FWB Children's home or other shelter ministry to those affected by unhealthy expressions of anger.

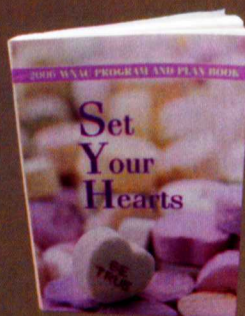
WRITE letters to local media expressing concern over their biased and often negative influence upon society. Offer positive suggestions.

WNAC NEEDS

PROVISION CLOSET. Towel sets, sheet sets (all sizes) sturdy cookware and baking sheets.

WNAC OFFICE. New computer monitors and updated software. Sufficient finances to cover day to day office expenses.

NOW AVAILABLE FOR 2006



skits
ideas
promotions
projects
information
installation
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enlistment

the WNAC Program and Plan Book \$8.00 plus shipping

MISSIONS

SHARE the Focus story (p. 24). Set a goal for group giving to Christmas Joy for Central Asia. Take gifts to the WNAC Convention or send to the WNAC office before October 15. IDENTIFY dominant belief systems in the places where your missionaries serve (including North America). NOTE the article by Eddie Payne. How can we become more aware of subtle changes within our culture? NEED a project? Contact: (IM) Steve Lytle steve@fwbgo 1-877-767-7736. (HM) Richard Atwood richard@nafwb.org 1-877-767-7674.

UPCOMING EVENTS

In an effort to keep you better informed, WNAC is now posting upcoming district, state and area-wide events of interest to women. Email your event name/date/location/contact person to colaborer@wnac.org

JULY: (15) IMPACT BIRMINGHAM
(16-19) NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FWB, BIRMINGHAM, AL
(17-18) WNAC CONVENTION, BIRMINGHAM, AL JULY 16-19

AUG: (1-31) WNAC EMPHASIS
(8) ARKANSAS STATE WAC MEETING, CONWAY HIGH SCHOOL, CONWAY

PRAYER

PRAY for women in your group or church who struggle with anger. Ask God to reveal the underlying reason for this response.

MAKE July prayer reminders using the download from www.wnac.org. Focus on differing worldviews. Pray that more Christians might embrace a truly biblical worldview.

IMPACT Birmingham through a Prayer Walk, Saturday July 15. See p. 22 for details.

ANTICIPATE the upcoming WAC season for prayer, January-August 2007. Begin praying now that women will follow Christ's example, going "Farther Still" in prayer.

...FEEDBACK...FEEDBACK...FEEDBACK

Dear WNAC,

Thanks for our free magazines, WNAC Manual, Plan Book and everything else you sent. We will join the Antioch District WAC at its next meeting this July. My ladies are excited about the WAC. Please pray for us as we begin this new work—new ground for them. God bless you and your staff.

Mary Ann Chronister
Russellville, AR

NOTE: WNAC provides a free packet of materials to any church interested in starting a WAC group. WNAC also provides new groups with a first year free subscription to *CoLaborer*. Call or email the WNAC office for more information (1-877-767-7662).

Dear WNAC,

I cannot express to you the thanks I have for the opportunity of writing an article for the *CoLaborer*....It has been one of our (YWAC) dreams to be able to get [the news] out nationally and share with other the great opportunity for fellowship, unity, love, and spiritual [growth that YWAC] will bring to the young girls in their churches. ...CoLaborer has blessed my life. These magazines contain articles that help edify my spiritual life and I truly enjoy reading them.

Brandi Meeks
Ecru, MS

Dear WNAC,

"I thank my God upon remembrance of you..." The words of the Apostle Paul sum up the way we feel about WNAC. As a lifelong FWB, I have always been very aware of the missions-mindedness of our women's movement. As a church planter, I have experienced firsthand the blessings of the faithfulness of our women. I wish I knew how to more appropriately thank the ladies of our denomination for being so faithful in getting the gospel out. As much as possible, please express our gratitude to others.

Clayton and Tammy Hampton
Clarksville, TN

Dear WNAC,

We are so grateful to WNAC for the gifts you [gave] to our account in 2005, plus a big thank you for the Provision Closet. Daily I am reminded of just how generous our FWB women are. We appreciate your ministry very much. Would you please pray for the salvation of Valerie?

Judy Bryan
France

Dear WNAC,

Just wanted to let you know that we are using one of the ideas from *CoLaborer* here in Alpedrete. We loved the idea from "Sharing Easter Joys" for the ladies' meeting using a springtime theme. Our church will be hosting a joint ladies meeting on June 3rd with the theme of "All Things New" (Completamente Renovada). Thanks!

Kristi Johnson
Spain

Dear WNAC,

We [enjoyed] the April Feature...just getting ready for it at our April meeting. Thanks to Sister Lucy for sharing her heritage with us.

Rhetta Butler
Slocumb, AL

Dear WNAC,

I read the April Feature in *CoLaborer* urging Free Will Baptist women to observe a Seder or Passover meal either in their homes or in their church at Easter time, even if we are Gentiles. Why? In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gal. 5:11)....We should be remembering the Savior, not slavery; His body and blood, not bondage; and it should be all about Christ, not promoting the flesh.

Winnie Yandell
Chickasha, OK

CoLaborer welcomes all comments and suggestions from our readers. Letters will be printed in Feedback as space allows.

IN NEED OF RESTORATION?



Register today by calling
1-800-588-7222

SPEAKER



Lynette Morgan

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\$147 per person **DOUBLE OCCUPANCY**

\$228 per person **SINGLE OCCUPANCY**

WNAC NATIONAL RETREAT
SEPTEMBER 21-23, 2006
RIDGECREST, NC

LABORS OF LOVE

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father:" 1 Thessalonians 1:2,3



✿ Missionary Debbie Griffin brought five ladies from Japan (Seiko Abe, Toshiyo Minami, Mika Sasaki, Motoko Yashino, and Yoshie Sukanaka) to the Georgia WAC Prayer Retreat April 21-22, in Norman Park, GA. Following the Friday assembly, women gathered for a get acquainted time with the Japanese visitors who modeled kimonos, demonstrated brush lettering and origami and served green tea. Missionary Sandra Bishop, and former short-termers to Japan Bethany Crowson and Joni Thomas also attended. GWAC also gathered and sent gifts totaling over \$1,800 to the Provision Closet.

✿ Pleasant Grove Woman's Auxiliary (AR) celebrated their 35th anniversary (March 25, 1971-March 25, 2006) at the Fish Net in Glenwood, AR. The group has changed over the years; thirteen members now reside in Heaven.



✿ Pleasant Hill WAC, Vienna, GA, enjoyed guests Sharon Ferguson and Larue Crowson at a recent monthly meeting. The Fergusons will soon leave for France to serve as support staff in the same church where the Crowsons once served as missionaries.

✿ Colquitt Free Will Baptist Church WAC (GA) made Easter a little brighter for sick children when they collected stuffed Easter bunnies for children in area hospitals. President Mary Nell Lentz distributed the gifts and seized opportunities for both outreach and prayer. After giving out about 15 bunnies in the pediatric ward, nurses took her to the NIC unit where she ministered to several families. A baby boy from the Colquitt church, born four weeks premature, had been released



from the unit only the night before, just in time to make his first appearance at church Easter morning. He also received one of the bunnies.

With thirty-eight members, Colquitt's WAC group is an active voice in their church, community and state. Eighteen women attended the GWAC prayer retreat. They recently hosted a reception honoring missionary Debbie Griffin, and the group is currently preparing a cookbook to fund new signs for their church.

5.



6.



PICTURED: 1. Women model kimonos at GWAC retreat. 2. GWAC women deliver a van full of Provision Closet items. 3. Debbie Griffin and Japanese visitors sing the "Wordless Book Song" for the crowd at the GWAC Prayer Retreat 4. Pleasant Grove anniversary supper attendees: (l-r) Ethel Pinkerton, Judy Hogg, Lori Strasner, Brenda Fant; Wendy Jacoby, Kindra Fatherree, Beverly Fox and Carrie Jo Cook. 5. Pleasant Hill WAC (GA) women: (l-r) **STANDING:** Nita Hobbs, Betty Jordan, Stella Ray, Tency Lewis, Martha Hobbs, Gail Ray, Larue Crowson, Rae Taylor **MIDDLE:** Nell Mathis, Thelma Culpepper, Audrey Hobbs **FRONT:** Sharon Ferguson, Sandy Hobbs, Nancy Brown. Member Henrietta Brown was photographer. 6. Jared, Rachel and baby Bretlyn Butler receive a musical "Jesus Loves Me" bunny from Colquitt FWB WAC (GA). 7 & 8. Heads WAC (TN) bridges generational gaps, teaching young girls about quilting and guiding them to pray for the world.

7.



Share your **LABORS OF LOVE** with others

colaborer@wnac.org

P. O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002

✿ Quilting has long been a vital part of culture and tradition at Heads FWB Church, Cedar Hill, TN. Usually, proceeds from quilts that were sold were given to missions. Recently, the church's Women Active for Christ took active measures to ensure that this tradition would continue when they hosted a

"Sewing Day." Women set up machines in the fellowship hall of the church and provided hands-on instructions, helping each girl make her own world map quilt. Both women and girls hold special interest in world prayer, since their pastor, David Outlaw, and his family are now FWBIM missionary appointees.

8.



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Colaborer JUL - AUG 2006 21



DEBE'S DELIGHTS

Debe Taylor
WNAC President

*"thy commandments
are my delights."
Psalm 119:143b*

Let's Just Praise the Lord

I missed it all. I was playing the piano and singing with a trio when it happened! A three-year-old girl was sitting all alone on the front pew totally absorbed in the worship service. That's when it happened. As I am told, she began to sway and ever-so-softly clap her little hands to the music. Several said she appeared to be "caught up" in the moment. Others said it seemed as though she was just praising the Lord. Whichever it was, she was completely uninhibited in her joy.

After listening to different ones express their thoughts concerning the small child's actions, I thought about my own expression of praise. Am I uninhibited? Do I let the Spirit move? Is my joy exhibited in my worship?

The Psalmist said, *"Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise."* (Psalm 33:1-3) The Lord longs for us to praise Him openly and freely. Too often I worry about what someone else might think of my expression of praise. I sometimes have a tendency to squelch the Spirit.

How many times have I been guilty of thinking someone was praising a little too loudly or demonstratively? Why do I think everyone should praise the Lord in the same way that I do? Maybe it would be good for us to think as a three-year-old—just feel the music and let the praise flow. This little girl had never been told she couldn't respond in such a manner. She felt moved and she demonstrated it in a very obvious way. You know what? I think God was pleased with her praise.

Throughout the Psalms, there are repeated commands for God's people to praise Him. Not only are there commands, but also suggestions for various ways to praise Him. It's time for God's people to get back to "praising" Him. After all, eternity will be one great praise service.

*"Let's just praise the Lord,
praise the Lord;
Let's just lift our hearts to heaven
And praise the Lord."*

—William & Gloria Gaither

Debe Taylor lives in Hot Springs, AR. A pastor's daughter and a pastor's wife, Debe knows a rich FWB heritage.

WHEN YOUR ROW IS HARD TO HOE

I grew up in southwest Missouri during the 1930s. My family raised strawberries. In the spring we would cut the trees from the new ground. All summer we would pull the weeds and hoe the strawberries. We each took a row. Some of those rows contained stumps where lots of weeds and grass grew.

As a child, it seemed to me, I always got a row with a stump. But my father would finish his row and start back on mine, meeting me at the stump. Together we would get the work done.

Sometimes in life, we think we have a hard row to hoe. Maybe it contains a stump—a leftover problem, an overgrown obstacle. Just remember, our Heavenly Father is at the other end of the row, and He's coming back to meet us. With His help, we can get the work done.

—BEULAH MORLAN





Is it Modest?

sible, not all are expedient. In other words, something may not be illegal or immoral, but also not be wise or practical or beneficial. That brings us back to the M word and four big issues.

apparel. The word modesty also implies a boundary or standard of measure. Does our clothing measure up? Can we say our outfit is not extreme? Is it too low, too short, too tight or too loose? Does it sufficiently cover the three B's (bosom, belly, and bottom)? Author Danna Gresh suggests several interesting tests that teens can use as a standard of measure. Raise and Praise: Palm Pilot, Stand in the Gap, etc. Interested? A downloadable poster of these tests is available at www.purefreedom.org.

What about cost? Did we pay an extreme price? Jesus taught us to "take no thought" about things we wear, but rather store up our treasure in Heaven.

SUMMER. IT'S THE SEASON WHEN GIRLS COVER THEMSELVES WITH SUNSCREEN AND SHADES AND UNCOVER JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING ELSE. You might expect to see this seasonal phenomenon at the beach or theme park or on TV, but probably not at church or on a youth group outing. Yet, answers to a recent email questionnaire proved otherwise. A sampling of FWB youth leaders concurred that dress can often be a problem. What kinds of clothing did they mention? Low necklines, midriff tops, lingerie-type tops, short skirts, tight pants and shorts and low-cut jeans. How can Christian girls know what's okay to wear and still follow biblical principles? Let's talk about the "M" word—modesty.

Modesty is not just a word your grandmother coined. It's not even a church phrase. It's derived from the Latin word, *modestos* meaning "keeping due measure" or "moderate." We could define modesty as

avoiding extremes.

Whoa. Now that takes in a whole lot more than just clothes. Stated this way, it's about our whole life.

That's exactly the issue Peter wrote about in the New Testament (1 Peter 3:3). He explained that God wants women (from young teens to seniors) to not be extreme—in their clothing, in their accessories or in their manner of life. And since every median has two extremes, you could say that Peter was asking women to avoid going off the deep end either way.

So does this mean that everything short of shocking your parents and your pastor is okay? No. The Apostle Paul said that though "all things are permis-

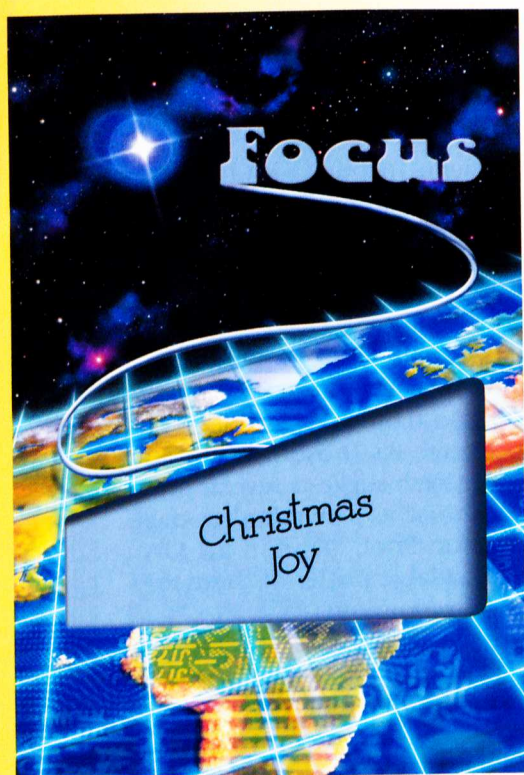
appearance. Can we say we avoid extremes in our appearance? Blue-streaked dreadlocks or fifteen piercings would probably not fit in the moderate range. Wearing long sleeves and ankle length garb in the heat of the summer wouldn't either. Both extremes scream for attention. Again, 1 Peter 3 says that outward appearance should not be the wow factor for believers.

actions. Let's talk about PDA (public displays of affection.) Are we honoring God in our physical relationships with other teens? Do we respect guys as brothers in Christ? Then our actions should reflect this. If we wish to be treated with respect, we must respect ourselves and our bodies.

God's Word tells us to respect our parents. What are their guidelines? Do we follow them? The same group of youth leaders who expressed concern about modesty, also agreed that parent involvement in this area would be a great help.

attitudes. Most of us easily recognize extreme attitude. But what's a modest attitude? It's the heart motivation behind our appearance and actions. Are we all about ourselves or is our goal to please God? Our heart attitude will determine our life principles. Are we consistent? Do we live by our principles seven days a week?

Paul said in Philippians 4:5, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." A lifestyle of modesty may not be popular, but it could pave a way for sharing our faith.



Pray:

—for Baptist Union ministries among underprivileged and special needs children in the five regions of Central Asia.

—for the staff of the Bible Mission in Almaty, Kazakhstan as they prepare for this year's Christmas Joy outreach.

—for cheerful and abundant Christmas Joy givers among Women Active for Christ.

—for the thousands of children and their families who will hear the gospel through this effort.

—for sufficient funds and a spirit of unity among CA JOY team members preparing to travel to Central Asia and deliver the Christmas gifts.



by LUDMALA KUZNETZOVA

What is Christmas? It's a birthday. And birthdays are all about guests, fun and presents! This past January, Bible Mission decided to celebrate this most important birthday – the birthday of Jesus Christ together with kids and their parents.

In Central Asia, orphans, special needs children, and kids from poor and needy families often find themselves devoid of fellowship and friendship due to their diseases or circumstances. We wanted so much for them to feel the joy of Christmas and the love of God. That's how the Christmas Joy for Central Asia began.

Both Bible Mission staff and local church members packed toys and candies, then wrapped them to resemble pieces of candy. Workers created decorations, sewed costumes and prayed a lot. We prayed for help in our preparation but mostly we prayed for the hearts of the kids, their teachers and mentors, and their parents. The next step involved distributing invitations. So many people wanted to come. We had no problem finding kids to invite. The summer before, we offered special training for those who work with special kids. This training served as a key for inviting kids from boarding schools, orphanages and centers for the blind, those with cerebral palsy, Downs syndrome, and other disabilities. The number of kids invited to our birthday party totaled 1,487 children (not counting parents). Everyone also received an invitation to local church services and Sunday schools all over the city of Almaty.

Our staff held six different Christmas parties complete with candles, cake, songs and fun. Children came, many not knowing whose birthday they were celebrating. We shared with the kids that Christmas is Jesus' birthday. One woman dressed as a beautiful box. This living "Christmas present" told us about the best gift anyone can ever receive.

Games, competition and visual aids helped kids learn about the presents God gives to humans. The best ever present was sending His Son, Jesus Christ.

This led to the question, "What present can we give Jesus?" Someone sang a song to Jesus; someone recited



a poem. We then explained to the crowd that the best present for Jesus is the heart. It doesn't matter if it's black (full of sin). Jesus wants to clean our hearts and be our Friend forever. All the kids and parents agreed that this is the best present. Everyone got a present, the Good News and a candy. Opening the gift-wrapped candy, each child found the best candies of Almaty, a toy and a children's New Testament. Blind children received a special paper, coded in braille. They were so thankful for this special gift in answer to their needs.

After the celebrations, many parents and teachers came and thanked us and everyone who helped organize such holidays for kids and even adults. After each meeting, adults got acquainted with the pastors of the local churches who invited them to the church meetings. We desire so much that these kids and their parents would become believers.

Some children couldn't come to the holiday celebrations because they are handicapped. They must spend their lives in bed or within the confines of their apartments. Our staff organized a holiday for them as well. We went to the children's homes, talked with them and hugged them. We prayed with the parents to encourage them. What wonderful days we experienced. Yet, we hope so much that this Great News

about Jesus will bring joy not just for a few days, but for their entire lives. Please pray for them with us.

We thank the Lord for what He accomplished this past Christmas. We appreciate your desire to help us tell children the Good News during the upcoming "Christmas Joy." Without your help, many children and their families will never hear the Good News. They will not receive the gifts of a toy, candies and New Testament. They will spend this special holiday as another normal gray day. Thank you in advance for your partnership in sharing the love of Christ with both children and parents.

The Apostle Paul said, "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Other Prayer Concerns



—Pray for Vacation Bible Schools in home missions churches this summer.

—Pray for Matthew and Brooke Turnbough as they return to Spain and anticipate the birth of a son in September.

—Pray for Angela Emerick as she begins language study in Krosnodar, Russia.

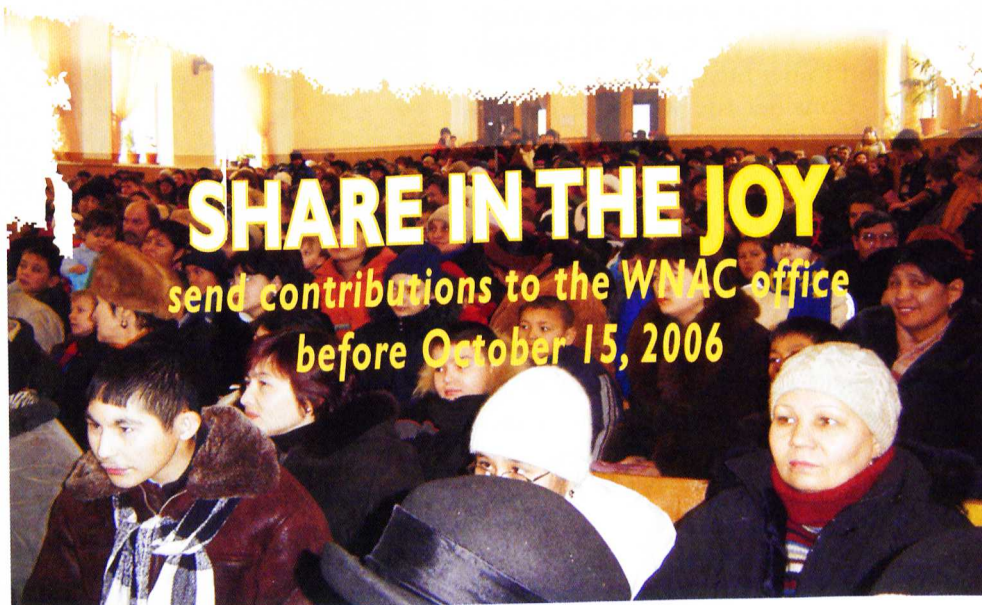
—Pray for Tim and Katrina Crowson, set to arrive in Tokyo, Japan, in August for a two-year ministry.

—Pray for Missionary Paul Hammons, Flagstaff, AZ, as he conducts a youth carnival for the community.

—Pray for Sean and Jill Warren as they assume the position of Missionary in Residence at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

—Pray for ease in cultural readjustment for Mediterranean Team missionaries who have returned to the USA to garner prayer and financial support.

—Pray for Paul Collins, Harrisonburg, VA, as he begins Site Plan Development for a church facility.



SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IN THE HOME is a privilege that by principles set forth in the Word of God belongs to the husband. Our loving heavenly Father has established roles for each member of the family (Ephesians 5:22-6:4) and promises blessings on our families when the roles are respected (Ephesians 6:3; 1 Peter 3:1-7). The same pattern of authority in the home applies to the spiritual leadership within our families.

Complicating the issue, however, is this dilemma: Who is to be the spiritual leader when the husband is not spiritually prepared to lead the family into the ways of the Lord? He may be a Christian, attend church, and participate to some degree in church related activities, but he is not growing at the rate of the wife.

How does a wife find balance—keeping spiritual alertness in the home without usurping her husband's God-ordained authority?

These days, in a world of ever-increasing demands on time, money, and effort, the role of spiritual leadership is shifting in many homes. Often, without the desire to take over the husband's role, the wife has become in many homes the spiritual leader.

Perhaps because of our social nature, women tend to participate in Bible studies more frequently, fellowship with other Christian women more often, and have opportunity to serve others. Somehow, it seems we even find more time to prepare for Bible studies.

How does a wife find balance—keeping spiritual alertness in the home without appearing to usurp her husband's God-ordained authority?

Wives can encourage spiritual growth in their husbands by making deliberate choices.

Deuteronomy 5:3 says *"The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day."* Clearly, Moses is reminding all of the children of Israel that God's promises are for each one of them.

In chapter six, Moses continues to give the Lord's commands: *"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."* This precept is directed to both fathers and mothers, as both parents should greatly impact their children with their lifestyle and teachings.

Scripture is full of wonderful examples of fathers and mothers who taught their children by life and word to follow God. One such example to be followed is that of the wife submitting to the authority of her husband (Ephesians 5:22-25).

There are situations, however, when the husband chooses to leave the spiritual direction of the family to the wife. Though this may be awkward for the wife who does not want to appear to be the spiritual head of the home, it can actually be a wonderful opportunity to model Christ-like behavior to her children and to her husband.

Consider the words of Peter in 1 Peter 3:1, *"In the same manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own hus-*

Recognizing your husband's attempts in biblical leadership will offer him positive reinforcement for growing in faith.

Follow the Leader



Ways to Help Your Husband Be the Spiritual Leader in Your Home

by
Teresa Christian

bands that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the behavior of the wives, while they behold your chaste conduct..." The attitude and behavior of a godly woman can reflect the love of Christ, as well as the patience and gentleness that should be evident to all.

Pray for Him

Practically speaking, wives can encourage the spiritual growth of their husbands by making deliberate choices. The most obvious starting point is prayer. How many times does Scripture admonish us to pray, and to pray boldly and specifically? We can pray purposefully that our husbands will encounter opportunities for fellowship, Bible study, and conversation that will inspire his walk with Christ. Time with other Christian men will *"provoke...[him] unto love and good works."* (Hebrews 10:24)

Involve Him in Worship

Secondly, we can involve husbands in times of worship with our children. While he may not initiate times of family devotion or prayer, he must still be seen as important to the process. Invite him to pray with the children at meals and at bedtime.

In matters of family worship through church attendance, make sure he is aware of the children's involvement in Sunday School and other activities. Help him keep specific times for meetings and events in mind so that he may have opportunity to attend. Try to avoid last minute surprises. Seek to have regular fellowship with other couples with whom you attend church.

Acknowledge His Attempts

Whenever your husband speaks from a godly perspective or exercises a biblical principle, be sure to acknowledge this before your children. Kids will discern who has become, for whatever reason, the spiritual leader of the home. Most likely, at times they will see Dad

(and Mom) acting outside biblical boundaries, and Satan will make sure they take notice. Recognizing your husband's attempts in biblical leadership will offer him positive reinforcement for growing in faith.

Teaching spiritual truths is not just about memorizing verses to quote or making sure our children attend Bible study or youth group activities. It involves them seeing God's truth applied in real life situations. The best way to do this is to instruct them as you are sitting, walking, lying down, or rising up, just as Deuteronomy chapter five commands. Capture these teachable moments.

Encourage Him to Grow

Verbally encourage your husband to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Ask him to pray with you regarding decisions, any matters that may be troubling you, and the spiritual maturity of your children. Speak positively to him of your pastor and church

Treat Him with Respect

Be careful not to talk down to your husband as though he is incapable of leadership. Speak *"that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."* (Ephesians 4:29)

Treat your husband with the respect due him as head of the home.

Treat your husband with the respect due him as head of the home. This, perhaps more than any other precept, will speak volumes to your children as to their father's role in their spiritual development.

If children observe you speaking disrespectfully to him or about him, they will pick up on this and begin to lose respect for your husband. Children may become con-

Avoid the temptation to speak negatively of other Christians.

fused, unable to clearly define their father's God-given role.

Let us not be guilty of blessing God with our tongue, only to turn around and curse men *"who are made after the similitude of God."* (James 3:9) Our kids can spot hypocrisy often times before we can, and they will see it in us well before we even realize we have committed it.

Strengthen Your Own Walk

Look for the many ways you can grow in your own walk with the Lord as you encourage your husband. Spend time in prayer and the Word so that you may be filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit, enabling you to speak the truth in love. Together with your husband may you *"grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."* (Ephesians 4:15)

Resist the trap of thinking of yourself more highly than you should.

Resist the trap of thinking of yourself more highly than you should. Endeavor instead to remain humble and always careful to point your husband toward Christ. It is God's plan to complete the good work He began in your husband (Philippians 1:6). You have the privilege of being used by the Lord to pray for and encourage your husband's spiritual growth.

Teresa Christian lives in Hermitage, TN with her husband Mike and daughters, Adina and Hannah. Employed by the Gideons, Teresa attends Donelson FWB Church.



A FAITHFUL STEWART

Genuine, caring, generous, and loyal are words used to describe Rebecca Stewart, a woman of God who is committed to impacting her world for Christ.

Rebecca Stewart was born in 1919 to Arthur and Marilla (Mat) Stewart near Bethlehem in Cheatham County, Tennessee. She remembers heating bricks to keep her feet warm as she rode a horse-driven buggy to church or to school. Rebecca attended Bethlehem FWB along with her parents, and her two older sisters, Pauline and Lois. Mat Stewart was a devout Christian. Arthur, though a good man and faithful churchgoer, was not a believer.

When Rebecca was 10, the family moved to Ashland City where they began attending Ashland City Free Will Baptist Church. There both Rebecca and her father accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. One Sunday a few weeks later, both Rebecca and her father were baptized in Ashland City's Dry Fork Creek.

Reaching out to people came naturally for Rebecca. Her parents often had boarders in their home. Rebecca became friends with the boarders, baby-sat their children, and witnessed to them about the Lord. In the early days of Ashland City FWB, the church was pastored by Bible college students, and many of the student pastors considered the Stewart house their weekend home. Because of this Rebecca developed friendships with ministers and missionaries throughout the FWB fellowship, and thus became attuned to the heart of the denomination.

During high school, Rebecca worked summers at a local store where she was paid a dollar for a 12-hour day. She graduated from Cheatham County High School in 1937 and from Draughn's Business College a year later.



Employed as a legal secretary for 50 years, Miss Rebecca assisted clients from throughout Cheatham County and even Middle Tennessee. She used her influence to confront domestic violence, teach Christian stewardship, and witness for Christ. She even convinced one of her bosses, a member of another denomination, to begin tithing. When writing wills, she would ask her clients, "And, how much do you plan to leave your church?"

In addition to her work, Miss Rebecca was active in business and civic organizations. Through these organizations and her church, she worked to help the poor. When someone was sick, bereaved, or in the hospital, Miss Rebecca was often the first person there.

A world Christian, Rebecca reached out of her local church to the

district, state, and national levels. She began attending the National Association Conventions in 1941. Since that time she has missed only ten conventions, most of them in later years because of her failing health.

A strong advocate of Christian education, Miss Rebecca has supported Free Will Baptist Bible College since the 1940s. At her 80th birthday party given by her church in 1999, her friends established a scholarship at the college in her honor.

The needs of missionaries, both home and international, weigh deeply on Miss Rebecca. Recently she called former WNAC Executive Secretary-Treasurer Mary Ruth Wisehart asking, "Which missionary accounts are in the red?" Such a question usually means that additional missions funds will be forthcoming from Miss Rebecca and the people in her sphere of influence.

In 1974 James Batts from Miss Rebecca's church was hospitalized at the TB Sanatorium. During that time his daughter Susie planned to be married and the family could not afford a church wedding. Miss

by Fannie Mae Hall

Friends and family honor Rebecca on her 80th birthday.





Rebecca enjoys time with her family.

Rebecca secured a dress, flowers, and a wedding cake and led the women of the church to give Susie a church wedding, and in style. Today as an auctioneer, James values the times he can work with Miss Rebecca as she settles family estates.

Though never married, Miss Rebecca is a strong advocate for families, and deeply committed to her own family. On birthdays and holidays you can find Miss Rebecca with nephew Jimmy Shores, great-niece Jayme Goodsell, and great-nephew Patrick Shores and family enjoying the occasion and affirming their love for one another.

And how is Rebecca Stewart perceived by those who have known her longest and best? She lives what the Bible teaches, she gives generously to others, and she is committed to reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ronnie Balthrop, deacon at Ashland City, who has known Miss Rebecca all his life speaks of her with great affection, "I would be hard pressed to think of a more caring person. Her dedication to Ashland City Free Will Baptist Church is unparalleled. When she gets to heaven I believe God will say, 'Welcome home, my good and faithful servant!'"

Fannie Mae Hall lives in Springfield, MO, and works in publishing for the Assemblies of God. A former renter of Miss Rebecca's, she contacted WNAC concerning paying tribute to this longtime WAC member and avid supporter of its ministries.

WORKPLACE WISDOM

by Shelly Miller



The Juggle Struggle

Just how many objects can you juggle? I'm certain that all of us at one time or another have made an honest attempt to place three objects (most likely balls, oranges or quarters) in our hands and cause them to rotate clock or counterclockwise with a rhythmic tossing and catching. Not too many of us can do this on the first, second or even hundredth attempt and the few who go on to master this art as a profession are traveling with a circus or side show. (Go ahead. I know it's been awhile since you tried it, but please come back and read the rest of the article).

The truth is, we are all jugglers of sorts. Some may be amateurs, some professionals, but no matter our age, the majority of us most likely struggle with juggling. The demands that life seems to place on us in addition to what we place upon ourselves can be overwhelming. Even the simplest thing like dropping a birthday card in the mail to a parent becomes monumental.

You may be juggling, home, church and career pretty smoothly. Then something unexpected gets tossed in from the sidelines, knocking you completely off course. Will you collapse beneath the weight of the unexpected, or will you continue juggling smoothly prepared for what God has ahead. Some of those unexpected objects may be things such as:

- LOSS OF JOB
- NEW MANAGEMENT
- HEALTH PROBLEMS
- CARE OF ILL OR SENIOR PARENT(S)
- CARE OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN
- FAMILY LEGAL ISSUES
- CAR TROUBLE
- FINANCIAL ISSUES
- DEATH
- DIVORCE

When one or a number of these things occur, life may seem insurmountable—especially in your workplace with its demands hovering, making it extremely difficult to focus on the task at hand. Let's trust God, our Master juggler, remembering He is in control of all the events of our lives, past, present and future. Let's also trust in His omniscience, knowing that nothing surprises Him.

Take time to inventory what God may be calling you to toss back into His care.

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."
1 Peter 5:6-7

Shelly Miller works as international product manager for AmSouth Bank. She and her family live in Donelson, TN, and attend The Donelson Fellowship FWB church. Active in women's prayer ministry, Shelly enjoys reading, trail-walks and gardening.

About God's Word

1. How did we obtain God's Word?

2 Timothy 3:16

2 Peter 1:20, 21

Job 32:8

2. What does God's Word do for us?

Psalms 119:9

John 15:3

Ephesians 5:25, 26

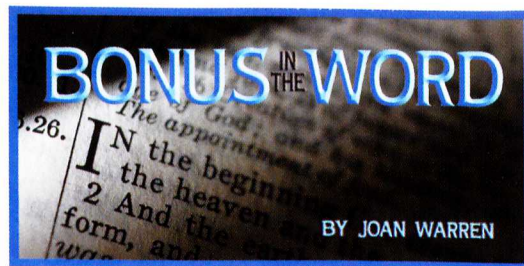
3. What does God's Word require of us?

Deuteronomy 10:12, 13

Micah 6:8

1 Corinthians 4:1, 2

Joan Warren is a longtime WAC leader and Bible teacher from Oilton, OK.



UNEXPECTED JOURNEY



Diane Thomas Bridgman

Reader, God was so good to bring Richard into my life after Ray's death. I was very impressed with both God and Richard. Richard and I were thrilled with this new love that was growing and each new day felt so wonderful. We'd both endured such intense grief after the loss of our spouses.

Then, I got the phone call. Richard had been injured in an industrial accident and I was needed at the hospital. I was told that he had been hit on the head and there was a bad gash. I went to the hospital fully expecting to bring him home after some stitches.

It was not to be. A seven-hundred pound piece of steel had fallen on his head (yes, he is quite hard-headed) and he had nearly bled to death. At the door to his room, the doctor put her hand on my arm and said, "We believe that he has broken his neck." I walked to his bedside and he smiled at me. I released my breath, not knowing that I had held it. I took his hand and reminded him of how much I

loved him. X-rays confirmed that we faced surgery. I did not tell him that death was a possibility.

Our marriage had been pure bliss up to that point and this was our first personal crisis as a couple. His pain was so intense that I could not touch him. I put my hand on the sheet near his face and I bowed before God in that emergency room, not knowing what lay ahead for us.

Our lives were put on hold for the next six months. We used that healing time to read, listen to good music, watch tomatoes grow, sit in God's lap and grow closer to each other and to Him. We endured the halo—having steel bars screwed into his head—and all the other hardships. We were glad for the day when the Lord let us up.

Reader, it is not a journey we wish to take again, but agree that our lives are richer for each step we've taken. Those steps began in that emergency room when we set our hearts on Him.

Diane Thomas Bridgman is a writer and speaker to Christian women who earns her keep as an administrator at Evergreen Memorial. She loves her WAC through the Grifton (NC) FWB Church. She is now "happily ever after" married to Richard.

IN THE WORKS



Marjorie H. Workman
Executive Secretary-Treasurer

OUR HEART, HIS HEART

"You can tell a lot about a person by looking at [her] checkbook."

(SERMONS4KIDS.COM)

Did I dare test this statement? What would my checkbook reveal about me? Could I handle the truth of Luke 12:34, *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also?"* Where was my heart according to my checkbook? What about you? Where is your heart?

God doesn't need to look at our checkbooks to know our hearts. He knows far more about us than any checkbook could ever reveal. In Psalm 139, David describes what life with God is like. He said, *"Thou hast searched me, and known me"* (vs. 1). God knows all of our thoughts, even before we do (vs. 2). He knows the totality of everything and everyone at all times. John confirms, *"God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things"* (1 John 3:20). He knows our actions and motivations. He knows our future, our weaknesses, our strengths, our pain, and our victories. He knows us in minute detail even to the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:30). David said, *"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me"* (Psalm 139:6).

Not only does God know all of our thoughts and the details of our beings, but also He is constantly present with us. No matter where we go, God is there. This is true even when we are in places we would never expect God to be (139:8). He is both omnipresent and omniscient. He desires to be an integral part of our lives. We need never feel lonely or abandoned for He is always with us.

Knowing the enormity and completeness of God's knowledge only heightens and deepens our shallow understanding of God's heart. He knows us, yet still loves us. So, what do we know about God's heart? It is bigger than anyone can imagine.

A LOVING HEART. We know God loves us deeply because He gave us His most precious gift. He sent His only Son to die for us (John 3:16). It is His heart's desire that everyone be saved. He is *"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). He wants this Good News to

be shared. *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). He longs to gather as many as will come to Him.

A CARING HEART. God is not asleep. David tells us in Psalm 121:4, *"He that keepeth thee will not slumber."* The same God who created and cares for the universe carefully watches over and protects us. Thus He wants us to care for others. *"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction"* (James 1:27). Jesus clearly explained that when we feed the hungry, visit the sick, provide clothing for the needy, and visit those in prison, we are doing it for Him (Matthew 24:36-40).

A FAITHFUL HEART. We can count on God's faithfulness. Since creation, God continues to maintain the universe. *"Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances"* (Psalm 119:90, 91). God is faithful to His word. *"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips"* (Psalm 89:34). His promises are sure. *"Sara...was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised"* (Hebrews 11:11). David said, *"With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations"* (Psalm 89:1). We are responsible to proclaim and reflect His faithfulness throughout our lives.

It is impossible for our finite minds to comprehend God's heart, nor can we understand His knowledge of us. But I'm thankful we are in His care. Our smallest actions are noticed and recorded, not in the register of a checkbook, but one could say in the palm of His hand, *"Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands"* (Isaiah 49:16).

The great issues of life flow from the heart. The heart that wants to know God's heart will pray, *"Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name"* (Psalm 86:11).

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