

October 2003

Contact

I Met **Jesus** Through Hurricane Hugo

A Letter to Molly

A Christian counselor writes a letter to a client

Sneak Attack!

A killer stalked the busy wife and mother

Don't put yourself on the shelf after retirement

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Keith Burden

Making Wrong Assumptions

Jack and Ruby weren't members

of the church I pastored. Out of courtesy I visited her a few times while she was in the hospital because the chaplain's census indicated she was a Free Will Baptist. I was surprised to learn she had died and more surprised when her husband asked me to officiate at her funeral. Although they had a pastor, Jack insisted I preach his wife's memorial message. Reluctantly, I consented.

A few short months later I received another telephone call. Jack had passed away unexpectedly and his son wanted me to preach the funeral. Once again I found myself in an awkward position, and once again I reluctantly honored his request.

I met the family at the funeral home to make preliminary arrangements. I was told another minister would be assisting me. We discussed the order of service. It would include the usual elements—an obituary, music, a eulogy, prayer and a message. I made careful notes detailing who would be assigned each responsibility. When I inquired about music, the family asked if I could recommend someone to sing. I volunteered the services of our ladies' trio.

Change in Plans

The day of the service the funeral directors came early to position the casket and arrange flowers in the sanctuary. Our church provided lunch for the family in the fellowship hall. It was during that time I was informed there would be an addition to the order of service. Some family members from Texas who were "real good singers" had been asked to sing a song for Uncle Jack. Against my better judgment, I agreed to accommodate this last-minute change.

Fear of Losing Control

Some pastors get nervous when asked to work with "real good singers"

they've never heard. I was one of those pastors! Having been burned on more than one occasion, I was fearful it might happen again. I had no idea who these singers were or what they would be singing.

The ladies' trio was in the choir room rehearsing when I rushed in to explain my predicament and what I intended to do to compensate for the potentially bad music. The trio would sing first and at the conclusion of the service. The family singers would be sandwiched in the middle. At least we would begin and end with some good music.

Moment of Truth

Moments before the service began I made my way into the sanctuary. As I walked up the steps onto the stage I saw a man and woman seated in the choir loft behind the ladies' trio. *They must be the family singers*, I thought to myself. I gave them a polite nod, then motioned for the congregation to stand as the family entered. The trio sang the opening song and the service proceeded. The other minister ended his remarks by leading in prayer.

During the prayer the couple seated in the choir loft moved quietly to the piano and prepared to sing. I was totally unprepared for what happened next. The man was seated at the piano and he played the introduction to the song. It became apparent he was no ordinary musician. The duet began to sing the most beautiful rendition of "Where the Roses Never Fade" I have ever heard. Their harmony was perfect...they sang with such ease and confidence.

Like a Ton of Bricks

That's when it hit me. I recognized the singers. Tim and LaDonna Johnson were professional Christian artists who traveled for years with Dallas Holm.

They came off the road and settled in Texas to raise their family and write Christian music. I listened to them sing in stunned disbelief; and to think I was worried about potentially bad music. I had made a serious wrong assumption.

I would like to tell you that was the last wrong assumption I ever made, but it wasn't. It does, however, point to an important lesson I am still learning. Sometimes we are too quick to jump to conclusions. We prejudge people or situations before we are in possession of all (or at least enough of) the facts. As a result, we often embarrass ourselves and miss out on the blessing others can bring when we give them the benefit of the doubt.

Every time I hear the song, "Where the Roses Never Fade," I'm reminded of that experience and just how easy it is to make wrong assumptions. The next time you're tempted to write someone off, take the time and make the effort to find out more about them. You never know who might just be a "real good singer." ■





No one knew that Hurricane Hugo

“I Met Jes Through

When Maria walked into our church that first cool Sunday morning, my daughter Emily came to the office and told me a strange lady was in the auditorium. I was busy with last-minute details, and I asked Emily to introduce herself and encourage this

“strange” lady to make herself at home. I would come by later and officially welcome her.

I wrapped up as quickly as I could and went to the auditorium where I found a middle-aged, soft-spoken lady with bright brown eyes. She sat alone in that quiet sanctuary and looked even smaller than her 5'5".

Since it was still early, I sat down to chat with her. I picked up Maria's Hispanic accent as she told me she was from Puerto Rico. While I listened, she began telling me part of her story.

Maria's Story

“I probably won't be able to attend service every week,” she began. “I have cancer and the treatments make it difficult sometimes.”

The smile never left her face, the joy and peace never left her demeanor. She knew Christ lived in her heart and she was determined that cancer not steal her heavenly joy.

The winter was particularly cold and snowy. Maria didn't have a vehicle, so she walked or took a bus or a

blew open the door of salvation
for a single mother.



US Hurricane Hugo”

By Steve Faison

cab wherever she went. She declined offers of transportation to attend church preferring to walk. She insisted with a smile that she needed the exercise. I made sure she understood that if she needed a ride, one was a phone call away.

Maria attended our church five weeks before I received a telephone call Saturday morning while in a committee meeting. She was in the hospital. As quickly as I could get out of the meeting, I made plans to visit with her. I had spent time getting to know Maria and hearing her story, but I wanted a layman in the church to receive a blessing from hearing her story.

Ralph and I went to Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D. C., to visit with Maria. She had developed a blood clot on her lung and the pain was excru-

ciating. With the complications from her cancer, doctors took every precaution to assure her well being.

Maria's Private Testimony

When we walked in the door, Maria's face lit up. That day I felt impressed that others could benefit from knowing Maria. I listened again as Maria shared her testimony with Ralph and me. Some of it I had heard, but it was sweet to hear it again. There was a genuine excitement about what Christ was doing in her life.

On the way home, I told Ralph my idea of letting others hear Maria's testimony. He thought it would be helpful to others on their Christian journey. Plans were set in motion to have Maria share her testimony during Sunday morning service.



Maria's Public Testimony

When the time came, Maria stood before the congregation and began. She told about a difficult childhood and how she raised her son as a single parent. Then she described the September day in 1989 when Hurricane Hugo invaded her native Puerto Rico. She told how her arm had been trapped in a glass door and badly cut.

My mind went to Calvary as she related how she almost bled to death between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. before roads were passable enough to get to the hospital. A surgeon met them at the hospital door and immediately took Maria to surgery. A serious infection almost cost her right arm.

The combination of events in Maria's life pushed her into deep depression. Contemplating suicide, she

"I don't care what I see or what happens. He is with me and He is the One who has my time in His hands. He's the One who makes me go over the mountains and able to do with His strength what He wants me to do."

remembered a former co-worker who was also a single parent. The co-worker had also led a difficult life, with one epileptic child and another with hepatitis. Through those hardships, the friend remained joyful.

Reunited at the hospital during the Hurricane Hugo ordeal, her friend's testimony brought hope to Maria. She attended her friend's church and began her walk with Jesus. The Lord began to teach, mold and change Maria into what He wanted her to become.

In 1996, Maria's son came to the mainland to study at Georgetown University. Maria decided she would devote more time and energy to what she had come to enjoy—serving Christ. Not long after that, she learned about the cancer. Surgery and nine months of chemotherapy brought pain and adverse reactions. The cancer spread throughout her liver and vertebrae. She finally came to Georgetown in order to receive better treatment.

Maria's Faith

As she spoke to our church that morning, Maria shared two thoughts that hit home. She said, "I don't care

what I see or what happens. He is with me and He is the One who has my time in His hands. He's the One who makes me go over the mountains and able to do with His strength what He wants me to do."

She went on to say, "The scripture is my medicine and church is my hospital.... That is why I give Him all praise. I know that nothing, nothing will separate me from His love, and that I am healed according to His promise. I'll see it either on this side of life or on the other side. But I am able to walk and talk and praise Him because of His mercy."

Isaiah 41:10 has become a special verse to Maria. She first quoted it in Spanish, then read it in English. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Maria's Miracle

Her voice quivered, and tears came to my eyes as I recalled an earlier visit with Maria. She asked if she could raise her hands in a church service in praise to the Lord. I said, "Of course, you can!"

You see, because of the severe injury to her right arm, doctors told Maria she would never lift her arm again to the full motor skills capacity. Because of the cancer, her left arm was given a similar diagnosis. In Maria's way of

thinking, it is literally a time of praise when she lifts her hands to Heaven. It is a time of thanksgiving for what God has done and is continually doing in her life.

There are details in our personal activities that we associate with events ingrained in our memories. Whether the explosion of the space shuttle Columbia or events surrounding 9-11, we remember exactly where we were and what we were doing when we heard the news.

I remember what I was doing during Hurricane Hugo. I was living in south Georgia working at a radio station. The Georgia Southern Eagles were playing the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders in Statesboro, Georgia, in what became known as the Hurricane Bowl. I was stuck at the studio instead of getting drenched at the stadium. But for those of us who know Maria, somehow Hurricane Hugo takes on a different meaning now. ■

About the Writer: Reverend Steve Faison pastors Bloss Memorial Free Will Baptist Church in Arlington, Virginia. He is the moderator of the Virginia State Association of Free Will Baptists.

A Christian counselor's letter to a client.

A Letter to

Molly*

By Lewis Campbell

Dear Molly,

This has been quite an afternoon. All I knew when you came in was that you had a drug problem and your children were having strange, unexplained accidents. Because of that, a judge was about to use a little-known and less understood federal law to "terminate your parental rights." You wouldn't be your little boys' mommy any more. If you understood this, you avoided the subject. I decided not to press the issue at the outset.

The judge either had insight or was required to ask me to do an evaluation and report back to the court. So we started three hours of interview, questions, pictures, puzzles and all the rest that goes into a psychological evaluation.

I almost fell out of my chair when you indicated that your therapist said you had obsessive-compulsive disorder. The pictures you drew, which I never really trust, were saying the same thing. Then I realized I hadn't asked about your family.

When I did, the dam broke. Almost emotionlessly you poured out a history of hurt, rejection, abuse and disappointment that broke my heart. I struggled to retain my professional objectivity. I pictured a little girl becoming a slavish perfectionist trying to earn love, an adolescent drowning hurt in a cookie jar till she ballooned to over 300 pounds, eventually turning to diet pills then hard drugs to numb the pain of emptiness.

I grew excited with you as you shared the wonder and thrill of your new-found faith. To the cynic, it might look like a ploy to impress the judge. I know that is a possibility. Yet I sensed a joy and hope, immature as it was, that

spoke of reality. I thought of the many mentors I had as a teen and wondered where yours were. I wished for a support system of godly men for your dad when he raised you as a single parent.

But that is all history now. Tomorrow I will spend several hours counting dots, adding scores and doing math to make sense of what we covered, then more hours before God trying to use that data to make recommendations that would be redemptive for you and your family.

As we worked, I thought of another teen—me. I remembered kneeling at an altar at youth camp telling God He could have me if He could use me. It never occurred to me that I would not be a famous pastor, evangelist or maybe missionary. The road since then has certainly been a bumpy, uneven one—sometimes in sunlight, sometimes in shadows, up and down.

Tonight, I think it makes sense. I see God making an appointment 50 years ago to bring us together today. Without trying to be dramatic, I felt today that I hold your destiny and that of your children in my hands. It is at the same time wonderful... and scary... and... sacred.

■

*Name has been changed.

About the Writer: Lewis Campbell is a psychological examiner and Christian counselor in North Little Rock, Arkansas. He is president of Training Resources, Inc., a consulting firm which serves as a backup resource to family service and juvenile agencies in Arkansas. He is an alumnus of Free Will Baptist Bible College and the University of Central Arkansas. He leads Sunday School leadership and pastoral counseling seminars for churches and church organizations.

The Importance of

KEEP RECORDS

Churches are notorious for being poor record keepers. Am I suggesting this is true of every congregation? No. Do I have a foundation for making such a statement? Yes.

I served as an association clerk on state and national levels. Through the years I experienced the frustration of trying to gather statistical data from local churches on our annual denominational report forms. On those occasions when I attempted to get a more complete report from a church clerk, I frequently encountered the same response—"We don't keep records with that information."

As the title suggests, keeping records is important. I'll try to explain by asking a series of questions.



KEEPING RECORDS

By Keith Burden

Is there a biblical basis for keeping accurate records?

In a word, yes! Several scriptural examples illustrate the importance of keeping good records.

In the book of Numbers the Lord ordered two numberings of the men of war in Israel. The purpose for the first census was to organize Israel's military and assign religious duties. The second census was ordered to prepare Israel for the campaign to occupy Canaan and would serve as a basis for dividing the land among the various tribes. Moses found this information to be critical for bringing order and direction to the nation.

Another example is found in the book of Ezra, chapter 2. Ezra, the priest and scribe who led a group of deportees back to their homeland from Babylon, assisted in rebuilding the temple and restoring worship there. Because certain individuals were unable to produce appropriate documentation and valid family records, they were disqualified from ministering as priests (Ezra 2:59, 62). It was an unfortunate outcome that might have been avoided had proper records been kept.

In the book of Esther we read an intriguing story about a beautiful young Jewess, an assassination plot against the king, and a conspiracy to exterminate all of the Jews in the Persian Empire. Because certain events were recorded in the book of the chronicles, the sinister plot against the Jews unraveled and God's people were spared annihilation. In all probability, this story would have had a much different outcome if accurate records had not been kept.

These biblical events convincingly illustrate the importance of keeping and maintaining complete records. There is nothing in scripture that would substantiate any claim that careful record keeping is anything less than prudent and profitable. God is a God of order and detail. Keeping and maintaining orderly records in the church reflects His character and nature.



What are some reasons for keeping records?

First, it makes good sense to keep records. It is impossible to remember everything. Even the sharpest mind is subject to information overload. Someone said, "It's better to have a short pencil than a long memory."

Second, keeping good records helps us do a better job, particularly in ministry. Without accurate records it is difficult to follow up on prospects or absentees in Sunday School or worship services. Unless we have sufficient data, it is nearly impossible to formulate realistic budgets or measure church progress numerically or financially. Complete records eliminate guesswork when it

Fourth, records preserve valuable historical data. Future generations will have no appreciation for the rich heritage of your church unless someone chronicles its history. It is easier to envision the future when you have a correct understanding of the past.

What are some important issues to consider when it comes to keeping records?

Start by taking steps to protect and preserve the records you now have. Old church minutes, financial records and legal documents should be catalogued, labeled and stored in a safe place. Membership information, Sunday School records and outreach data need

budget. Up-to-date records are vital to Sunday School outreach. Accurate membership information is a valuable tool for the nominating or personnel committee. Maintaining complete business meeting minutes enables members to make more informed decisions.

So what's the big deal?

Incomplete or incorrect records can be costly, and in some cases, even deadly. Experts claim American businesses annually lose at least \$200 million from misfilings, bookkeeping errors and incorrect phone messages. Pharmacists estimate there is a death a day because of incorrect medications or doses resulting from illegible handwriting.

Without accurate records it is difficult to follow up on prospects or absentees in Sunday School or worship services. Unless we have sufficient data, it is nearly impossible to formulate realistic budgets or measure church progress numerically or financially.

comes to setting goals and projecting growth.

Third, there are legal implications related to having detailed records. Those individuals who claim charitable contributions on their tax returns must be able to substantiate those claims with official records from the church. It may be necessary to produce written documentation if it becomes necessary to discipline vocational staff, volunteer workers or church members. Minutes of business meetings have been subpoenaed by the courts in lawsuits involving local churches. From a liability standpoint, a church can ill afford to neglect this vital practice.

to be formatted, organized and made accessible. This can be done using a standard filing system (i.e. file cabinet) or a computer database.

Steps should be taken to identify those individuals responsible for keeping and maintaining church records; never assume it is being done. Church clerks, treasurers, secretaries and others should be made aware of their responsibility in this area and given necessary resources and materials to perform this vital function.

Use church records to minister more effectively. Detailed statistical data can be of tremendous benefit to the finance committee as they prepare the church

The Lord's work is the most important business on earth. Let's give it our best effort... for the record! ■



About the Writer:
Reverend Keith Burden serves as executive secretary for the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

A killer stalked the busy wife and mother.
He knew where she lived.

Sneak Attack!

By Rebecca Deel

rheumatology

0000000000

sjögren's syndrome

shelter of His wings

Hidden deep in the grass, he waited. When his chance came, he leaped from cover, struck hard and dived back into the shadows. He stalked from darkness for three years. His attacks grew bolder. He began leaving tracks. He didn't care.

Facing the Attacker

At 2:00 p.m. on April 15, 2002, we unmasked the stalker. My doctor identified him by name—Sjögren's (SHOW-grins) syndrome, an autoimmune disorder in which white blood cells attack moisture-producing

glands. A cousin to Lupus, the disease marks its stronghold in my body with noticeable fatigue and joint pain.

Still reeling from the first blow, my new rheumatologist completed the one-two punch a week later by adding a connective-tissue disorder to the diagnosis. My world leaped off its axis.

Facing Death

Somewhere near the end of that two-hour medical consultation, the doctor confidently informed me I would live to be around 70 years old. Seventy? I was already past the halfway point!

How could this happen to me? After all, I've been a Christian over 30 years and followed the Lord's guidance in decisions. I married a dedicated Christian man. We are raising two precious boys in a Christ-centered home. I even teach at a Christian college and carry respon-

purpose in life is to glorify God. He wants people to recognize the Potter in the clay.

Everybody faces storms. The disciples in Matthew 8 faced a vicious, life-stealing storm. In the midst of that violent gale, Jesus calmed their fears. He never promised a life free of boat-rocking problems. But He did pledge to be my Fortress, Shield and Defender in the middle of calamities. I can hide in the shelter of His wings.

Facing Discipline

The Christian life is one of discipline. Paul exhorted followers of Jesus in I Corinthians 9 to run the course with diligence and finish well. Those involved in sports know athletics are no cakewalk.

My rheumatologist smirked as he told me to stay out of the sun, rest fre-

God used him to remind me that I'm not the Lone Ranger. The battle is not mine. It is the Lord's. And ultimately, the battle ends in victory.

God is in control. The stalker blindsided me, but he didn't catch my Defender unaware. The Lord prepared the path before my feet kicked up the first dust cloud. A faithful colleague at work waited in the wings, ready to help carry my heavy responsibilities. Precise physical regimen restored mobility and strength. Proper diet boosted energy and controlled pain.

What's Next?

God is sovereign. Some prayers get a positive response. Others get a negative answer. Could God heal me? Yes. Will He? Perhaps. Perhaps not. He didn't remove Paul's thorn in the flesh—just gave him grace to cope.

In the midst of that violent gale, Jesus calmed their fears. He never promised a life free of boat-rocking problems. But He did pledge to be my Fortress, Shield and Defender in the middle of calamities. I can hide in the shelter of His wings.

sibilities in my local church. Why me? I felt like Hezekiah before God healed him—cheated of years and time with future grandchildren.

Facing Life

After I assaulted Heaven with questions for days, the Lord quietly reminded me of a few things.

Every person is going to die. He nudged my battered spirit to review Hebrews 9:27. Every man has an unbreakable appointment with death. Some encounter it suddenly. Others are gifted with foreknowledge. God already knows the time and date. He's not surprised when one of His steps into Heaven.

Disease is not a punishment from God. The human body begins to die at birth. According to Job 14:1, man's years are few and full of trouble. In Job's case, the Lord allowed illness for testing. Our

quently and swim. Since I hate being hot and sweaty, playing in the shade was no hardship.

Resting frequently presented more of a challenge. My goal to be Supermom required slight alterations with two young boys to raise, a full-time job to perform, a home to maintain and church responsibilities to fulfill. Reinstating the cleaning draft looked more and more promising.

The problem came as I remembered from college physical education days my knee-knocking fear of drowning. The good doctor paled when informed that I preferred kicking and punching in karate class to floundering and drowning in a pool.

Discipline took center stage as new rules for life crowded an already full landscape. After researching my ailments, my karate instructor said, "We can deal with this. You can deal with this. Everybody has to fight something."

I no longer ask why. The challenge for me is taking the next step. Every day is a battle to help my body stay in balance. The church family laughs with me when my offertories include some unexpected clunkers. My immediate family knows not to trust me with china or a full pitcher. My karate instructor sympathizes when I hurt, but stubbornly insists that I keep moving toward the next belt rank.

And my heavenly Father provides a new battle plan for each day. His first-aid kit includes an abundance of grace, peace, strength and a sense of humor to sail the stormy seas. ■



About the Writer:
Dr. Rebecca Deel teaches in the business department at Free Will Baptist Bible College. She serves as pianist at Fellowship Free Will Baptist Church in Antioch, Tennessee.

**You can live longer and better.
Don't get trapped in a retirement of boredom.**



The Shelf

By Roger Reeds

Did you know that people are trying to live longer? People have always searched for longevity. Most of us know the story of Ponce de Leon. He probably drank more water than anyone in history.

Ponce de Leon came to America with Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1493. He returned to the new world in 1508 and conquered Puerto Rico. Inhabitants there told him about an island that supposedly had a magical fountain. Anyone who drank from this fountain would have his youth restored.

Ponce de Leon set forth to find this fountain. He discovered a long strip of land and called it Florida. He went across Florida drinking from every spring. He never found the magical fountain of youth. Mankind has been looking for the fountain of youth ever since.

Not much troubles the human heart more than aging. Our heavenly Father can help us drink from the fountain of youth if we allow Him.



Life of Purity

First, we must have a clean heart. The psalmist prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Most of us know about David's involvement with Bathsheba. Psalm 51 tells us that David took steps to make things right with God. John said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The next step is to have a clean mind. Isaiah wrote, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

**When Moses was 80,
God called him
for special service.
The man made excuses
explaining why he was not
qualified for service.
Not once did he mention
old age.**

One characteristic about the computer is if you put garbage in, you get garbage out. The same thing can be said of the mind.

The third step is to have clean hands. The psalmist said, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul into vanity nor sworn deceitfully." These three factors help us stay young—clean hearts, clean minds, clean hands.

Life of Pursuit

If we are to remain young in our hearts and bodies, we must be *invigorated*. Our bones may be arthritic, our eyesight dim and our walk slower, but if we keep our enthusiasm for life, we can be young at 90.

Luke 2:25–38 tells of two elderly people who retained their enthusiasm for the Lord and their health. One was Simeon who, tradition states, was 113 years old. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. He came to the temple when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple. Simeon took the child in his arms and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant die in peace, according to thy word."

The other elderly person was Anna. She came upon the scene just as Simeon was leaving. She was 84 years old and spent her life in fasting and prayer. When she saw the baby Jesus, she gave thanks to the Lord. She recognized Him as her Redeemer and told all Jerusalem about Him.

If we are to remain young in our hearts and bodies, we must be *involved*. One man past his 70th birthday decided to plant an apple tree in his back yard. His pessimistic neighbor the same age asked, "Why are you planting that tree? As old as you are, you will never live long enough to eat any apples from it."

The enthusiastic neighbor looked up and said, "You may be right. I may never eat any apples from this tree. Tomorrow is coming and someone else who likes apples is going to eat the apples from this tree I am planting."

A Southern Baptist evangelist preached beyond the age of 100. When he was 105 years old, he planned a crusade in Japan. Asked how he had lived so long, he said, "I honored my father and my mother. I try to take care of my body. I get proper rest. I try to put my Lord first." The key is one must stay involved. It will help keep us young.

Life of Purpose

One day the president of Stanford University drove down a long, hot California highway when he passed a hobo. He stopped the car and asked, "Say, friend, would you like a ride?"

The hobo replied, "No thanks. Since I ain't going nowhere I ain't in any hurry to get there."

Did you know that Moses was 80 when he found his purpose in life? He fled from



Egypt at age 40. He lived in Midian 40 years. When Moses was 80, God called him for special service. The man made excuses explaining why he was not qualified for service. Not once did he mention old age. He spent the next 40 years fulfilling God's purpose. Many people have succeeded in their later years:

Noah Webster wrote his monumental dictionary after age 70.

Churches ought to look in the direction of older men because they can bring so much experience to congregational life.

Benjamin Franklin went to France in the service of his country when he was 78.

Johann Strauss composed some of his more serious music at 80.

Tennyson wrote "Crossing the Bar" when he was 80.

George Bernard Shaw wrote some of his more famous plays after he was 80.

Thomas Edison still worked on new inventions well into his 80s.

Michelangelo wrote poetry and designed buildings at 89. He painted the Sistine Chapel ceiling when he was nearly 90.

Several key factors should accompany our pursuit. One is to spend time in prayer. Tennyson said, "More things are wrought by prayer than this whole world dreams of."

Fanny Crosby wrote thousands of hymns. She never attempted to write one without first kneeling in prayer. She must have spent considerable time in prayer in order to pen than many hymns.

One pastor served his church 30 years. At 60 he thought he should resign and turn the church over to a younger man. He went to his knees to determine the Lord's will in the matter and became convinced God would have him stay. He stayed another 30 years, well past his 90th birthday.

Another primary factor is to make *Heaven our final goal*. Abraham served God faithfully and lived 175 years. He was called to leave his hometown of Ur of Chaldees. Hebrews 11:10 speaks of Abraham's ultimate goal. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

The title of this article is "The Shelf." Some preachers put themselves on the shelf too early in life. They retire when they should serve for many years. Many churches put preachers on the shelf. The demand today is for young men. As a result, churches do not contact older preachers and reject their resumes.

No preacher should retire when so many churches need pastors. The call to preach is a call for life. Churches ought to look in the direction of older men because they can bring so much experience to congregational life. When more churches call older men to their pulpits, we will see fewer churches without pastors.

The next time your church needs a pastor, look on the shelf to see who is there. You may be surprised to find a capable pastor ready to serve. ■



About the Writer: Dr. Roger C. Reeds retired in December 1993 after 32 years as general director of the Sunday School and Church Training Department. He pastors Trinity Free Will Baptist Church in Goodlettsville, Tennessee. Dr. Reeds has been preaching 54 years.

Marilyn Pritchard Ends 19 Years at Contact

ANTIOCH, TN—*Contact* editorial assistant Marilyn Pritchard concluded 19 years with the magazine in August, according to Jack Williams, editor. Miss Pritchard joined the *Contact* staff in 1984 after returning from Ivory Coast, West Africa, where she served a year as a volunteer missionary aide.

Williams said, "Marilyn's departure leaves a big hole in the Executive Office staff regarding publication of *Contact* magazine. The decision to phase out the editorial assistant position was strictly a matter of economics. Marilyn is the best I know at magazine production and convention management. We're going to miss her skills and can-do attitude."

During her tenure with *Contact*, she did layout and design for 228 consecutive issues keying in articles, news items and columns for 7,296 pages while also serving as proof reader and frequent writer.

An Illinois native with a professional grasp of journalism, Marilyn wrote 37 articles for the magazine. Her first, a two-page spread titled "Sunshine and a Cheerful Heart," was published in 1981 while she worked as cashier at Free Will Baptist Bible College. Her last article, "Why Me, Lord?" was printed in the October 1998 issue.

While most of her articles were short (two to five paragraphs long), she also wrote 11 convention previews (1987–1998). Some of them stretched eight pages filled with statistics, personality sketches and insights about the host convention city.

Marilyn's duties included more than her job description. Her work with the annual Free Will Baptist national convention was a series of deadlines. She prepared the 200-page *Digest of Reports* for press within a 20-day framework each May/June. She did layout, design and typesetting for the 32-page convention program.

Marilyn served 16 years as office manager at the national convention. During each five-day whirlwind, she published a daily newspaper, typed reports for committees and printed more than 50,000 pages of materials for delegates.

Prior to each convention, she designed what became known as "the convention bible" for distribution to hotels, convention centers, convention bureaus, vendors and staff personnel. The convention



bible was 75 pages long—a 25-page, single-spaced set-up chart, plus 50 function sheets detailing every aspect of meeting arrangements from seating and security to menus and audio visual specifications.

Her annual duties included preparing the 500-page *Free Will Baptist Yearbook* for press and publishing the 32-page *Denominational Digest* for distribution at state associations.

Contact editor Jack Williams said, "Marilyn routinely prepared more than 1,000 pages of data for press each year in addition to news releases, letters and whatever else I pushed her way. She's one in a million. I'm grateful for her contribution to the work of the Executive Office. She made the rest of us look good."

Marilyn Pritchard is a 1974 *cum laude* graduate of Free Will Baptist Bible College. She worked nine years at the college before coming to *Contact*. She was a free-lance editor and proof reader who edited five books prior to her service in Africa. Her future plans at press time were open.



Missouri Adopts \$525,000 Budget

LEBANON, MO—When the three-day Missouri State Association ended, delegates drove home knowing they had adopted a \$525,000 budget for state and national outreach.

Clerk Rick Dement said funds would be allocated: State ministries (64%), National ministries (36%).

The June 2-4 association met at Cowan Civic Center in Lebanon. Moderator Richard Robinson led the 90th annual session. Officials reported 416 who registered, including 89 ministers, 111 lay delegates and 19 deacons.

Four ministers preached sermons developing the association theme, "Guarding Our Heritage." Pastor Max Courtney (New Life FWB Church, Licking), Pastor Jim Williams (Carthage FWB Church), State Home Missions director Dale Skiles and FWB executive secretary Keith Burden spoke.

Nathan Ruble, Missouri executive secretary, announced his retirement for August 29, 2004. The state General Board will select his successor. Ruble was elected to his position in 1992. He has served in the state as a pastor and executive secretary since 1973.

The Missouri Women Active for Christ conducted their one-day meeting Monday, June 2.

The 2004 state association will meet June 7-9 in Springfield.

Theological Commission Publishes *Integrity II*

NASHVILLE, TN—The second volume of *Integrity, A Journal of Christian Thought*, has been published by the Commission for Theological Integrity, according to Leroy Forlines, commission chairman. The first volume was printed in 2000.

Integrity features articles and other items by some of the Free Will Baptist denomination's most prominent thinkers and writers. The content includes material concerning issues important to Christians in general and ministers in particular.

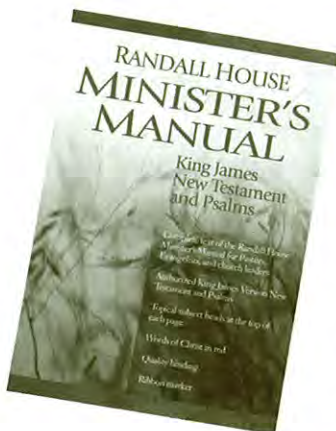
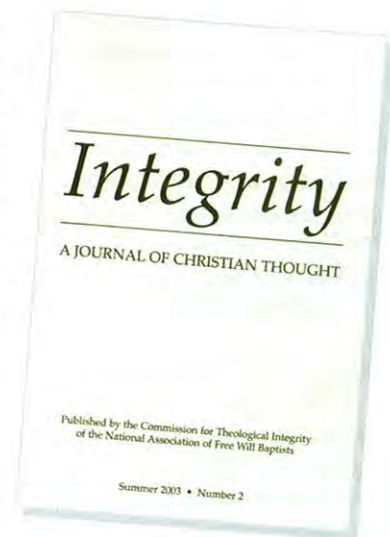
Copies of *Integrity (II)* will be mailed to pastors and denominational leaders. The

publication is a joint venture of the Commission for Theological Integrity, Free Will Baptist Bible College, Hillsdale FWB College and Randall House Publications.

Dr. Paul Harrison served as editor-in-chief for the second issue; Dr. Robert Picirilli served as associate editor.

Extra copies of *Integrity* may be ordered for \$6.00 each from the Commission for Theological Integrity. Send order request to:

Leroy Forlines
3606 West End Avenue
Nashville, TN 37205



New Randall House Minister's Manual and New Testament

NASHVILLE, TN—Randall House is pleased to announce the December release of their new *Minister's Manual New Testament* (\$17.99). This exciting new product combines the complete text of the *Free Will Baptist Minister's Manual* with the authorized King James Version New Testament and Psalms, bound in genuine leather.



● Gahanna

Ohio Re-elects Robert Prichard

GAHANNA, OH—Delegates to Ohio's 65th annual state association elected Cleveland pastor Robert Prichard to his 10th term as moderator, according to clerk Mike Stokes. Reverend Prichard led business sessions during the June 27–28 meeting at Gahanna FWB Church.

Some 350 people registered for the event, including 61 ministers, 37 lay delegates and 10 deacons. Delegates adopted a \$510,000 state budget to be allocated: State Office (47%),

National Association (30%), State Missions (15%), Ohio Pastors Retirement (5%) and State Youth (3%).

In other action, delegates voted to change the state constitution to reflect an increase in national representation fees. Fees rose from \$65 per church to \$125.

The state association theme, "Tying Up Loose Ends," was developed by three visiting ministers: Ron Hunter (Randall House director), Keith Burden (executive secretary) and Matt Pinson (Free Will Baptist Bible College president).

The 2004 state association will meet June 25–26 at Gahanna FWB Church in Gahanna.

Directory Update

Georgia

Tim Hutchinson to New Salem Church, Colquitt from Marvin Chapel Church, Marianna, FL

Mike Edwards to First Church, Jesup from First Bible Church, New Castle, IN

Mitch Griffin to First Church, Thomaston from Cool Springs Church, Norman Park

Wayne Martin to Christian Hill Church, Rochelle

Teddy Burch to Sunny Side Church, Pearson

David Womack to Bellview Church, Colquitt from Christian Home Church, Blountstown, FL

Fred Hersey to First Church, Blakely

Walter Daniels to Macedonia Church, Colquitt from Thompson Church, Colquitt

Roy Woods to Surrency Church, Surrency from Mt. Ararat Church, Eastman

Michigan

Milford Byrd to Community Church, Ypsilanti

North Carolina

Ted Cole III to Bethel Church, Gastonia

Brian Bird to Canton Church, Canton from Sunrise Church, Emporia, KS

Mark Hope to Center Grove Church, Waxhaw from Beacon Church, Farmville

Brian Phillips to Emmanuel Church, Washington

Robert Harris to Harriett Memorial Church, Forest City

Ray Cribb to Maple Street Church, Rockingham

Greg Bevan to Maranatha Church, Greenville from Stafford Church, Stafford, VA

Tom McFatter to Nowling Chapel Church, Morganton from Oak Grove Church, Elm City

B. L. Efird to Oak Grove Church, Elm City

Tennessee

Jeff Davis to Fellowship Church, Kingsport from Second Church, Ashland, KY

Bud Hill to First Church, Springfield ■

Foundation Delivers Endowment Gifts

ANTIOCH, TN—The Free Will Baptist Foundation delivered more than \$42,000 in endowment gifts to various Free Will Baptist ministries for the period ending June 30, 2003. The gifts came from endowment funds managed by the Foundation, according to William Evans, director.

For the first six months of 2003, these gifts were delivered to the following ministries:

Foreign Missions	\$ 15,547.37
State and Local Ministries	\$ 8,395.08
Free Will Baptist Bible College	\$ 4,721.54
Home Missions	\$ 3,718.70
Board of Retirement	\$ 2,398.37
Master's Men	\$ 2,332.63
California Christian College	\$ 1,498.47
The Together Way	\$ 1,349.41
Hillsdale FWB College	\$ 1,140.85
Contact Magazine	\$ 473.22
Seminary of the Cross	\$ 463.75
WNAC	\$ 385.05
International Fellowship of FWB	\$ 208.33
FWB Foundation	\$ 115.64
FWB Family Ministries	\$ 103.31
National Commissions	\$ 36.92
Total	\$ 42,888.64

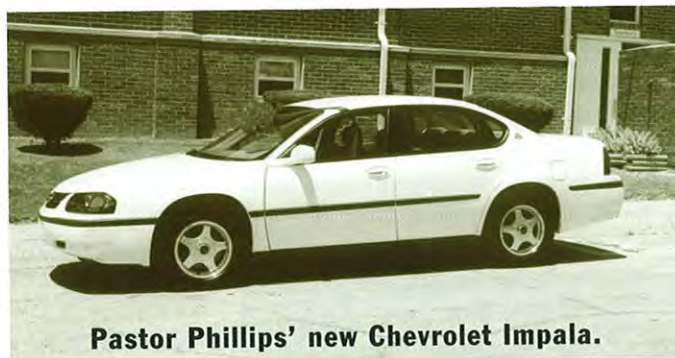
Endowments are permanent gifts invested so that income is available for ministry. These gifts continue to give year after year. The Foundation manages gifts for every national agency and will accept gifts to these endowments in any amount. For information about endowments, please contact the Foundation at 877-336-7575.

In the last eight years alone, the Foundation has delivered over \$650,000 to denominational ministries.

Missouri Church Honors Pastor Wayne Phillips



Wayne and Ann Phillips



Pastor Phillips' new Chevrolet Impala.

PARK HILLS, MO—Members of Fellowship FWB Church in Park Hills surprised Pastor Wayne Phillips with the keys to a 2003 Chevrolet Impala on Sunday morning, June 29. Phillips has completed 25 years as pastor of the Missouri congregation.

The 60-year-old North Carolina native was also handed a Book of Memories containing cards, letters and well wishes from the church family. During his quarter-century with the church, Phillips led three building programs, secured a full-time youth pastor and saw annual offerings rise from \$72,000 in 1978 to \$263,000 in 2002.

Reverend Phillips has served the congregation longer than any other pastor, according to Betty M. Reeves who wrote a biographical summary of Phillips' life and ministry. The Fellowship FWB Church organized in 1946.

During the morning celebration activities, a video prepared by Mark Heflin and Gary Phillips allowed the congregation to see the Phillips family grow up and grow older. After the reading of "In the Right Path" (the biography by Betty Reeves), Pastor Phillips preached from Joshua 1:8.

Wayne Phillips was converted at age 15 and baptized in a farm pond. He enrolled at Free Will Baptist

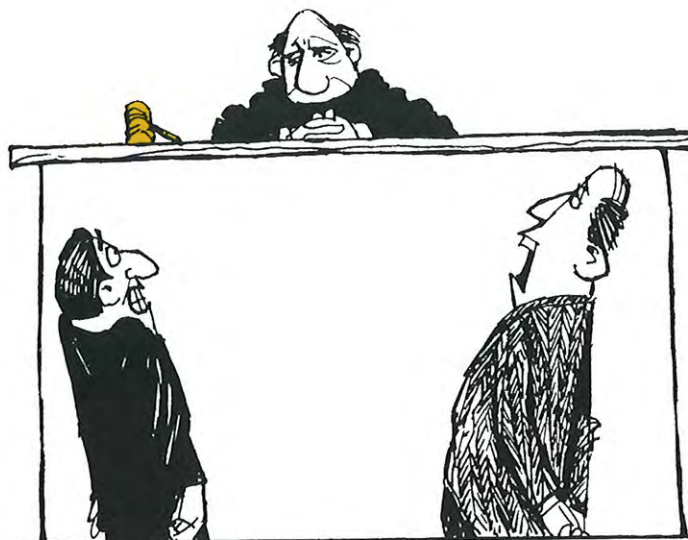
Bible College in 1961 and was ordained to preach in 1963.

Brother Phillips began his pastoral ministry at First FWB Church in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, in 1964. He later pastored in Micro, NC, Indianapolis, IN, and Enterprise, AL, before accepting the call to Fellowship FWB Church in Missouri in 1978.

Wayne and Ann Phillips were married in 1964 and have two adult sons, Gary and Mark. ■

BEYOND BELIEF

BEFORE ENTERING A PLEA, MY CLIENT
WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THE COURT'S POSITION
ON "LOVE THE SINNER, HATE THE SIN."



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Arkansas: First FWB Church in North Little Rock celebrated 50 years of service to the community with a four-day event September 11-14, according to Pastor **Mark Stripling**. The church organized in August 1953 in the home of **Chester Cotton**. Several former pastors were asked to speak: **Alton Loveless**, **Fred Warner**, **Ben Scott** and **Jackie Brown**.



Breaking Ground in Jonesboro

Members of **Faith FWB Church** in Jonesboro broke ground June 1 on a 10,200-square-foot multipurpose family life center. Deacons, trustees and other leaders placed silver spades in the ground to launch the project. **Kenneth Winningham** pastors.

Georgia: Zion Hill FWB Church in Millwood approved plans to build a 300-seat sanctuary this spring, according to Pastor **Keith Lloyd**. The congregation broke ground Easter Sunday with a record 149 people present. In the past seven years the church secured its first full-time pastor, built a parsonage, hired a youth minister, built a Sunday School wing and paved the parking lot.

Illinois: Vacation Bible School at Pleasant View FWB Church in Walnut Hill averaged 45 youth with six professions of faith. Deacon **James Eubanks** was honored with a plaque for serving 27 years. **David Burgess** pastors.

Pastor **Ernie Lewis** welcomed eight new members to **Blue Point FWB Church** in Cisne.

Forty people participated in a four-mile missions walk-a-thon at **Waltonville FWB Church** in Waltonville. Pastor **Mike Neuman** said the walkers who ranged in

age from 3 to 83 raised \$1,422 for the Illinois Regional Support Plan.

Kansas: Pastor **Clifford Ball** reports a growing membership of 64 at **Bethel FWB Church** in Kansas City. Members have renovated the property inside and outside. The first man called to preach from the church, **A. J. Wordon**, was ordained in July. Several youth attended the national convention in Tampa, FL. The church also reports 22 church youth at camp with five rededications and two professions of faith.

Mississippi: Bethlehem FWB Church in Pontotoc reports four conversions. Pastor **Jack Whitley** never made it to the pulpit May 18; the altar filled with people praying and weeping before he opened his Bible to preach.

A day-long celebration greeted members at **Lovewell FWB Church** in Richton as they dedicated their new fellowship hall this spring. Pastor **Bruce Walley** says attendance has climbed from 20 to an average of 45.

Missouri: Pastor **Dale Cochran** baptized four converts at **Hannibal FWB Church** in Hannibal.

Members of **Black Oak FWB Church** in Marshfield dedicated an addition to their sanctuary and other renovations in June. Executive secretary **Nathan Ruble** delivered the afternoon message. Pastor **Jack Day**, who has led the congregation 35 years, said 103 people attended the morning worship service.

Ever met a happy pastor? Call **Richard Robinson** who leads **First FWB Church** in Joplin. The church just celebrated their Golden Jubilee anniversary in the community and dedicated a 6,500-square-foot family center. The new center includes eight classrooms, a kitchen and fellowship/sports area.

North Carolina: Calvary FWB Church in Jacksonville moved into new facilities, according to Pastor **Henry Potter**. The

250-seat auditorium includes burgundy-finished pews and beams, new pulpit furniture and a congregation of thankful members.

The building project at **Friendship FWB Church** in Pink Hill was completed in less than four months at a cost of \$130,000. Pastor **Don Craft** said the 106'x50' sanctuary will seat 350 people. Some 166 worshipers joined in the first service in the new facility. The church began in a tent on two acres in the 1970s.

Retired FWB minister **George C. Lee** published a songbook this summer that includes 70 family photos. The 8½"x11" book includes 125 songs he wrote. The books were going fast at press time, so if you want one, contact Brother Lee as soon as possible. The price per book is \$10, plus \$2 shipping. Send orders to Reverend George C. Lee, 303 Veronica Avenue, Goldsboro, NC 27534. Call him at 919-734-7670, or e-mail him: GLEE63@NC.rr.com.

South Carolina: Faith FWB Church in Darlington celebrated 30 years of service in a special homecoming event this year. Executive secretary **Mike Jones** preached the homecoming message. **Cyrus Shoffner** pastors.

They believe in heavy offerings at **Fairview FWB Church** in Spartanburg. Pastor **Tim Hackett** says the Vacation Bible School collected 334,500 pennies in an effort to boost the building fund.

Southside FWB Church in Darlington logged 50 years of service, according to Pastor **Leroy Lowery**. The history of the church was presented in Sunday School. The family of founding pastor **Clarence Lambert** received a plaque in his honor.

Tennessee: Reverend **Bud Hill** came out of retirement to lead **First FWB Church** in Springfield. The first few weeks resulted in six conversions, five rededications, eight baptisms and 10 new members. Hill also teaches at **Pleasant View Christian School** in addition to his pastoral duties. ■

Just What He's Looking For

By Kenneth Akers, General Director

As we read through the Bible there is one constant—people are searching for Jesus. The truth is that many of them did not know it. In the Old Testament, they looked for the coming of the Messiah. In the New Testament, people constantly tried to find and see Jesus. I don't think people today are any different.

Men live in a world that offers them many things to draw their attention. James 4:4 tells us that to be friends with the world is to be at enmity with God. Like I said, people are looking for Jesus but don't know it.

Temptation Traps

Many men will turn to sex or pornography to fill that void in their lives. With internet pornography becoming the largest single addiction today, it is obvious there is a need to reach out to men even more. Why are men turning to the internet? Could it be we as churches are not providing enough alternatives? Could it be we don't have enough opportunities for involvement?

There are a few things I have learned about men's ministry. Men need to be challenged and motivated. I realize that some men will slip no matter what. But what about those we can help?

Another temptation for men today is one that has been around for years. Alcohol has been and will probably always be where men turn when they need to fill that emptiness. Proverbs 20:1 tells us whoever is deceived by wine or strong drink is not wise. Proverbs 23 says those who turn to alcohol will have nothing but trouble.

Misplaced Priorities

Still others turn to their jobs or wealth. Many men feel complete when they have *stuff*. Mark 8:36 asks what would we profit if we gained the whole world but lost our souls? When men put

wealth or possessions above God and family, everyone loses. Many men will work that extra job, overtime or whatever they need to because they think this is what makes their family happy. The truth is their family, their church and the men themselves lose.

Some men believe that all they have to do is go to church and go through the motions. Luke 18 tells about the Pharisee and the publican. This story explains that there is more to being a Christian than going through the motions.

We Can Help

Master's Men has been working for years with local churches, district and state associations, other national departments and more in order to provide training, fellowship and opportunities for our men. Through sports fellowship we offer men opportunities to be with other Christian men in an atmosphere that will draw them closer to Jesus. Through retreats and rallies we provide encouragement through the sharing of God's Word. By using our *Direction Bible Studies* we help get in touch with men and share what God has to say about topics and temptations men face every day.

You have just what every man is looking for: Jesus. Can Master's Men help you reach them? We think we can. For more information about Master's Men and how we can help, go to our website at www.nafwb.org/mm or call us toll-free 1-877-767-8039. We want to help you help your men. ■



Master's Men

Free Will Baptist
Men's Ministry

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

- Men need to be challenged and motivated.
- When men put wealth and possessions above God and family, everyone loses.
- Master's Men has been working for years to provide training, fellowship and opportunities for our men.



What Is It Worth?

By Marjorie Workman, Executive Secretary-Treasurer

Reading. I can't imagine what it would be like to be illiterate today. Yet 10 million children struggle with learning to read. We take for granted simple things like reading a book to our grandchildren, following instructions for a recipe or navigating a

trip via a road map. But, for those with reading difficulties, these are daunting tasks.

I well remember learning to read. Growing up in rural America following World War II, my family did not own many books. However, each of us had our own personal Bible. My Bible became my textbook for reading. I would pour over scripture trying to make sense out of my mispronunciations and often-skipped words. It's a wonder I don't use thou's and thy's in my conversations today.

I was an avid reader in school. I enjoyed reading aloud in class, and I grew very impatient with classmates who stumbled along taking forever to read their portion. Book quotas were never a challenge for me—I always read more.

Most children will learn to read. But according to research from NICHD's Program in Learning Disabilities, 20–40% of children who do not receive special help cannot master the task of reading well. Research shows that story telling and reading to children in pre-kindergarten years increases reading proficiency. Various types of reading material in the home such as books, newspapers, magazines and encyclopedias help raise the reading level. Those who read for fun on their own time read well and score higher on tests such as math and general knowledge.

Unfortunately, according to the U.S. Department of Education, the numbers are dropping for 12th graders who read for fun on their own time. Also, children who watch four or more hours of television per day have poorer reading skills, according to the Center for Media Education.

Using these studies, I wonder if we could make an analogy to our denominational proficiency. How well would we score on missions knowledge? Do we know what is happening on Free Will Baptist college campuses? Are we knowledgeable about competitive activities for our youth? Do we know the purpose of WNAC and Master's Men?

Are we aware who gets funds from "The Rest of the Family Offering?" How much do we know about the ministries of our children's homes?

By providing our family (and church family) with Free Will Baptist reading materials such as *CoLaborer*, *Contact*, *Aim*, *Heartbeat* and our college publications, we increase their understanding of our denomination. Missionary newsletters arriving frequently by mail or email also aid in promoting knowledge about missions.

For women, *CoLaborer* is especially designed for you. It is written by Free Will Baptist women and is the only Free Will Baptist magazine for women. Each issue includes inspiring articles, devotional thoughts, features and ideas for women's meetings, and reports of God at work in the world. It keeps upcoming events announced well in advance in order to provide opportunities for women to come together for worship and fellowship.

The magazine helps keep women connected who share a common purpose—providing opportunities for women to understand and fulfill the Great Commission through their responsibilities in the family, in the church, in the community and around the world.

Women who read Christian literature will grow. Pastors can assist in this spiritual growth by including in their church budgets the cost of *CoLaborer* for the women. For less than a dollar a month for each woman, a bundle plan can be added to the church's literature budget.

Reading material that is important to parents will have an impact on their children. Families can add *CoLaborer* and *Contact* magazines to the family budget. Subscribe online at www.nafwb.org/wnac or call 877-767-7662. Help make reading fun and informative in the family. Increase denominational loyalty. Read! ■

WNAC
WOMEN
NATIONALLY
ACTIVE FOR
CHRIST

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

- Various types of reading material in the home such as books, newspapers, magazines and encyclopedias help raise the reading level of children.
- Reading material that is important to parents will have an impact on their children.
- *CoLaborer* is especially designed with Free Will Baptist women in mind.

An Open Letter to Participants

By William Evans, General Director

Earnings, or the lack thereof, for the last 18 months were a reminder that retirement funding is a long-term objective. Thank you for holding steady during these difficult economic hurdles. Those of you who remained active in the plan were rewarded.

Earnings for the first period of 2003 are:

Plan 1	—	19.50%
Plan 2	—	19.25%
Plan 3	—	19.00%

This certainly does not mean that we will not experience other losses in the future. Both the U.S. economy and world economies as a whole are still uncertain. The good news is the major fear associated with Iraq did not materialize. Signs generally point toward a strengthening business outlook, interest rates have remained at almost unthinkable lows and there are signs of an economic upturn in Japan. However, any of these areas could turn negative again and there are no financial assurances going forward.

Those who took settlement missed this most recent recovery. They avoided the risk of further lows. Those over age 62 or near their retirement should always *consider* possible settlement in really unstable economic times. (Please note I did not say you should take a settlement.) To weigh a settlement decision each individual should consider the overall economic condition, contribution levels and other investments.

Those who are a few years away from retirement or age 62 should consider their options, then act accordingly. Those with five or more years to a planned retirement will almost always fare better by remaining calm and focused on the long range goal.

What should you as a participant do now?

First, do not assume that the earnings of this period will be duplicated in the next period. Past experience is no guarantee of future earnings.

Second, rest assured the investment policy of our department remains intact. This means we continue to have a conservative value-oriented approach. Actual investments, while honoring our church covenant, are well diversified over both sectors and companies as well as large and small capitalized companies.

Third, feel free to contact our office concerning questions. It was encouraging that many participants called during the last six months to discuss their specific circumstances. The mass communications we make to plan participants must be general in nature. Therefore, we encourage individuals to use our toll-free number to discuss personal needs and questions relating to your account, such as settlements or major changes in deposits or outside options.

Fourth, never forget that our plan is established and operated to benefit you. That is not to imply you should be blindly loyal to this plan but you should check with us before making major decisions concerning your account. It is our goal to never harm you financially. Some of the major benefits of our plan, especially for ministers are:

- **tax-sheltered deposits,**
- **self-employment tax shelter,**
- **tax-free housing allowance at settlement (for those who qualify),**
- **broad diversification in investment,**
- **portability.**

Fifth, consider our settlement options before you make a firm decision. Our options are varied enough to meet most every need and have a guaranteed earnings rate higher than most insurance companies presently offer.

Sixth, if you can reasonably do so, increase the amount being deposited into your account. It isn't necessarily wise to make larger lump sum deposits but regular deposits over the long haul produce better average results. This dollar cost averaging procedure is desirable since earnings are uncertain and our need for retirement funds at some point in the future is almost guaranteed.

If you are not presently a participant in our plan, now is the best time to join. Remember, there are three things that determine the value of your retirement account—deposits, earnings rate and time, and time is the most important. ■



RETIREMENT
AND
INSURANCE

- The Board of Retirement continues to have a conservative value-oriented approach to investment.
- Investments, while honoring the Free Will Baptist church covenant, are well diversified over both sectors and companies as well as large and small capitalized companies.

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

Prayer Summit 2004

By Judy Lytle, Prayer Summit Coordinator

**"A prayer summit?"
"What's that?"
"Why?"**

These are a few of the responses from people who hear of the prayer summit Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions is sponsoring January 16–18, 2004.

General Director James Forlines says, "Prayer Summit 2004 may be one of the most significant meetings this Mission has held or will ever hold."

Regarding the importance of prayer to his 50-plus years of ministry in India, missionary Carlisle Hanna wrote:

After the death of my sister, Helen, I did not see anyone to take her place so far as prayer for our ministry was concerned. That is still true. My mother died 13 April 1969. She had written to me every week since I left home to go to college when I was 16. After Mother could not write, Iris has written every week. My sister Iris died on 13 June 2003. They informed me about our family and our church people in our home area. They knew about India and our needs there. Now, I really do not know who will carry on this ministry on our behalf.

Our daughter, Sheila Marie, died 17 March 1952 in India at about 3:20 p.m. A dear lady at Beulah FWB Church, Mrs. Maude Jones, was compelled to get out of bed at that very time and pray for us. When daylight came, she wrote a letter. That was the first letter we received after Sheila's death. What a wonderful ministry Mrs. Maude had on our behalf.

If ever more intercessors were needed, they are needed now. We live in a destitute, morally decadent and insecure world. Foreign Missions is urgently seeking "pray-ers." A significant number of denominational intercessors have passed from this earthly scene. As Brother Carlisle said, we need replacements. Perhaps God is calling you to a ministry of prayer.

Prayer Summit 2004 is designed to deepen awareness of the significance of prayer for world evangelization. We are in a spiritual battle which can only be won with spiritual weapons. Prayer is one of those weapons.

The old song, *Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*, says, "All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down." Free Will Baptists can accomplish much with prepared missionaries, adequate finances, well-developed strategies and a capable staff. But without prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit accomplishments will be of no eternal value.

All who believe in the power of prayer and who desire to reach their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the entire world are invited to attend Prayer Summit 2004. Dr. and Mrs. LaVerne Miley, who spent years in Africa, understand the importance of prayer. They will lead the plenary sessions. Doug Little, director of stateside development, will employ his years of experience as a missionary pastor to bring our hearts together in a concert of prayer. Pastor Glen Johnson of Chesterfield, Virginia, director of mobilization and recruitment Eddie Payne, Doug Little and missionaries Mike and Deleen Cousineau will lead workshops.

The most important activity will be prayer. Free Will Baptists from across the United States will join together in one place and pray, pray, pray for world evangelization. Prayer Summit 2004 will be linked to our mission fields around the world in prayer retreats on the same dates. This worldwide prayer effort should bring world-changing results!

Register now for Prayer Summit 2004, January 16–18, 2004, at Camp Garner Creek Retreat Center in Dickson, Tennessee. For information please contact judy@nafwb.org or call Foreign Missions at 1-877-767-7736. Information is also posted as a link on the website www.nafwb.org/fm, "Prayer Summit 2004."

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not," (Jeremiah 33:3). ■

**Camp Garner Creek
Retreat Center**



**FOREIGN
MISSIONS**

Free Will Baptist Ministry Focus

• "Prayer Summit 2004 may be one of the most significant meetings this Mission has held or will ever hold."

• All who believe in the power of prayer and who desire to reach their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the entire world are invited to attend Prayer Summit 2004.

ALL WE LIKE SHEEP

By Dean Jones

We've been led to believe that sheep are relatively stupid creatures and must have the direction of a shepherd in order to find food, water and protection. While I don't disagree, there is one other conclusion that can be made about

sheep. The following account is based on a real-life experience. Don't try this at home.

Our church decided to try a Christian alternative to Halloween and organized a "walk through the Bible." Our goal was to create scenes from a Bible story with sensory elements which allowed children to taste, touch, smell, hear and see an actual Bible story. Our church has an unfinished basement which provided the perfect setting.

Creative Idea

We selected the life of Christ. The first scene would be the birthplace, complete with manger, straw, Mary, Joseph and live sheep. The second scene was the earthly ministry of Christ with the feeding of the 5,000 and food for students to taste. Scene three took place in the Garden of Gethsemane when the soldiers came to arrest Christ. This provided noisy soldiers, live trees and sleeping disciples.

Scene four was the crucifixion complete with lightning, hammering of nails and darkness. Scene five was the empty tomb arranged with empty grave clothes and the sounds of rejoicing angels. After journeying through each of the scenes, children were led to an area to hear a gospel presentation.

Back to the manger scene where I mentioned sheep. Our set-up crew decided live sheep would be the best option to provide the touch, sight and smell options. Where were we to get live sheep? Easy, our pastor raised sheep and had

three in his backyard. Not many pastors raise sheep, but his willingness to loan his sheep taught the ultimate lesson about sheep.

Old Problem

We drove the three miles in a friend's panel truck, rolled up the door and our sleeves and pulled out the loading ramp. Five grown men went sheep hunting. The two we selected were affectionately named Lucy and Ethel. We carefully approached from all sides. Having been taught that sheep are stupid, we thought they might mistake us for trees and attack or something worse.

We came with ropes and lassoed the poor beasts, attempting to drag them back to the truck. After several unsuccessful attempts, we abandoned the dragging method. Not only are sheep stupid, they are also heavy. But that is not the lesson to be learned here.

Our next method was to pick them up and carry them to the truck. Don't try this at home. The sheep didn't take kindly to our lift-and-carry method. They ran away from us. We stood back in frustration wondering what Plan C should be. It was at this point I learned the real character trait of sheep. They are stubborn!

Simple Solution

Our pastor's wife and daughter observed the show from a balcony on their home. After a few moments of the Real-Life Sheep Show, the daughter

sensed our frustration and came to our rescue. Armed with a box of Lucky Charms cereal, like a scene from Hansel and Gretel, she dropped a small trail of cereal from the sheep's humble abode, across the field, up the ramp and into the truck.

The first sheep was still a chore. It made the trek fine until it arrived at the ramp. Sensing danger, she (Lucy or Ethel—I never took time to find out which) stopped dead in her tracks. One captor continued to tug from above, while two more pushed from behind (not to be attempted by the unprofessional) and the other two prepared to lower the door to prevent escape. When the first sheep was safely in the truck, the second one marched right in and away we went.

The lessons I learned here are numerous. First, grown men will at times go to great lengths to provide life-changing opportunities for kids. Second, if Plan A or B doesn't work, sometimes a bystander will have a great Plan C. Most important, if we truly are like sheep (and I believe we are), we are often more stubborn than stupid. We can be lured into many situations, but not without great persuasion from the shepherd.

If you'd like more information about providing a walk through the Bible experience for this Halloween season or advice from a non-professional shepherd, please e-mail me at dean@randall-house.com. ■



Randy Sawyer

Evangelizing a Postmodern World

For most of human history, a person rarely came in contact with someone from outside his culture. The average person had no idea there were other cultural realities, other claims to ultimate truth, other absolute beings asserted. On those rare occasions when different cultures interacted, reconciling those differences was usually pretty simple.

One asked, "Who is right and who is wrong?" The question was, of course, easy to answer—"I am right and you are wrong. I will conquer you if I have to, or convert you if I can."

Situation We Face

We now live and work with different cultures every day, and we are faced with varied claims to truth. Further, it is considered politically incorrect for one group to suggest their belief system to be the final authority, and even worse to attempt to convert others to that worldview.

One predominant characteristic of today's postmodern mindset is that truth claims are not universal but cultural, derived from one's time and space connections. Since no one group has a monopoly on truth, we are encouraged to celebrate diversity and, through tolerance, seek to co-exist in peace.

America has always been a multicultural society, described historically as the "melting pot." Immigrants from all over the world with varied cultural diversity were blended into one people. The very name, "United States," and the motto, "*e pluribus unum*," identified the intention of our founding fathers to join all peoples into one republic.

Individualism was highly valued, and immigrants were allowed, even encouraged, to express their ethnic heritage. Yet the diverse groups were homogenized into a uniform people, all answer-

ing to the label *American*. The emphasis was on uniqueness but unity. Postmodernism, on the other hand, celebrates uniqueness and insists upon disunity.

No longer is it simply *American*, but *Anglo-American*, *Afro-American*, *Native-American*, *Hispanic-American* or *Asian-American*. The prevailing rule is that each group must be free to express itself according to its values and beliefs. We must not invade the space occupied by another. We must certainly not seek to evangelize others.

Strategy We Need

The greatest question facing the church today is how to fulfill the great commission in this cultural diversity and religious pluralism. In an essay titled "*Evangelism in a Postmodern World*," James Emory White provided an analysis of our dilemma and offered suggestions for a postmodern strategy of evangelism. White suggested an imagery scale of one to 10, with one representing the person who is far from Christ and 10 symbolizing that individual "*in Christ*."

He then mused that the average person we might have encountered in our evangelistic efforts in the 1950s was most likely at least a seven on the scale. That is, most possessed at least some knowledge of scripture, were convinced of absolute truth, had a sense of morality and were prone to attend church now and again.

However, he observed that the person we approach today in our evangelistic efforts is likely a two on the scale. This means the average person is ignorant of scripture, questions the existence of ultimate truth, lives in a self-contained world where personal morals are not to be forced upon others and seldom attends church. The methods of the 1950s, there-

fore, must be revised if we are to make an impact in a postmodern society. What is appropriate methodology then for evangelism in a postmodern world?

Thoroughly Scriptural

First, our strategy must be thoroughly scriptural. Biblical literacy appears to be at an all-time low in the Western world. The truth claims of God's self-revelation must be presented to counter-balance society's propensity toward relativism.

Paul instructed Timothy to "*preach the word*," "*give attention to reading and doctrine*," and "*to be instant in season, out of season*." He then clearly stated that the need for such a biblical ministry was predicated on the fact that in the latter times "*men shall not endure sound doctrine*." Paul's prescription for a sick society was to faithfully minister the Word.

Culturally Relevant

Second, our strategy for evangelism in a postmodern age must be culturally relevant. White observed, "Effective churches will attempt to convey the message of the Gospel in a manner that is understandable to contemporary culture." The key is "bridging the gap."

Translating the gospel into the forms of contemporary culture has been in the vanguard of every effective evangelistic movement, beginning with Christ and the apostles, through the reformation, into the great revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries. Further, contextualizing the gospel has always been the challenge as missionaries confront different cultures. The gospel must be translated into the context of a given age. We must, therefore, retain the integrity of the message while reshaping the format of the presentation.

THE TOGETHER WAY

July 2003

Appropriately Relational

Third, effective evangelism in a post-modern era will be relational. Rather than allowing ourselves to be isolated from culture, we must be insulated from the world's values while seeking to infiltrate to "make disciples." Christ ate with "publicans and sinners," providing an appropriate example of what it means to befriend a sinner without becoming a sinner. He targeted individuals and extended the Kingdom one relationship at a time.

Likewise, Paul "became all things to all men" as he traversed the Mediterranean world in Christ's name. Compare Paul's presentation before the synagogue with his message before the learned Athenians. Notice his observance of long-standing Jewish rituals, even after his conversion to Christ. He clearly sought to know the cultural background of his audience in order to shape his ministry among them accordingly.

Process Driven

Fourth, we must view our task in terms of "process" rather than "event." It will take a great deal of time and effort to move an individual from a three on the scale to an eight. With scriptural illiteracy so high, pluralism the unquestioned policy, and relativism the universal philosophy, we must be willing to establish relationships and gradually move people along the scale.

This is not to decry confrontation evangelism, because we do not know how far along an individual may be. But as a general rule postmodern times require process evangelism.

As we lovingly befriend individuals within our sphere of influence and faithfully model and proclaim the evangelical message, we are promised that the Spirit will use the Word to cut through the cultural surface and transform hearts for the kingdom. ■

Receipts:

State	Designated	CO-OP	Total	Year To Date Designated	Year To Date CO-OP	Year To Date Total
Alabama	\$ 728.20	\$ 310.47	\$ 1,038.67	\$ 3,407.83	\$ 1,286.44	\$ 4,694.27
Arizona	.00	.00	.00	15.00	176.00	191.00
Arkansas	7,260.65	12,958.48	20,219.13	71,853.23	121,171.73	193,024.96
California	.00	1,389.59	1,389.59	100.00	8,488.50	8,588.50
Colorado	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Delaware	.00	.00	.00	114.40	.00	114.40
Florida	.00	.00	.00	256.96	4,536.00	4,792.96
Georgia	35,042.62	2,610.92	37,653.54	239,223.82	12,248.75	251,472.57
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Illinois	14,169.68	2,474.03	16,643.71	90,358.71	20,406.44	110,765.15
Indiana	2,511.20	220.77	2,731.97	13,786.54	1,382.00	15,168.54
Iowa	.00	.00	.00	.00	65.00	65.00
Kansas	.00	154.77	154.77	.00	540.49	540.49
Kentucky	.00	1,198.69	1,198.69	1,900.00	8,210.37	10,110.37
Louisiana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Maryland	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Michigan	34,370.55	2,382.02	36,752.57	155,381.06	15,749.01	171,130.07
Mississippi	7,713.20	229.47	7,942.67	73,938.64	4,199.72	78,138.36
Missouri	47,205.37	18,789.24	65,994.61	308,244.01	117,607.40	425,851.41
Montana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Nebraska	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Jersey	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Mexico	891.87	40.93	932.80	3,583.94	211.48	3,795.42
North Carolina	530.38	1,978.33	2,508.71	9,207.96	17,657.61	26,865.57
Ohio	17,014.34	2,389.20	19,403.54	118,086.76	26,956.23	145,042.99
Oklahoma	45,753.58	10,341.24	56,094.82	426,844.56	77,490.85	504,335.41
South Carolina	65,517.86	9.00	65,526.86	324,352.05	254.94	324,606.99
South Dakota	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Tennessee	9,802.02	3,036.00	12,838.02	83,037.75	10,702.37	93,740.12
Texas	18,013.20	373.93	18,387.13	73,221.42	1,955.38	75,176.80
Virginia	.00	.00	.00	838.95	218.68	1,057.63
Virgin Islands	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
West Virginia	330.00	130.58	460.58	7,983.68	863.52	8,847.20
Wisconsin	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Canada	805.05	14.96	820.01	4,716.76	92.82	4,809.58
Northwest Association	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Northeast Association	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Other	.00	.01	.01	.00	.07	.07
Totals	\$ 307,659.77	\$ 61,032.63	\$ 368,692.40	\$ 2,010,454.03	\$ 452,471.80	\$ 2,462,925.83

Disbursements:

Executive Office	\$ 1,731.41	\$ 27,464.69	\$ 29,196.10	\$ 10,870.39	\$ 203,612.34	\$ 214,482.73
Foreign Missions	197,400.07	7,720.63	205,120.70	1,195,621.33	57,237.67	1,252,859.09
FWBBC	26,081.36	7,720.63	33,801.99	165,609.96	57,237.67	222,847.63
Home Missions	72,200.31	6,042.22	78,242.53	569,290.90	44,794.70	614,085.60
Retirement & Insurance	361.29	4,699.51	5,060.80	2,618.93	34,840.37	37,459.30
Master's Men	1,082.01	4,699.51	5,781.52	5,148.00	34,840.37	39,988.37
Commission for Theo. Integrity	68.04	167.84	235.88	389.95	1,244.27	1,634.22
FWB Foundation	256.77	2,014.08	2,270.85	1,594.33	14,931.60	16,525.93
Historical Commission	68.04	167.84	235.88	389.94	1,244.27	1,634.21
Music Commission	33.17	167.84	201.01	244.73	1,244.27	1,489.00
Media Commission	83.17	167.84	251.01	699.73	1,244.27	1,944.00
Hillsdale FWB College	2,392.67	.00	2,392.67	15,048.25	.00	15,048.25
Other	5,901.46	.00	5,901.46	42,927.59	.00	42,927.59
Totals	\$ 307,659.77	\$ 61,032.63	\$ 368,692.40	\$ 2,010,454.03	\$ 452,471.80	\$ 2,462,925.83



Diana L. Bryant

When Daddy Is the Pastor

One of the most startling

things I contend with is the realization I am no longer a "young mother"! I simply cannot qualify with both children grown and away at college. While I am no longer a young mother, I have a heart for those who are.

Mothers of young children have many things in common, but some things are unique to a pastor's home. Home and ministry cannot always be separated; they influence each other. How sad to see a pastor's children grow up to resent the church, uncomfortable with things they have seen and heard. I'm no expert, but I do have some hard-earned observations.

Teach children to love Daddy.

Teach them how special and important their daddy is. One of my favorite things to do when the children were small was to make an event out of Daddy's homecoming, particularly when he had been out of town. We strung pictures across the living room, blew up balloons, made banners, hung streamers, all to say, "Welcome Home, Daddy; We Missed You!"

This was good for the kids and Daddy. Let them see the love between you and their father. A loving home provides a sense of security and self-esteem for children. Their concept of God as a heavenly Father and the picture of the church as the Bride of Christ is heavily influenced by their experience of home and marriage. Your marriage is the first pattern for their future relationships.

Don't blame the church for circumstances.

Money may be tight in your home if you are a young pastor's family, but don't teach your children that it is the church's

fault. The fact is many young families struggle in the early years. Even if your church provides less than it should, give that problem to God. Teach your children that we trust God to provide our needs, not the church.

If your house is not what you like, work to make it the best you can and be satisfied. Don't burden your children with the attitude of being shortchanged by the church or of feeling deprived because others have more than the pastor's family. Some will always have more, some less.

Avoid unreasonable expectations.

Don't put unreasonable expectations on your children because Daddy is the pastor. If something is right to do, teach them to do it for the sake of right. Teach your children to do the right things, say the right things and be an example to others because they are Christians, not because they are the pastor's children.

Beware of others' expectations.

Don't allow others in the church to put unreasonable expectations on children because Daddy is the pastor. This will depend largely on your attitude. Give children a place of service in the church . . . again, not because Daddy is the pastor, but because all church members need a job.

Recognize the benefits of being in the pastor's family.

Our children got to hear missionary stories first hand, meet people from around the country, and learned early how to converse with adults. Trips to the national convention can double as vacations if you include fun things on the way to or from the host city. Your children will see more of the country

than their friends simply because you attend the annual national meeting.

Learn to be thankful.

If people in the church do things for your children, don't let the children assume this is their right because Daddy is pastor. Teach them to be grateful for favors, and use it as an opportunity to teach them to be kind to others. Make sure they know how to give as well as receive.

Watch your language.

When conflicts arise at church, resist the urge to speak badly of members in front of your children. They will learn soon enough that some people are not always what they appear to be on Sunday and that even good people have differences of opinion. Model kindness and discretion, and you will see it in your children later.

Love your children.

Love means time, attention, discipline and teaching. Make sure they know they are the most important people in the congregation and you are thankful for them.

It sounds like a cliché, but it is true—children grow up fast! All too soon you will be back where you started—just you and your husband in the parsonage. Live the years with your children at home with the thought that your time to teach, train and be a minute-by-minute example is limited. It's one of the greatest adventures in life! ■

About the Writer: Mrs. Diana Bryant is president of Florida Women Active for Christ. She is a member of Ryanwood Fellowship Free Will Baptist Church in Vero Beach, where her husband Randy pastors.



Garnett Reid

Deepest Love, Highest Joy Ephesians 5:21–33, Part I

I watched it happen. Their

marriage disintegrated before my eyes. As the young couple's pastor, I felt helpless. I offered every resource I could think of to save their relationship. An irresistible force seemed to pull them apart. They had survived their child's health problems and unemployment; in fact, the trials seemed to strengthen the bond between them...for awhile. Finally, they succumbed. The marriage was over.

The other side of the coin, however, is that most Christian marriages *do* survive! We need to sound this note more than we do. Believers must not give way to the world's thinking, as if divorce is no big deal, or even desirable or chic.

Yet the husband and wife relationship does not last without a commitment from both to make it last. In Ephesians 5:21–33 Paul offers inspired help from God. These verses sound so familiar to Christians that we dare to assume we have mastered their counsel. We have not. We need to hear and read them over and over until we live them, until they work their way into our kitchens and dens and bedrooms.

In the immediate context, Paul dealt with the problem of sexual immorality (5:3, 8). He challenged us to wise living, now extending to how we live in those most intimate relationships of our lives. He pulls all the strands of the fabric together into a directed, divine pattern for the home in this the lengthiest passage in the New Testament on the husband-wife dynamic.

My plan in this study is not to develop a detailed exegesis of these verses, but to offer from them seven principles that apply to our roles in marriage today.

Paul speaks to believers, not to the world at large.

Remember he addressed his readers as "dear children" (5:1), "saints" (5:3), and

"light in the Lord" (5:8). Of all people Christians must understand that marriage is a three-fold union: Christ, the husband and the wife. Certainly non-Christians can and should cultivate successful marriages. If they do so, they will be building on biblical principles though they may not acknowledge them.

Believers should also realize that though both partners may know and serve the Lord, we are still fallible, sin-prone human beings. No home, not even a Christian one, is perfect.

These lessons about the home illustrate the ultimate relationship between Christ and His bride, the church.

Paul reminds us that he speaks "concerning Christ and the church" (v. 32). Their Christian marriage is an essential feature of both partners' relationship with Christ. It is therefore a spiritual trust and in turn demands accountability.

No wonder the apostle exhorts mutual submission "in the fear of God" (v. 21). The Lord Himself stands as the supreme head of the home. Our responsibility to submit to each other assumes its rightful place as a spiritual discipline. We testify to Christ's Lordship when husband and wife give themselves to one another in shared joy.

The baseline principle Paul commends is mutual submission.

Verse 21 marks the transition from the first part of chapter 5 to the present section focusing on the home as a reflection of Christ and the church. Wives submit to their own husbands as husbands "submit" to their wives in loving devotion (vv. 22–25, 28, 33).

In fact, as hard as it is for me to admit, as a man I need this directive more than my wife because I tend to be more selfish, independent, beset by egotism—you know, the "macho" guy thing.

So what does it mean to "submit" to another person? The Greek word translated "submit" means to place one thing in order under another, to subordinate. One yields to the other. John Piper describes it as a "disposition to yield or an inclination to follow." The wife recognizes and yields to her husband's responsible leadership. As the husband loves his wife, he submits to her in meeting her needs.

This duty of mutual submission points up the roles of husband and wife as complements to each other. They find what they need in each other. This feature of God's great wisdom in designing "male and female" clearly reveals the perversion inherent in the attempt to legalize homosexual relationships as "marriages." Marriage involves partners who complement each other. As J. Budziszewski notes, "a man and a man (or a woman and a woman) are not complements, but sames.... Rather than balancing each other they drive each other to extremes." God's loving design for humans is nowhere more evident than when He made them "male and female."

H. W. Webb Peploe, vicar of St. Paul's Church in London a century ago, would fret over the poor selections he made of gifts for his wife, "But she accepts them graciously," he obliged, "because a long time ago I gave her my heart." Such a love surely brings this life's highest joy. ■

Next Month: "Deepest Love, Highest Joy," Part II: Four Final Principles



Thomas Marberry

Aren't You Glad Jesus Asked?

By Frank Gregory (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 2003, 108 pp., paperback, \$9.99).

Frank Gregory is a native of

Arkansas; he was converted as a high school senior. He graduated from Hillsdale FWB College (1985) and from Wheaton College (1995). He has pastored in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas and presently pastors First FWB Church in Duncanville, Texas. This is his first book.

Gregory correctly notes that Jesus was a master of communication and that the question was one of the most important ways communicated His message. Jesus knew what questions to ask, when to ask them, how to ask them and how to respond to the answers He received. Jesus understood that good questions can cause people to examine themselves and their relationship to God.

Jesus also understood that good questions alone do not make good communication. He listened carefully to people's answers and often followed up with other questions that probed deeper into the person's heart and soul.

Gregory argues that "question-asking has almost become a lost art." Because of our pride we prefer talking to listening. We are more comfortable telling people what we think they ought to do than we are listening closely to their cares and concerns.

According to the author, the purpose of the book is "to help us realize just how many questions Jesus asked in His approach at teaching us how to live." Gregory demonstrates that the questions Jesus asked in the Palestinian context of the first century are still valid today.

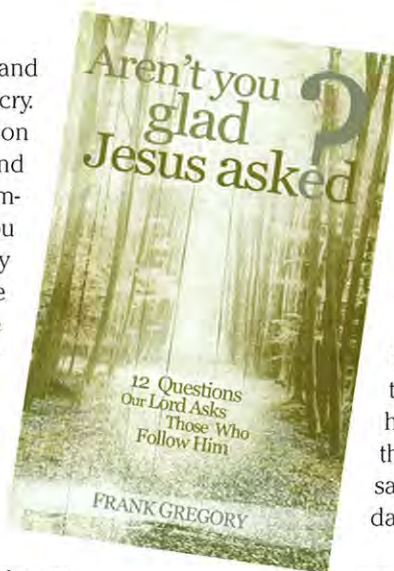
Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early Sunday morning to complete the anointing of Jesus' body. She found the tomb empty, went and told the disciples.

Mary, in her frustration and desperation, began to cry. Then came the question first from the angels and later from the Lord himself, "Woman, why are you crying?" Jesus knew why she was crying; so did the angels. They asked the question not for their benefit but for hers.

As Gregory explains, "She, like so many women, was desperately looking for Jesus." Jesus wants to reveal himself to those who are crying because of difficult and trying circumstances.

Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper when a woman entered with a box of expensive ointment. She broke the box and began pouring its valuable contents on Jesus' head. Some of those present rebuked the woman for this extravagant waste of money. Jesus responds with a question, "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me."

Gregory analyzes the situation in a most insightful way. He writes, "When Jesus asked the men around Him why they were bothering Mary, He was actually asking them what was bothering them." With this simple question, Jesus had forever exposed their self-righteousness. Her broken spirit stands in sharp contrast to their religious arrogance. Gregory applies this teaching to our day, "When we enter a place of worship with a religious spirit, we are coming in with the improper attitude in which broken-



ness will make us extremely uncomfortable."

This is a brief but insightful book. It is a good historical and theological analysis of key questions Jesus asked, but it is much more than that. The book can help us understand the core of Jesus' message and apply it to our daily lives today.

In his excellent forward, Dr. Timothy Beougher of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, interprets this as a book on personal evangelism. He writes, "It gives genuine practical help in witnessing, not simply ivory-tower theory." His statement is, in my opinion, correct but incomplete. This book will certainly prove useful in sharing the Christian faith with unbelievers, but its greatest value will be found in helping Christians to understand their own faith in a more complete and mature way.

This is a good book. It deserves a place on the top shelf of your library. ■



Jack Williams

When God Turns the Page

Black Thursday. That's what

I call it, the day Marilyn Pritchard's 19-year job as *Contact* editorial assistant ended. It made no difference that she loved her job and was good at it, because when the numbers work against you, everything stops at the bottom line. Even though she's a tough, resourceful lady, this economic downsizing hurts her pocketbook and her heart. There's just no polite way to say, "You're unemployed."

Marilyn almost left in 1986 when a local publisher courted her with a career-move management position. At the last minute, she rejected the publisher's offer and stayed with *Contact*. I gladly shelved the editorial I had written about her departure. Seventeen years later she's leaving again, and this time the choice is not hers. The second editorial is harder to write.

Right now I'm irritated because Marilyn seems less disturbed by this turn of events than I am. I wonder how she will live; she thinks God will provide. I'm disappointed that we're not taking care of a valued employee; she thinks God has something better for her. I want to kick a wall and bite somebody; she wants to wait on the Lord and pray. You do understand my frustration.

When Marilyn came to work for *Contact*, she looked like a brown-eyed teen with short hair. I discovered she was no teen and was almost young enough to be my daughter. She grew up helping me publish a magazine 12 times a year. She leaves today with a mutt named Eskimo and a condo across the county line.

Most people are good at something, and that was certainly true with Marilyn Pritchard. She had a nose for art, for layout and design. She produced

some terrific article spreads and created my all-time favorite *Contact* cover, the July 1998 issue—a spectacular shot of the American flag overlaid with the Declaration of Independence.

That's not all. Marilyn understood that a magazine is more than a collection of ideas saddle-stitched between two covers. She attended professional conferences and learned the craft of magazine production. Long before I was ready, she caught the technology wave and swept the magazine from yellow legal pads to desktop publishing.

There's more. Marilyn had a feel for what readers would like and what they wouldn't tolerate, which is why the best editorial I ever wrote didn't get published—a dandy thing titled, "Sports Pages Don't Cover It." She read it and advised me to stuff it in a drawer until I regained my sanity. "Sports Pages" has been under lock and key for 10 years, where it will remain until Marilyn's blue Toyota reaches Rutherford County.

You're probably thinking, Surely, Marilyn wasn't good at everything, and you'd be correct. She hated writing news releases, and it showed. She always took the scenic route instead of the bang-bang *who, what, when, where and why* approach. I rewrote every news release she tried, usually reducing eight paragraphs of passive verbs to a handful of hard-hitting Rambo-type sentences.

And for the record, she didn't handle interruptions well. One phone call could sidetrack her onto some obscure project and leave me pulling my hair. It wasn't until she was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) in 1991 that I understood why the smart editorial assistant who, on the one hand, could work nine hours without stopping seemed to disconnect every time some-

one knocked on her office door. Looking back, I'm amazed she did so well in this noisy place we call the National Offices.

There was something almost magical about Marilyn that little kids adored. They thought she spent her nights at the North Pole. Even my nonsense grandsons came under her spell. They'd drop by, toss a hello my way and march straight down the hall to "Miss Marilyn's" kingdom where she stashed mysterious gadgets that made boys giggle and squeal. I dread telling them The Office Elf no longer works here.

Marilyn was at her best giving to others—staying at hospitals with friends recuperating from surgery, sending personally-designed greeting cards or pulling co-workers' chestnuts from the fire when deadlines threatened.

But she never figured out why packing canned goods in a suitcase made it heavy. She disliked long, formal staff dinners, yet delighted in repairing office equipment that broke. She wrapped a diesel mechanic's know-how in a quiet spirit and a gentle way.

While I never heard her yell at anybody, she did snarl at me now and then for no reason. She covered my technological deficiencies while nudging me toward the evil world of computers.

What I admire most about Marilyn is her absolute trust in God's care. She believes her life is safe in His hands, and I know she's right. She's content to wait until God turns the next page. I, on the other hand, want to make sure the Good Lord understands what's at stake here.

As I write these words, I can almost hear Marilyn's laughter when she reads that previous sentence. Turn the page, Lord. Quick! ■

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