FEBRUARY 1998



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS

31 Years at One Church

Battered Band

The Fix-It Squad

Draw 3 Lines

Counterfeit Jesus



FEBRUARY 1998

VOLUME 45, NO. 2

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SECRETARY SPEAKS



Melvin Worthington

The Spectrum of Stewardship (II)

his second study in the spectrum of stewardship series deals with the focus of stewardship. In order to fulfill our stewardship responsibility, we must focus on the Sovereign's ownership, saints' obligation and stewardship opportunities.

Sovereign's Ownership

Biblical stewardship commences with a clear focus on the Sovereign's ownership. It assumes that the essential ingredient of scriptural stewardship is the truth that the God who created all things owns them. The essence of stewardship is that God owns everything, and we are the overseers or managers of what He entrusts to us.

Paul affirms this truth when he declares, "What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," (I Cor. 6:19-20).

Christians are purchased, pardoned, purified and a peculiar people who belong exclusively to God. We are His bondslaves.

Paul affirms God's ownership when he writes, "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ . . . Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ " (Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1; Philemon 1:1; Rom. 1:1).

Paul reminded his readers when he wrote to them that he recognized God's ownership. The Lord chooses, calls and commissions each of us to do His bidding.

Stewardship which focuses on God's ownership evidences an acknowledgment, appreciation, adoration and allegiance to stewardship responsibilities.

Saints' Obligation

Biblical stewardship continues with a focus on the saints' obligation. As stewards, we are responsible and accountable. Stewardship of that which has been entrusted to us is not optional. Stewardship responsibilities are an obligation.

Without reservation or hesitation, we must seize every opportunity to fulfill our stewardship obligation.

This obligation must be met cheerfully, consistently, carefully and conscientiously. Stewardship responsibilities are a serious, sobering and solemn matter. We must not disregard, dismiss, discount or deny our stewardship obligation.

Stewardship Opportunity

Biblical stewardship climaxes with a focus on stewardship opportunities.

The Secretary's Schedule February 1998

1 Central FWB Church Royal Oak, Michigan

1-4 Michigan Ministers Retreat

26-27 South Carolina State Association

Each Christian has personal stewardship opportunities. While we are not responsible for what others do, we are responsible and accountable for what we have. We must be faithful in the performance of the stewardship responsibility the Lord has given us.

Each Christian has practical stewardship opportunities. All Christians do not have the same gifts, abilities or opportunities. The Lord gifts and places each Christian in the place where there are practical stewardship opportunities. We are not asked to do what we can not do or go where we can not go.

Whatever stewardship opportunity we have, we must faithfully fulfill our obligation. We must not covet the opportunities and gifts of others but faithfully find, follow and finish the will of God as opportunities come our way.

Each Christian has plentiful stewardship opportunities. There is always plenty to do in the church, community and city. As stewards we can make a difference in each of these areas with our gifts, talents and time.

Biblical stewardship commences with a focus on the Sovereign's ownership, continues with a focus on the saints' obligation and climaxes with a focus on the stewardship opportunities which surround us.

May the Lord burn into our hearts the principle which Paul asserts, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful," (I Cor. 4:1-2).

How to Stay 31 Years at One Church

By Gordon Sebastian

his has become the pattern for nearly all my introductions when speaking away from home. I'm sitting on the platform with the pastor who is about to introduce me as the guest speaker for the meeting. Then, here it comes...He leans over and asks that one question I've learned to expect, "Brother Gordon, how long did you say you've been at Peace Church?"

Of course, when his introduction is made, the length of my tenure at one church has increasingly become the thing most important. In fact, it seemed so important to one preacher last year (at that time I'd been at Peace 30 years) that he asked me to consider preparing a message for a future Bible conference titled, "How to Stay 30 Years at One Church."

Wow! Now that was some assignment. The truth is, "staying" at anything has always been a major challenge for me. By nature I'm impulsive and impetuous. That's why, after staying only months at my first four churches and five years at the fifth, I asked God to help me grow up and stay at the church I now pastor.

God certainly answered that prayer and He did it, or should I say He's doing it, through helping me implement seven principles that governed the ministry of Paul as set forth in II Corinthians 4.

Remember God's Call (v. 1)

A preacher friend of mine once said, "I've resigned a thousand times, but I just never announced it." I can't count the times I've wanted to throw in the towel, but didn't actually do it. The reason? I reviewed God's call in my life, and His directing me since that time.

That was the primary reason I stuck it out at Bible College in the mid-50s. Twice I determined to transfer to another college, but just couldn't after reviewing all that God had done to bring me to that place in my life.

Knowing that God called me to Peace Church, that I must ultimately answer to Him, and that He is not done with me yet, have been major factors for staying when I've wanted to quit.

Be Transparent (v. 2)

Earl, a friend in the ministry, was telling me how his book ministry brought him in contact with famous men such as Charles Stanley, Jay Adams, W. A. Criswell and several others. He noted that all these great men seemed to have one thing in common. They all were, as he put it, "so down to earth and transparent."

For years I've told my congregation as well as others that to get anything from God we must learn to be honest with Him, and that to be honest with God we must first be honest with ourselves. Why is it so hard for us to just ad-

mit to God how sinful we really are? J. I. Packer in his book, *Rediscov*-

ering Holiness, says that the Christian must never stop repenting. It's part of our ongoing experience with God.

One of our most prominent pastors whose success was honored by Bob Jones University, more than once has fallen on the altar of his church, confessing his coldness and need of revival, and asking his deacons to come and pray for him. My church, too, wants to know that the man in their pulpit is "real" enough to understand what they are going through.

Have Right Objectives (vv. 5, 11)

Do you know why some who seem so capable never succeed? That's their only objective! They want to beat everyone else. One pastor announced to his new congregation that if they followed his leadership, they would have the largest church in the entire metropolitan area. The pressure was so great on the staff that they would hide from the pastor on Mondays following "off" Sundays. Ten years later, he lost his marriage and his ministry.

God never called me to Wilson, North Carolina, to build the biggest church in town. My only task is to glorify God by doing His will and being the best I can for Him. Anything beyond that is entirely up to Him.

Accept Limitations (v. 7)

One of several members with Southern Baptist backgrounds in my church said to me awhile back, "If you'd been a Southern Baptist pastoring in a large city, you'd have a congregation of over 2,000."

But you see, I'm not a Southern Baptist and I'm not pastoring in a large city. Why? Because God wants me right where I am, pastoring Peace Free Will Baptist Church!

Who knows what might have happened if I'd pastored another church in a large city? I might have run off with the secretary or I might have had a nervous breakdown due to the pressure of a megachurch.

If a preacher can't accept his limitations (and we all have them), he'll always end up pastoring three churches at one time—the one he just left, the one he's pastoring now, and the one he's always dreamed of pastoring.

Love Others (v. 15)

I've repeatedly said to my congregation, "You haven't lived until you have forgiven a friend (they're the ones who can really hurt you) and until you have loved an enemy (they're the ones you've been 'given' to love)."

Reviewing my ministry, I must say that one of the greatest "gifts" God has given me is the gift of loving people. But I must explain what I mean by "gift."

Love is not one of the spiritual gifts. It is a gift only in the same way that tribulation is a gift. You pray for patience and God *gives* you tribulation. Similarly, you pray for love and guess what God *gives* you? Right. An enemy! Over the years, God sure has given me my share of these to love, but He has also shown me how to do it. Just remembering how God has loved me in spite of how I treated His Son, has given me all the justification and enablement I need to love anyone. After all, no one has ever treated me as badly as I have treated Jesus.

Recharge Battery (v. 16)

From the books they authored and from the testimonies they've shared in person on the platforms of today's conferences, I've learned that the men God has used all have a hiding place, a place where they get alone with God. Jesus, our greatest example and hero, constantly hid Himself away with His Father.

I'm convinced that if God's men don't take time off to be alone with God, and time off to get away with their families, they become a casualty waiting to happen. Recently at a Bible conference, I heard a preacher boast that he never took a day off, never played golf and never took a vacation. This is the kind of stuff young preachers don't need to hear. It's grandstanding and it's sick!

I lost one staff member because he made himself so busy that he didn't have time to go home to his family. I can't afford to lose any more from this kind of negligence. Not only do all four members of the ministerial staff of my church have hiding places where they daily get alone with God, they have time every week when they are to be with their families. My ministry depends both upon an ongoing experience with God and upon the strength of my marriage.

Maintain Perspective (v. 18)

I'll never forget that hotel on Granby Street in downtown Norfolk. That's where I was offered a high position with a major company, if I would give up my plans to enter the ministry. "After all," the executive explained, "you can still serve the Lord and work in our company."

It was way back then, when I was still in the Navy and planning to go to Bible College, that I determined I must never be sidetracked by the glitter and gold of this world. I've seen so many who have lost their power, all because they lost their perspective.

Just last year, a friend who pastored a megachurch of 4,000 members, called to ask if I'd be interested in involving myself with him in an exciting new business venture, one that could make me a lot of money. I was so disappointed that he called me for that reason. And I was so hurt when I learned just a few weeks ago that he is now entirely out of the ministry. No preacher will stay at it for very long when he stops seeing as God sees.

Rusty, our minister of music, has just entered a Master of Divinity program at a nearby seminary. For his first class, the president of the school, Dr. Paige Patterson, greeted all newcomers with something like, "It's my duty to inform you that many of you don't have what it takes to finish. From past experience, I know that many of you are going to quit!"

Sad, but many never make it in the ministry, and many more who do make it never stay long in one place. Why? They can't handle those many "light afflictions."

But Paul closes the chapter saying, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Thirty-one years in any one place will always involve surviving many "light afflictions."

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Gordon Sebastian pastors Peace Free Will Baptist Church in Wilson, North Carolina.

The Battered Band

By Suzan T. Hutchinson

o you take this man to be your wedded husband? To have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, forsaking all others and cleaving unto him from this day forward? May I have the ring?

The ring for him alone. Just his size. Just for him. Perfect. Round. Golden. A promise of so much. Of love. Commitment. Faith. The future. Uncharted territory from this point forward. Untried. Untested. Unproven. Just like him.

Time passes and the new wedding band picks up a few scratches and dings. It develops a mystique all its own. As the band changes, so does the marriage. Hard knocks hammer out character. Stress and strain of life strengthen and shape. The bumps and scratches produce maturity and unity of mind and spirit. The marriage shines. Golden.

I found the battered band on the cabinet, swathed in bathtub silicone and slick with WD-40. Placed there for safekeeping, the ring patiently waited for its owner to return. I picked it up, washed it carefully and pulled it close. Golden. Simple. Round, but not perfectly round anymore. Bent out of shape, then bent back once, twice, maybe more.

This ring of promise, once pristine, is now life-scarred. In spite of pulls and tugs, smashes and bangs, it remains whole. Golden. Sparkling. It signifies fulfilled love, commitment honored, promises kept. It speaks of life lived to the fullest. Life maximized. Full of use and years and experience. Just like him.

I slipped it on my finger. I shouldn't have, but I had to know. Would it fit? No, of course not. Bumps and lumps were obvious on the loose ring. Where do they go when he wears it? Of course, it fits him because his fingers shaped the band as life shaped him. It is for him alone. Just his size. for (him. His

Just

smiling wife slipped it on his finger, saying, "with this ring...."

"With this ring . . ." they began life together. Together they faced disappointment, heartache, frustration and fear. They shared the task of raising and providing for a family. They sacrificed and saved. Together they served the Lord, worked in the church and for the denomination. They faced each day's challenge with courage.

The band bonding them is strong. While working at Free Will Baptist National Offices on Murfreesboro Road in south Nashville, they faced perhaps their hardest blow. His foot was severely injured while keeping a runaway lawnmower from entering traffic.

His wife was his constant companion in the hospital. She cared for him. She loved him. She prayed for him. She fought for him. She encouraged him. She was for him what he could not be for himself.

"For better, for worse . . . in sickness, in health" At home, she cared for his foot, cleaning and dressing it. She photographed it often so he could see that it was indeed healing. They were inseparable. They banded together in their pain and their need for each other.

Marriage is full of such snags and hard knocks, some of them hard enough to knock the round out of any ring.

Daddy's wedding band was shaped by external forces. The stronger the force, the bigger the bulge. The harder the blow, the deeper the dent. External forces shaped my parents' lives. But unlike the ring, those forces did not bend them out of shape. They hung tough. Didn't give up. Didn't give in. They remain one, banded together in Christ.

Like a ring on a finger, they keep Christ at the center of their life. No matter how hard life gets, with Christ at the center, they endure every trial, the good times and the bad.

Their life together has flourished—unique, wonderful, golden a golden band of 50 years. Fifty years of loving, giving, working, worshiping, growing and living.

Today, they still face the future. They have weathered gray hair and wrinkled brows. Children are married, grandchildren pampered. They are retired but not retiring. So much in love. So much to live for. So much to do, together. Just Daddy, Momma and the Lord.

After 50 years, the band may be worn thin and bent out of shape, but the marriage is sound, healthy, strong and growing. It glows like a new wedding band. Golden.

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Suzan Trotter Hutchinson is a member of First Free Will Baptist Church in Dublin, Georgia, where her husband, Tim, pastors. Suzan grew to womanhood in that home with "The Battered Band" in Nashville, Tennessee, where her parents still reside. George B. (Jack) Trotter, Jr., and Geneva Frances Thomas were joined in holy matrimony on February 6, 1948, by Rev. John L Welch in Nashville, Tennessee. On February 6, 1998, they celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.



Jack and Geneva Trotter

Capital Stewardship/Victory Campaign November 1997 Update

State	Goal	Gifts	Balance
Alabama	\$76,397.63	\$ 5,156.15	\$71,241.48
Arizona	1,228.93	2,883.71	(1,654.78)
Arkansas	76,860.94	43,422.13	33,438.81
Atlantic Canada	1,570:51	45,422.15	673.51
California	17,216.76	1,444.20	15,772.56
Colorado	789.18		and the second se
Florida		1,165.00	(375.82)
	20,703.30	6,347.42	14,355.88
Georgia Hawaii	38,179.19 184.54	30,135.88 727.26	8,043.31
Idaho			(542.72)
Illinois	353.37	25.00	328.37
	16,176.29	4,949.47	11,226.82
Indiana	7,868.27	1,846.75	6,021.52
lowa	266.99	.00	266.99
Kansas	1,287.82	280.00	1,007.82
Kentucky	35,454.34	6,224.29	29,230.05
Louisiana	94.23	1,925.00	(1,830.77)
Maryland	6,812.10	1,539.38	5,272.72
Michigan	15,116.19	16,004.22	(888.03)
Mississippi	15,559.86	3,843.23	11,716.63
Missouri	60,484.40	33,934.91	26,549.49
Montana	27.48	100.00	(72.52)
Nebraska	102.08	119.00	(16.92)
New Mexico	596.80	630.55	(33.75)
North Carolina	59,118.06	8,136.40	50,981.66
Northeast Assoc.	883.41	270.00	613.41
Northwest Assoc.	1,087.58	201.00	886.58
Ohio	40,923.66	20,488.10	20,435.56
Oklahoma	92,271.60	10,612.08	81,659.52
South Carolina	18,335.75	3,102.00	15,233.75
South Dakota		175.00	(175.00)
Tennessee	78,557.09	76,503.44	2,053.65
Texas	11,547.20	7,516.52	4,030.68
Virginia	24,323.33	2,027.93	22,295.40
Virgin Islands		200.00	(200.00)
West Virginia	46,204.51	1,148.00	45,056.51
Wisconsin		61.00	(61.00)
Totals	\$766,583.39	\$294,042.02	\$472,541.37

TOGETHER	
VXAN	

		N	ovember		Test Carlo La	N. Arts
Receipts: State	Designated	CO-ÒP	Total	Year To Date Designated	Year To Date CO-OP	Year To Dat Total
Alabama	\$ 736.06	\$.00	\$ 736.06	\$ 5,681.84	\$.00	\$ 5,681.
Arizona	.00	.00	.00	3,776.95	371.90	4,148.
Arkansas	12,866.88	20,891.79	33,758.67	146,097.78	147,548.29	293,646.
Colifornia	.00	731.48	731.48	205.00	10,697.29	10,902.
Colorado	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
Delaware	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
Florida	.00	.00	.00	383.19	16,150.00	16,533
Georgia	19,748.73	1,964.33	21,713.06	192,337.73	29,743.86	222,081
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
Idaho	374.00	274.00	648.00	374.00	274.00	648
Illinois	6,792.95	1,610.23	8,403,18	116,123.29	25,437.62	141,560
Indiana	837.81	.00	837.81	10,744.53	1,571.66	12,316
lowa	.00	.00	.00	310.00	2,439.37	2,749
Kansas	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	2,147
Kentucky	224.00	393.90	617.90	12,756.58	5,136.99	17,893
Louisiana	30.00	.00	30.00	130.00	.00	130
Maryland	.00	452.06	452.06	.00	3,018.84	3,018
Michigan	4,696.92	1,353.42	6,050.34	138,376.05	29,189.86	167,565
Mississippi	-,070.72	365.22	365.22	3,000.59	3,862.26	6,862
Missouri	53,070.43	.00	53,070.43	486,517.82	.00	
Montana	.00	.00	.00	400,517.02	.00	486,517
Nebraska	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
	.00	.00				
New Jersey			.00	.00	.00	10.000
New Mexico	573.19	46.59	619.78	10,381.79	548.98	10,930
North Carolina	3,651.11	1,097.97	4,749.08	14,316.18	12,192.46	26,508
Ohio	60,714.59	3,198.09	63,912.68	139,409.18	36,509.45	175,918
Oklahoma	43,099.97	9,755.97	52,855.94	576,400.58	45,936.65	622,337
South Carolina	33,989.56	163.25	34,152.81	334,439.61	1,226.71	335,666
South Dakota	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00
Tennessee	26,800.65	1,630.46	28,431.11	124,954.57	19,647.57	144,602
Texas	6,348.61	596.89	6,945.50	69,719.26	4,433.90	74,153
Virginia	867.68	25.00	892.68	9,042.31	275.00	9,317
Virgin Islands	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
West Virginia	614.96	.00	614.96	45,232.98	619.65	45,852
Wisconsin	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
Conada	103.75	4.78	108.53	1,398.08	59.89	1,457
Northwest Assoc.	.00	.00	.00	95.02	15.00	110
Northeast Assoc.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
Other	.00	.04	.04	390.00	.17	390
lotals	\$276,141.85	\$44,555.47	\$320,697.32	\$2,442,594.91	\$ 396,907.37	\$2,839,502
Disbursement	s:					
Executive Office	\$ 5,761.18	\$22,277.76	\$ 28,038.94	\$ 94,407.41	\$ 198,454.00	\$ 292,861
Foreign Missions	154,082.77	5,123.88	159,206.65	1,460,908.41	45,644.29	1,506,552
FWBBC	10,346.14	5,123,88	15,470.02	145,126.25	45,644.29	190,770
Home Missions	79,752.92	4,009.99	83,762.91	617,388.40	35,721.61	653,110
Retirement & Insur	ance 865.97	3,118.87	3,984.84	12,646.10	27,783.41	40,429
Master's Men	921.36	3,118.87	4,040.23	19,269.90	27,783.41	47,053
Com. for Theo. Inte		111.39	166.88	1,024.81	992.29	2,017
WB Foundation	757.77	1,336.66	2,094.43	12,665.54	11,907.20	24,572
Historical Commissi		111.39	148.36	819.56	992.29	1,811
Music Commission	65.87	111.39	177.26	764.74	992.29	1,757
Media Commission	42.63	111.39	154.02	846.72	992.29	1,839
Hillsdale FWB Colle		.00	888.44	13,749.43	.00	13,749.
Other	22,564.34	.00	22,564.34	62,977.64	.00	62,977.
lotals	\$276,141.85	\$44,555.47	\$320,697.32	\$2,442,594.91	\$ 396,907.37	\$2,839,502
101013	JL10,141.0J	244,333.47	JJLU,071.JL	22,442,374.71	3 370,701.31	34,037,302.

February 1998, Contact 7

Part two of an 11-part series on cults in America.

The Counterfeit Jesus of the **Jehovah's Witnesses**

By Tom Forehand, Jr.



harles Taze Russell, a 16-yearold Congregational Church member, was zealous but biblically unprepared when he attempted to win an unbeliever to Christ. During the encounter, Russell was "completely routed" and soon rejected the doctrine of eternal punishment.¹ This doctrinal turning point in the life of Russell surely gave birth to his legacy: the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society and its counterfeit Jesus.

1914—"The End"

By 1877, Pastor Russell, a Pennsylvania businessman who sponsored Bible studies, had fallen under Second-Adventist influence. (Adventists had been expecting the immediate return, "advent," of Jesus for several decades.) After liquidating his father's clothing business, Russell ended up with \$250,000 to publish his bizarre religious beliefs.² As his publications increased, so did his personal embarrassments.

By 1913, he had suffered a messy

divorce and had been involved in a flurry of fraudulent schemes. Though he ranked himself "next to St. Paul" concerning his religious mission, a humiliating lawsuit revealed that Russell, the "self-educated theologian," could not even read the Greek alphabet!³

The greatest embarrassment for this prolific writer and speaker surely came in 1914. For almost 50 years, Russell had been teaching that Jesus returned invisibly in 1874. By using measurements from Gizeh's Great Pyramid to confirm his biblical speculations, Russell repeatedly published that the end of the world or "the destruction of all human institutions of this world" would occur "by 1914."⁴ Some time after Russell died in 1916, his grave was appropriately marked with a large pyramidalshaped headstone.⁵

1925—"The End" (Again!)

Russell's mantle soon fell on Joseph Franklin Rutherford whose 1920 booklet "Millions Now Living Will Never Die" set 1925 for the world's end.⁶ By 1930, Rutherford had moved into a San Diego mansion, Beth-Sarim ("House of the Princes"). This palatial estate, where Rutherford wintered during the Depression, was built for Old Testament "faithful men . . . [who were] expected back from the dead *any day* *shortly before Armageddon*."⁷

In 1941, Rutherford's Watch Tower Society was urging its members to delay marriage due to the "*remaining months before Armageddon*."⁸ Some time after Rutherford died of cancer in 1942, Beth-Sarim, an extravagantly visible reminder of false prophecy, was sold.⁹

Much of subsequent Jehovah's Witness (JW) leadership has failed at end-time prophecy. JW leaders have also rejected both military service and blood transfusions for its members.¹⁰ Today, a small army of several million JWs, hoping to live forever on a paradise earth, regularly distribute multiple millions of their magazines, *Awake* and *The Watchtower*, in neighborhoods throughout the world.

"Another Jesus"

JWs teach that Jesus was Michael the archangel.¹¹ Yet, the Jesus who fearlessly rebuked Satan could hardly have been the Michael who was afraid to do so (compare Jude 9 with Matthew 4:10). Jesus is both fully God and fully human (Philippians 2:6-9).

Colossians 1:16 states concerning the preincarnate Jesus: "For by him were all things created...." Thus, Jesus (the Word) is our Creator God and not a created being (i.e., an angel; also see John 1:3). JWs distort the meaning of Colossians 1:16 by inserting the word "other" into their peculiar translation. Yet, "other" is not found in the Greek text of this verse.¹²

JWs also teach that the "originator of the 'trinity' doctrine" is Satan.¹³ The Bible teaches that there is but *one true God*; this God exists simultaneously as three divine persons. Each of these persons in the Christian godhead—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—is fully God *by nature* (Galatians 4:8). Thus, Christians believe in One God who is three persons.

A JW once mockingly said to me: "If you believe in one Father, one Son and one Holy Spirit and each is God, then you believe in three different gods because one *plus* one *plus* one is three."

I responded: "I believe in only one God. What is one *times* one *times* one?" He shot back a rote, wrong and programmed answer: "Three!" (He also claimed to have been a college graduate!)

The Bible teaches:

 There is one true God—Deuteronomy 6:4: "The Lord our God is one Lord." Yet, "one" does not necessarily mean one person. Adam and Eve were "one flesh" but two persons (Genesis 2:24). Thus there is some kind of plurality in the godhead.

The first biblical word translated "God" is plural in form (though it is used as a singular—Genesis 1:1). In Genesis 1:26, "God said, Let us make man in our image" The "us" represents whom?

Some say that God is here speaking to "angels," yet, where in the Bible are angels said to have been created in the image of God? (see James 3:9 and Hebrews 2:9) Couldn't the "us" be the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit?

- Two called Jehovah?—."... [T]he LORD [Jehovah] rained upon Sodom ... fire from the LORD [Jehovah] out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24). Couldn't this verse be referring to God the Son (Jehovah) on earth (see verse 18:1ff.) and God the Father (Jehovah) in heaven?
- Two called "Alpha and Omega"—JWs claim that the "Alpha and Omega" is "Almighty God, the Father."¹⁴ Yet, Jesus is also called the "Alpha and Omega."¹⁵ Both Father and Son are "Alpha and Omega" or eternal.
- 4. Name above every name—Part of Philippians 2:9 refers to Jesus' name: "given . . . a name which is above every name." JWs distort this verse in translation by inserting a word in brackets: "given . . . a name which is above every [other] name."¹⁶
- 5. How do you honor both Father and Son? Regardless of what one understands about our incom-

prehensible God, Christians are required to "honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" (John 5:23). Will you pray to, bend the knee to, or worship the Father? Then you should feel just as free to do the same concerning the Son!

If a JW knocks on your door, ask him to read John 5:23. Ask him if he believes it. Then ask him if he will get on his knees with you and call on Jesus, as Stephen did (see Acts 7:59). You may be surprised at his response, but he will never forget your appropriate biblical challenge.

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Endnotes

(Recommended reading materials in bold face)

- 1. Edmond Charles Gruss, *Apostles of Denial* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1986), pp. 38-39.
- 2. Ibid., pp. 38-41.
- 3. Ibid., pp. 42, 45-47.
- Raymond Franz, Crisis of Conscience (Atlanta: Commentary Press, 1983), pp. 145-149, 157-159; also see Studies In The Scriptures, Series III (Brooklyn: International Bible Students Association, 1924), pp. 309-364.
- 5. See Comments from the Friends, Fall 1988.
- Gordon E. Duggar, Jehovah's Witnesses Watch Out for the Watchtower!(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 39ff.
- Italics added by author; Franz, p. 196; *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers* of God's Kingdom (New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., 1993), p. 76.
- 8. Italics added by author; Franz, pp. 196-7.
- 9. Ibid., pp. 60, 196 footnote 7.
- Duane Magnani, *Danger At Your Door* (Clayton, Ca.:Witness, Inc., 1987), pp. 61, 256ff.
- 11. Aid to Bible Understanding (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., 1971), p. 1152.
- Compare the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, 1961 Ed. (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., 1978), p. 1274 with The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures, 1969 Ed. (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., 1969), p. 896.
- 13. Let God Be True (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., 1946), p. 82.
- 14. *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., 1985), p. 413.
- 15. Compare Revelation 1:11-17, where Jesus, "the Son of man," is "the first and the last," with Revelation 22:13, where "the first and the last" is "Alpha and Omega." Also see Isaiah 44:6.
- 16. The word "other" is not found in the Greek text. Compare New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, p. 1271 with The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures, p. 885.



By James Vallance

Fix-It Squad is a great means of helping folks in need. Let me answer some questions about a Fix-It Squad.

Who is in a Fix-It Squad?

A Fix-It Squad is made up of as many men as wish to be of service. Young men seeking new skills can pair up with men who have those skills and learn while doing. Retired men who wish to maintain their sharpness with a skill may devote time.

Busy middle-aged men may want to put some "feel" and "touch" into their service ministry. Keep in mind that the meaning of the word, "minister," is to give aid or help. All ages are welcome to belong.

What is a Fix-It Squad?

Master's Men promotes this concept for its chapters. But, any church can utilize the concept as long as you have the one necessary ingredient: men. A Fix-It Squad is made up of men in your church who help other folks in need.

Men in the building trades can offer help in areas where they possess skills. Men with automotive experience might better use their talents maintaining vehicles. Men with office skills might help others learn computer or office skills. Men pool their resources for tools or perhaps even spare parts.

When does a Fix-It Squad fix?

Once the men decide who will be involved and list their cumulative skills, they decide when to get together. Pick a day or evening. Have the pastor announce your intentions to the church or community. Advertise in the church bulletin or community newsletter, depending on the scope of your plan.

Pool your resources. Know what you can do. Don't attempt too much. Choose jobs that are simple. Make sure they can be accomplished in a short time. Plan for just an hour or two for each task. Later, special projects may be chosen demanding more time or labor commitments.

Where does the Fix-It Squad fix it?

Identify the folks who need help and the type of help you can offer. Set times for your Fix-It Squad to do the job. You may need to go to homes for some tasks. If so, make sure you have all the tools and parts to save valuable time. Let homeowners know exactly when to expect your men. Consult with them about what kind of task is to be performed.

Some Fix-It Squads may do all their work at the church. For instance, one evening might be set aside to change oil and filters in older members' or single parents' vehicles.

The simplest manner is to set appointments and have people come to a central location. Oil changes usually don't take too long. But planning is necessary. Be sure you have ramps, wrenches, a container for old oil, the correct filters and types of oil.

How does it all tie together?

The Fix-It Squad can be as simple or as complex as you want it to be. Your men might plan to have only one activity a month or quarter. Others might meet weekly for a certain number of times. Keep it simple. Don't ask anyone to do more than he is willing or able to do.

Remember, this is not for pay. Only one charge is required of those who receive help . . . a prayer. By telling people up front that a prayer is the correct way to finish up the job, they know no pressure will be applied to offer cash for services provided. Men who do the work should expect to do the praying. No pressure!

The only cost is for materials. And, depending on the type of task and the needs of the person, men may prefer to donate the materials.

The Fix-It Squad can be a spiritual force in your church and community. For instance, an unsaved elderly person might need help for a task that he cannot perform because of age or infirmity. By volunteering to do the work without pay, men of the church have opportunity to give a good witness and trust the Lord for an open door to invite that person to accept the Lord as Savior.

It is best not to apply pressure. Leave the person with a promise to be available if they need to talk or pray. They'll call you when they need you.

Will it work?

Of course it will! You just have to decide how you want it to work. Here are some ways men have used their Fix-It Squads:

What's Working Now

Men of Cofer's Chapel FWB Church in Nashville, Tennessee, provide, free of charge, an oil change every three months for vehicles of their older folks and single parents. They will also change the oil for other members who only have to pay for the cost of oil and filter. Men in another state gather once a quarter for a "Bright Idea." They visit their community's elderly members and offer to change light bulbs that might be burned out. This helps seniors avoid climbing on unsteady legs in dangerous locations and shaky situations.

That grandmother obviously cannot climb a ladder any more. Her light bulb has gone out in that dim stairway. She needs the bulb replaced. Yet, she may not want to "bother" anyone. That dim stairway could cause a broken leg or hip for someone who no longer sees well. Send the Fix-It Squad to the rescue. A few moments of caring and sharing, a prayer with her for services rendered, and the Fix-It Squad is on its way to another need.

Some folks don't know how to change the broken light switch, the loose tile in the bathroom, the leaky faucet, squeaky step or 1,001 other small problems. Some just don't have fix-it skills.

Men of First FWB Church in O'Fallon, Missouri, replaced the porch roof for a family in their church. In this past year they also framed a house and received \$5,000 for their labor. Twenty-five percent of those funds were given to Master's Men, the rest used for ministry in their church and state.

A Michigan group built a roof over a mobile home for a man too ill to work. They also spent one day chopping a supply of wood for the man's stove for winter.

The Master's Men (and some women!) of First FWB Church in Jasper, Alabama, help with roofing jobs. In the past two years they reroofed the parsonage and most of the church. Some families paid for the roof work on their homes, and that money was used to help the Alabama FWB Children's Home, the church's school program and the national Master's Men ministry.

Perhaps an older person with poor vision needs someone to read the Bible with them weekly. Someone could deliver the Sunday School lesson on cassette (available from Randall House Publications) or the Sunday sermon from their church. The Fix-It Squad could fix a "listening station" consisting of a tape player with headphones or speakers and do a weekly check on the equipment's performance. Don't forget the prayer!

What about single parents? They might need furniture assembled, a door hung for privacy, a child-proof gate at the top of the stairs. The Christmas season offers opportunities to assemble those special gifts with "some assembly required." Remember the prayer payment!

Men in your church can solve these problems quickly and inexpensively. Handy men have more spare parts lying around the garage than they'll ever use. A simple solution is available in your church to cut spiraling repair costs of electricians, plumbers, carpenters and other skilled workers.

Remember this simple equation: Need + Opportunity x Availability + Willingness = Prayer answered, job accomplished, money saved and blessing given!

Beyond Local Fix-It Squads

There's one final question: *Is there* something I can do beyond the work of a local Fix-It Squad?

Excellent question. The answer is a resounding, "Yes!" A number of opportunities exist right now for further involvement:

Idea #1

Donate good tools to the Master's Men Missions Tool Shed Project. Missionaries need worn-out tools replaced or new tools for new projects. Fourteen men went to Cuba in 1991, took tools valued over \$3,500 and left them for the churches to use in construction programs. Home and foreign missionaries request tools which we try to provide.

Idea #2

Your group can schedule a mission work trip. Many workers helped in Mexico the past two years. Groups have traveled to Cuba yearly since 1991. Workers traveled to Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, the past three years. Many churches need help here in the United States, probably one near where you live.

Idea #3

Your group can get involved with

one of our "Build-A-House" projects. This concept provides future funding for Master's Men Department. Several homes were constructed using volunteer builders. Funds were donated by the homeowner/builders to the department as a thanks offering for the help. Now, funds are available to almost completely finance the construction of a home.

That structure, to be built by volunteers, will be sold. The profit from the sale goes to Master's Men for funding. The second "Build-A-House" project in Arkansas provided another home for a family, and the profit of the sale is used in the work of Master's Men.

Idea #4

Disaster relief efforts always need volunteers willing to clean up, rebuild destroyed structures and offer general aid to families in need. Clothing distribution and food preparation are just two important services for disaster victims.

Free Will Baptist men could do the same thing for churches. Some of our churches are uninsured. When fire or flood devastates, the congregation needs help. Fix-It Squads could provide valuable assistance. Churches with extra songbooks (or older sets) could donate them. Unused tables, chairs, desks could also be given.

Idea #5

Challenge your men to become part of the biggest Fix-It Squad . . . Master's Men. Manpower is always welcome in Master's Men. Your men can see personal growth, spiritually and numerically, by becoming Master's Men.

Idea #6

Provide funding from your men or church to help in any or all of these ministry activities of your national Master's Men ministry. Every good work must be supported some way. Perhaps you are God's instrument to help Master's Men accomplish good works in His name.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Mr. James Vallance served 15 years as director of the Master's Men Department. He resigned in December 1997.

Learn from your mistakes.

Draw Three Lines

By Tim McDonald

t was hot, early September, 30 years ago. With school starting, the aging teacher was laying down "English" law!

"You will maintain a spiral notebook of at least 120 pages meeting my personal approval. You will write the questions I designate, leaving space for answers, finishing if necessary at the end of each lesson.

"If you make a mistake, you will not tear out that page nor will you blot it through; simply draw three lines through the mistake and go on. I want workbooks, not works of art!"

Later I learned she had a Ph.D. in language. Decades later I realized she also carried a doctorate in "common sense." Better advice on living does not exist.

For years I have seen this advice ignored to personal detriment and national destruction. Whenever you "mess up," it is best to draw three lines through your mistake and go on.

Many refuse this advice, trying to make their life a work of art. They tear out pages at each miscue and start over endlessly, seeking a spotless record. They never progress beyond their initial mistake, achieve no progress and never learn from "trial and error."

Eventually they grow frustrated at lack of progress as their spiral notebook of life runs out of pages and the binding unravels.

Unfortunately, some never allow others to progress beyond their failures. They hold everyone up to the incessant ridicule of their perceived perfect standard. They conveniently misremember their past and demand absolute compliance to their imagined standard.

Antithesizing the "worker of art" are those who cross through, mark over, blot out, then erase to perforation the fabric of their lives. They go over and over their mistakes, seeking absolute removal. They carry their mistakes through life, never finding victory.

An alternative form of failure is refusal. Certain individuals stare down life's mistakes by ignoring them. These people heedlessly careen through life refusing reality, trampling underfoot the feelings of anyone disagreeing with them.

They are as subtle and successful as a car driven with a flat on the interstate at the speed limit. Most people around them are made fully as miserable as they are within themselves.

The only way to deal with life's mistakes is to follow the good doctor's instructions. Draw three lines through a mistake and go on. Our lives are workbooks, not works of art. They are lived in the real world, not sealed and hung in museums. Mistakes happen.

This "three lines" advice works whether in relation to God or man. I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Whenever you make a mistake in life, confess to yourself and the aggrieved party—whether God, man, mate, family, friend or foe—"I made a mistake and I am truly sorry." Ask sincerely for forgiveness from that individual for any wrong done.

Once forgiveness has been sought, realize you have done all you can and go on by living so as to never repeat that mistake. You will become a better person and prove to the injured and all involved parties your sorrow over your mistake. Draw those three lines and go on with your life.

This plan works with God, man and inner man. Your life will not be a work of art, but it will be an attractive lifelong work, improving as years pass. You will leave a book of works others can see and learn from. As a consequence, they live a better life, making the world that much a better place.

This works *if* you draw three lines through your mistakes and go on with the greatest artistry—living!

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Tim McDonald pastors Pearce Chapel Free Will Baptist Church in Smithville, Mississippi.

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A parent's worst nightmare "Oh, Shaun, What Have You Done?"

By Carol Braden

ctober 28, 1996, seemed like a normal Monday in Tulsa, Oklahoma. My husband Les went to Kansas to get his work truck and wasn't due back until that evening. My13-year-old son Shaun, the last of three children left at home, was in the eighth grade.

This was report card Monday, a day we all dreaded. For four years, report card day had been a battle. One of two things happened: We got the cards along with disappointment, yelling, excuses and then grounding. Or, more often than not, we got lame excuses for why the report cards were delayed.

Shaun was quiet and never talked about his problems or troubles. He never talked back or was disrespectful even when caught doing something wrong. Everyone liked him. The previous year we noticed a change in his behavior—lying, stealing small amounts of money, being less social with old friends.

The Way We Were

We did the typical parent thing, telling his older sisters, "Take him with you and make sure you watch out for him." We discovered that Shaun, then age 12, had been smoking marijuana with most of the credit going to his sisters.

Even before the marijuana usage, we had been taking Shaun to counseling. Then we started random drug testing on our own. We thought we were doing all we could. We taught our children right from wrong. We said grace before every dinner. We went to church twice a year, on Christmas and Easter. We told them God was real. We were active in sports with our son. We expected that would be enough.

God delivered my husband from alcohol abuse in 1993, through much prayer and a good AA program. We tried hard to be good people, but we never took time to grow in the Lord as Christians.

We knew the fundamentals. When our kids were small, we made sure they went to Sunday School and church. They were all baptized the same day.

We had the attitude that their relationship with God was their responsibility. We knew there would be a judgement day and we would just take our punishment. After all, we believed in Jesus' purpose on earth and God in Heaven, so we would be okay. Maybe we weren't saints, but we were not consigned to Hell, either.

What we really taught our children was this: As long as you're not *really* bad, there will be time when you get old to change your ways and get right with God—a kind of saved-by-the-bell attitude. We thought you could justify staying out of church if you tried to be a decent human being.

Black Monday

Back to that Monday. Shaun came home from school about 90 minutes before I got home from work at the post office. I would call him or he would call me. That day I asked him if he had brought his report card home. He said he had.

I asked about his grades. He told

me to wait until I got home to see them. I figured they were all right this time because he had stayed eligible to play football all season.

Driving home an hour later, I had the usual things on my mind: what to fix for supper, what time Les would be home, my daughter Alanda's birthday (she would be 18 on Halloween, three days away). No dark cloud hung over me, no mother's intuition kicked in.

Those who have children know that kids can do some freaky things close to Halloween. So when I walked in the door and saw Shaun lying in the floor in front the couch with red stuff on his face, I walked by telling him, "Very funny. If that stuff stains your shirt, you're in big trouble."

The space between our living room and kitchen is open so I could see him as I put my purse on the table and set my coffee cup down.

"Okay, Shaun, the joke's over. Get up now," I said. He didn't move. I was not overly-concerned because he played possum well.

I went back to the living room. My mind wouldn't or couldn't let me believe what I saw. A lump on his forehead between his eyes was covered in blood. At first I thought he had fallen.

Then I saw what I thought was his BB pistol on the couch and thought, "That nut was playing around, shot himself with his BB gun and knocked himself out."

When I picked up the gun, I knew it was not his BB gun but a real one. I didn't recognize it then, but later found out that it was an antique .35caliber pistol given to my husband by a friend, usually hidden in his office and unloaded. Five minutes after I got home, I knew what had happened. But it seemed like an eternity from the time I walked in the door until I realized my son had shot himself between the eyes with a gun. The only thing I remember saying was, "Oh, Shaun, what have you done?"

Almost Beyond Hope

Then I went on auto-pilot. I remember everything that happened like I was watching it happen to someone else.

When I made the 911 call, I sounded like a computer talking. I remembered to be clear and give good directions. We live in the country and can be difficult for emergency crews to locate.

Shaun was breathing but never moved. I sat beside him, holding the cordless phone. I knew better than to move him but did slide my hand under his head to see if the bullet had gone through. My hand came out dry. There was remarkably little blood.

I checked the front door every few minutes. When our neighbor came home, I yelled for help. He went to the main road to direct the ambulance.

The sheriff's deputy came first, then the volunteer fire department, then the local ambulance and then the Claremore ambulance. There were at least 20 people in my house.

Paramedics were working on Shaun so I went outside, held my daughter Leslie and told her what happened. Our other daughter Alanda was in Claremore. I called and told her and my mother to meet us at the hospital. I called Les' work and asked them to put a note on his car telling him to go to the hospital when he got back in town.

Emergency crews tried to wake Shaun. When they moved him, he cried out, "No, no! Leave me alone!" Those weren't wonderful words to hear, but they let me know that he could still talk.

Officials would not let me ride in the ambulance with him. They would be too busy and I would be in the way. The deputy didn't want me to drive, but I couldn't let my son get out of sight. The ambulance driver must have thought I was a safety hazard; I drove no more than 20 feet behind him.

The Long Wait

As soon as we arrived, medics disappeared with Shaun and I was alone. I took his insurance card to registration and answered their questions. Then I was taken to a small private waiting room for families of people who are in grave danger. I knew about that room. I had never walked out of one with good news.

I did all I knew to do. I answered the deputy's and paramedics' questions. I made sure my daughter was in good hands. I notified the immediate family and left a message for my husband. I made sure my son got the best care possible.

People tell me I was strong and helpful. I don't know how much was my strength, but I know that God was in control. I give Him credit for helping me function during the crisis.

When my mother and husband walked in, I went to pieces, crying and hysterical. By the time I calmed down, the whole family had arrived and we waited.

Shaun had been taken to Hillcrest Hospital in Tulsa because it was the closest. Doctors then decided to stabilize him and transfer him to Saint Francis Pediatric Intensive Care Unit.

Someone asked that just Les and I remain in the room. With the family outside, we were told we could go back to see Shaun. But we needed to know something first. Shaun had come to just long enough to pull out all his tubes and IVs, creating a real mess before they could sedate him.

They were right, there was blood everywhere. It was awful. We stayed only a few minutes before they prepared him for transport. He was heavily sedated and in arm and leg restraints.

A CAT scan revealed that the bullet was lodged in the bone separating the sinus cavity from the brain cavity behind the left eye. The doctor could not tell how much of the brain had been impacted by bone splinters or how much nerve damage had occurred.

The Prayer Lines

Our family drove to Saint Francis. Within an hour Shaun was settled in PICU. My closest friend Karen called and got Shaun on a prayer chain. More friends and family arrived, including friends and teachers of Shaun's. By this time it was midnight. We were amazed at how all the people knew. But in a small town, even the rescue teams are related to someone we know. Shaun was on five prayer lists.

More x-rays and CAT scans were performed. The neurologist on call, Dr. James Rodgers, one of the foremost neurologists and neurosurgeons in the country, came in the PICU waiting room. Dr. Rodgers is a Christian. We do not believe it was luck that put him there that night.

He said bone damage was extensive in the front of the brain, the nerve to the left eye completely severed, and the bullet lodged in the center of several major nerves and arteries. Doctors could do nothing except administer antibiotics and anti-swelling medications—and wait. Getting to the bullet was out of the question. The next four or five days would be crucial.

I found out where all the blood I thought should have been there, had gone. Over the next two days, over a gallon of blood was pumped from Shaun's stomach. It had drained down his throat.

By 2:30 a.m. things had settled. Leslie and I sat in Shaun's room. He was in front of the nurses' station hooked up to every machine possible except a ventilator. Until this point, I had not prayed. I spent the whole night trying to figure out how this could have happened. Not once had I thought it possible that Shaun could die.

Encounter with God

I wasn't close to God. My relationship to Him was tentative at best. But I did believe in Him with no doubts of His power.

This would be the perfect time to bargain with God or beg and plead. But in that quiet room with little light and my son's life hanging in the balance, I reflected on something else. I remembered how little I had done regarding my son's spiritual upbringing, what a poor example I had been, what a sacrifice God made with His own Son, Jesus Christ.

I was ashamed before God. He had given me three healthy children. But I had never considered their spiritual health my responsibility.

God sent the Holy Spirit to help

me understand the message He had for me, and I prayed the only prayer I could. I asked Him to forgive me, to have His will in Shaun's life, and to give me strength to handle whatever happened. I knew how little control I had over my children's choices in life. I was powerless. The chance I had to turn them over to God and raise them for Him was almost gone.

No matter what happened, I had to give God the credit He deserved, to appreciate the sacrifice of His Son and to live, grow and work as a Christian. He had my attention.

This understanding was not a lightning bolt from the sky. It was more like a parting of the curtain of excuses, a dawning of what my stubbornness and self-reliance had cost. For years I had depended on my strength alone and had come up short.

When Children Doubt

Shaun was awake intermittently the next few days. He fought his care every step of the way. He yanked out IVs and refused to cooperate with his treatment. He was restrained most of the time.

I asked him what he thought would happen to him if he died. Where would he go? He said he didn't think he would go anywhere. It would just be nothingness. He didn't believe there was anything past this life.

He said plainly that he did not have any will to live. Life wasn't worth the effort. I told him that if he didn't have his own will to live, I would have the will to live for him.

God gave me strength to stand strong in that room, but when I walked out I was like a sponge that had been wrung dry. Each time I walked back in, God helped me to be Shaun's strength when he had none.

Four more days we waited for signs of swelling or infection. I made no bargains with God. I asked that His will be done, that He continue to supply strength and show me how He wanted me to go.

Words cannot express how totally heart-wrenching it is to hear your child say he has no will to live. But live he did, making constant physical progress. Swelling never came. Infection never set in. Internal bleeding stopped. We, including the doctors, knew we were witnessing a miracle from God. Shaun was not lucky. He was blessed. A bullet between the eyes caused no permanent brain damage, very little nerve damage, and the loss of sight but not total movement to his left eye. There is no medical explanation. Satan allowed Shaun to pull the trigger but God protected him.

The Visitor

On one of Shaun's first days in intensive care, a young man came to visit. I don't know who called him. He told us he worked with the youth at his church, a church we had visited at Christmas and Easter, where a few of our friends attended. He asked if he could pray for Shaun with us.

The young man's name is Glenn Haueter, a member of Woodcrest Free Will Baptist Church in Catoosa. We gladly allowed him to pray with us and for us. He came back several times. The church sent flowers. We were told the whole congregation was praying for us. God sent Glenn as a messenger to show us which way to go.

After Shaun was released from the hospital, he went directly to a psychiatric hospital, but there was little improvement in his attitude. Doctors put him on Prozac, an anti-depressant, but he remained a hostile zombie. We could not get any satisfaction regarding Shaun, no communication from his psychiatrist. My husband and I vowed we would do the best we could to make up for the shortcomings in Shaun's spiritual upbringing. So I began looking for a Christian school.

The Sunday after Shaun was released from Saint Francis, my husband and I attended Woodcrest Free Will Baptist Church to thank God for His blessings and miracle. His Spirit was there and His message fell on eager ears. Members treated us with love and compassion. We felt welcomed, not judged.

The pastor addressed us personally and prayed for Shaun publicly. Glenn Haueter greeted us like long lost relatives, not people he had just met. Our friends, the people we knew and the people we had never met, treated us like family. We knew that we were where God wanted us to be.

The Change

We enrolled Shaun in Southpark Christian School and found a Christian psychologist. We all started attending Woodcrest FWB Church regularly.

Shaun is now an active member of the youth group. He has asked Jesus



to be his personal Savior. He has given his testimony at youth camp and revival and touched many lives. What a lesson to parents and what a testimony of God's love and power for kids!

As for me, God could have taught me this lesson without sparing my son's life. His generosity and love know no bounds. His forgiveness is incomparable. He did not reward me for my devotion to Him; that was lukewarm at best. What happened was truly divine intervention.

The shame I had for the way I treated God and His gifts has been forgiven and replaced by determination to worship. I am not the only one who has learned from this. My husband has been there every step of the way. He has learned and grown from this and has his own story to tell.

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Carol Braden is now a member of Woodcrest Free Will Baptist Church in Catoosa, Oklahoma.

The low down on Tripping on Our Tongues By Joan Martin

hen someone whispers, "I heard a story about Mike. If you promise not to tell, I'll share it with you," how do you reply? A gossip is said to be a person who repeats idle talk and rumors, especially about the private affairs of others.

The Right Kind

There are two kinds of gossip. The one I like goes like this: "I heard Gena is going to be honored for her work with kids in the projects. If it's true, we should have a surprise party for her."

Or, "David sure is nice looking. He's got a great voice too and I heard the choir leader would like to get him singing. But Dave's too shy. Why don't we just drop the info that people have remarked about his voice?"

Gossip gives people whose lives may be worlds apart a common interest on which to chat. Small talk flourishes on the office grapevine, in support groups, clubs of all kinds and even churches.

Is this always bad? Not necessarily. Healthy gossip will be kept only to news of what others are doing, and interesting bits of information we've learned. Then it can be a time of light and invigorating moments. Wanting to share information and compare notes is normal.

The Wrong Kind

Which of us hasn't fallen prey to the other kind: the tell-tale, busybody kind of chatter? Just after we've let the rumor hang out, we try to stuff it all in again.

Unfortunately much gossip is exclusive and cuts people out. If done in whispers and with a move to a corner, people become irritated. Just as the man or woman appears on TV to give us the latest Hollywood news, it is rarely positive.

The danger is pegging someone with a defect which will stick to him forever. If the rumor is about a character flaw, moral bent or stupid mistake, the person talked about may never be loosed from its effects.

The Personal Kind

Our family was the object of neighborhood gossip. Our son had become rebellious and we were doing our best to guide him back.

No one knew except a best friend, how we struggled and suffered over his skipping school and choosing the wrong crowd.

One day my friend was invited to a neighborhood coffee party. The subject at hand was my son. Ruth related to me that she listened for a few moments then stood to her feet and said, "These people are some of my dearest friends. I know they are doing their best to help their son. I cannot stand here and listen to this gossip, most of which is untrue, any longer." She left.

Most of the women present had pre-school or early school-age children. They had never dealt with teenage problems.

Today our son is a husband and father and giving advice to his own little boy and girl.

There are people in power everywhere who seem to have the "inside scoop" on information. They are the "head grapes" on the vine. Often their information is incorrect.

Today when I hear of someone else having trouble with a teen, I say, "I'll pray for them," and sometimes write a note saying, "We went through something the same as you. If you want to talk, I'm here."

The Biblical Kind

The book of James talks about taming the tongue. James likens it to a bit in a horse's mouth. With one pull, we can make the animal turn in any way.

A ship at large can be steered by a small rudder wherever the captain wants it to go.

A great forest can be set on fire and burned down by a small spark (James 3:3-5). How then can we keep our own tongues from running away too fast and loose with the reputation of an-

other, or information of which we are unsure? We can share a knowledge a little more thoughtfully and slowly. We can ask ourselves, "Is it really necessary to tell this? Will it do any good?" We can also ask God to hold us back from smearing the reputation of someone else.

As a child I overheard a telephone conversation between my mother and her friend. She said, "Someone told me the same thing you have said. We must be careful not to be the ones to make trouble in passing unfounded rumors around. Let's keep it between ourselves." They did.

I learned a lesson about gossip that day. Hopefully, I will pass on "good gossip" which when passed around will lift someone else up to feel good about themselves.

Someone said, "Gossip is taking my garbage and throwing it on your lawn," I'd like it said of me, "She takes the flowers of the grapevine and plants them in the gardens of others."

None of us would want to trust a gossip with the deep and personal details of our lives. We know they probably will gossip about us too.

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ABOUT THE WRITER: Mrs. Joan Martin is a freelance writer who resides in Wayzata, Minnesota. Joan is a member of the Minneapolis Christian Writer's Guild.

FREE WILL BAPTIST

Daniel Cronk, Missionary Statesman, Dies

NASHVILLE, TN—Reverend Daniel R. Cronk, missionary statesman and teacher, died November 20, 1997, after a lengthy battle with cancer. He was 74. He served 25 years as a Free Will Baptist missionary to India (1948-1972), and as field director.

After returning from India, Reverend Cronk served nine years on the faculty at Free Will Baptist Bible College (FWBBC) as a missions instructor. Twice, the National Association elected him to the Foreign Missions Board where he served 15 years.

Dan was converted to Christ in Detroit

in 1942 at age 19, licensed to preach that same year and ordained as a minister in 1943. He immediately enrolled at FWBBC and graduated in 1945.

Following a two-year pastorate (1946-1947) at Little Star FWB Church in South Carolina, Dan and Trula Cronk were commissioned as missionaries to India.

In addition to his studies at FWBBC, he graduated from Columbia International University and Middle Tennessee State University. He also attended George Peabody College and Scarritt College.

Memorial services were conducted November 23 at Horton Heights FWB Church where Brother Cronk was a member. He planned the entire service, se-

Camp Caleb Seeks Director

FLAT GAP, KY—Camp Caleb is seeking a director for the ministry at Flat Gap, Kentucky. The facilities include 265 acres in Eastern Kentucky. The camp property and buildings have been appraised at \$1 million, according to president James Cox.

The Camp, owned by a board of trustees, operates year round with summer camps, and retreats for adults, youth retreats and other activities during the fall, winter and spring. The facilities include three lakes, 250-seat dining hall, activity center, swimming pool, 290' water slide, cabins for the boys' and girls'



lecting not only the hymn stanzas to be sung, but also each person who was to sing or give testimonials.

Mark McPeak, addressing the gathering, said of Cronk's influence, "Dan and Trula were part of every important decision in my life."

Dr. L. C. Johnson who was president of FWBBC when Dan enrolled said, "I was Dan's teacher at first, then he began teaching me."

Trula Cronk, Dan's widow, said during the memorial service, "Dan was my best

friend. He was also my pastor, my teacher and my counselor. He taught me almost everything I know. And in the last three months, he taught me how to die."

Pastor Terry Eagleton ended the service with an invitation for Christian workers to rededicate themselves and for the unsaved to become Christians.

Reverend Cronk is survived by his wife of 52 years, Trula Gunter Cronk; one son, Randall and his granddaughter, Anka, all of Nashville; one brother, Charles, and two sisters, Joan Smith and Elizabeth Robbins of Michigan; another sister, Alma Rambo, of California and one uncle.

areas, and other facilities.

The new director must have a master's degree or a B.S. with work being done on the master's degree.

A complete job description is available by writing: Camp Caleb

ATTN: James Cox, President P. O. Box 252

Flat Gap, KY 41219.

Resumes should be submitted by those interested. An interview will be set up with the search committee.

Master's Men Director Resigns

ANTIOCH, TN—After 15 years at the helm as Master's Men director, Mr. James Vallance resigned to the board during its December 1, 1997, meeting. His resignation, with board approval, became effective immediately. The 53-yearold director began his work with the agency on August 1, 1983.

Prior to being named director, Brother Vallance served eight years as vice-chairman of the Master's Men Board while residing in Huntington, West Virginia. He also edited the monthly state paper, *The West Virginia Free Will Baptist*, for 10 years.

Vallance brought to the office seven years experience in radio broadcasting and two years in television programming. He has served on the Media Commission for 15 years.

His tenure as director was both a creative and a hands-on experience, pulling numerous major projects together. He spearheaded the LifeMembership and LifeFriends programs in 1985 that established a \$100,000 endowment trust fund for Master's Men.

Through Vallance's encour-

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agement, some 18 individuals (called Endowment Builders) have named the agency as beneficiary in wills, insurance policies and living trusts. Estimates place the value of those future gifts near the \$500,000 mark.

The agency established the "Build a House Campaign" in 1984, which resulted in more than \$34,000 to be applied to current indebtedness.

Other projects include a 52bed dormitory erected in Brazil in honor of John and Kay Metcalf, built in 1984. Master's Men have also helped erect 81 places of worship saving local congregations nearly \$4 million in construction costs. Work crews traveled overseas 11 times; Vallance accompanied them to Japan (1988) and Cuba (1991, 1996).

Mr. Vallance added Sports Fellowship to the Master's Men outreach in 1992 with an annual softball tournament and golf tournament.

In his resignation letter to the board, Brother Vallance said, "I love Free Will Baptists and its ministry for men. I will be praying for and supporting the Master's Men Board and the department."

His future plans were indefinite at press time.

The Master's Men Board is searching for a successor to Brother Vallance. During the interim, two local board members, Clarence Lewis and Thurman Pate, Jr., will oversee day-to-day office operations. Another board member, Clifford Donoho, will oversee publication of *Attack* magazine which will be downsized to newsletter format.

Georgia Names William Smith Executive Secretary

SAVANNAH, GA—The first major business decision at Georgia's 61st annual state association was the ratification of Pastor William Smith as executive secretary to succeed the retiring Herbert Waid who served 16 years. Smith, 41, assumed his duties January 1.

Smith, a West Virginia native, was pastor of Cedar Springs FWB Church in Blakely when his nomination was ratified during the November 13-15 state association at First FWB Church in Savannah.

Reverend Smith was instructed to relocate the state office from Moultrie and separate it from his residence. The office relocated temporarily to the Colquitt area while plans are finalized for a more central location. Delegates adopted a \$500,000 state budget for 1998, including \$175,000 in cooperative funds. Moderator Paul Smith was elected to his fourth two-year term. Some 198 people registered for the state association, with 54 ministers and 15 deacons.

In other action, delegates voted to adopt the Georgia ACTS 1:8 Plan to fund Georgia missionaries. More than 200 people attended a Friday evening tribute banquet honoring Herbert and Geraldine Waid.

The association theme, "Our Objective as a Church," was developed by six speakers, five of whom are Georgia pastors: Jeff Cockrell (Satilla FWB Church), Joel Hampton (Glennville FWB Church), Charles Barnard (White Oaks FWB Church), Rick Wilson (Lyons FWB Church) and Terry Hennecke (First FWB Church, Brunswick); as well as FWB executive secretary Melvin Worthington.

Home Missions staffer David Crowe spoke twice during the Thursday Bible Conference.

The Georgia Women Active for Christ met Thursday with 85 people attending. Missionary Debbie Griffin delivered the major message. Melinda Pinson from Colquitt led the devotional service.

The 1998 state association will meet November 12-14 at First FWB Church in Albany.

Reverend Stanton White with the Lord

WARREN, AR—Reverend Stanton B. White, who helped light the original gospel fire for Free Will Baptists in North Louisiana, died October 31, 1997. He was 84. Funeral services were conducted November 2 in Warren with Reverends R. V. White and Roy Grice, Jr., officiating.

Brother White ministered and pastored 46 years in Southeast Arkansas and Northeast Louisiana. He was one of those pioneer Free Will Baptist preachers who labored faithfully in part-time churches, driving thousands of miles each year to rural communities while working a full-time job during the week.

Contact editor Jack Williams said, "Stanton White was a man of great dignity. He moved through small communities with a spirit of humility and unconditional love. He was always a courteous Christian gentleman."

Williams continued, "Brother Stanton left a good

name and a good family. He invested all he had and all he was in the kingdom of God. I've never met a better man."

Reverend White was the son of a Free Will Baptist preacher, the late W. P. White. One brother, J. E. White, is a retired Free Will Baptist preacher.

At the time of his death, Rev. White was a member of Willoughby FWB Church in Warren. He retired from the Potlatch Corporation as a machine operator.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Helen S. White; two sons, Aaron White of Dumas and David White of Warren; two daughters, Sarah Smith of Tyler, TX, and Sue Aycock, a Free Will Baptist missionary to Brazil; two brothers, J. E. White of McGehee and Dee P. White of Warren; one sister, Marie Adams of Warren.

Oklahoma Pastor, Bob Mantooth, Dies

VALLIANT, OK—Reverend Bob Mantooth, pastor of Watermill FWB Church near Valliant, died Sunday morning, September 28, 1997, as he dressed for church. He was 73 years old and had pastored the Watermill Church eight years.

Brother Mantooth was converted in 1952, answered the call to preach a few months later and began pastoring in 1954. His 45-year pastoral ministry included 10 churches in Arkansas and Oklahoma.

He began and ended his pastoral career in Oklahoma, serving three churches (1954-1961) and returning to the state to lead the Watermill Church in 1990. Between 1961 and 1990, he pastored six churches in Arkansas—Mt. Joy, New Hope, Lodi, Hot

Springs, Pleasant Grove and Salem.

The November 1997 issue of *The Vision* (Arkansas state paper) said about Reverend Mantooth, "When Bob accepted the Lord, his whole life changed. He gave up everything to follow the Lord."

At Brother Mantooth's funeral, the officiating ministers, Reverends Bob Stuart and Hershel Rogers, gave an invitation. One person was converted to Christ and two were rededicated.

Reverend Mantooth is survived by his wife Edna; one son, Larry of Kirby, AR; two daughters, Vickie Belcher of Kirby and home missionary Elaine Parker of Shreveport, LA; his mother, Dolly Frost of Pauls Valley, OK; four brothers and one sister.

Commission Plans Mass Choir Recording in Tulsa

ANTIOCH, TN—The Free Will Baptist Music Commission ended their September 1997 meeting with firm plans for a mass choir recording project in Tulsa, Oklahoma, according to chairman Randy Sawyer. The ambitious project is scheduled July 10-11, the Friday and Saturday preceding the national convention.

The recording session is set at Rejoice FWB Church in Owasso, just north of Tulsa. Recording begins Friday afternoon/evening and continues Saturday, followed by a fellowship supper for all participants.

"This is a very exciting under-

taking for our commission and for Free Will Baptists. It will include songs that our people have held dear as part of our tradition, as well as new songs destined to become standards of the church," Sawyer said. "It's something no Free Will Baptist musician will want to miss."

Songs from the release will be used in worship by the mass choir during evening services at the convention, and attendees will have the first chance to purchase the project that week at the Music Commission booth. Production plans include cassettes, CDs, choral books and orchestration tracks.

"We need participation from everywhere for this project to be a success," Sawyer continued. "Singers from choirs with 10 voices or 100 voices all need to make preparations to be at the recording session."

Rehearsal music will be mailed this spring. Those who plan to attend and want the music should send a request to:

Reasons To Rejoice c/o Fellowship FWB Church 2518 Una-Antioch Pike Antioch, TN 37013 or e-mail to:

KJustMan@AOL.com.

Leadership Conference Explores Biblical Stewardship

NASHVILLE, TN-For two days in December 1997, some 140 Free Will Baptist leaders from 23 states revisited the deep wells of biblical stewardship in a series of workshops and tutorials. Meeting under the general theme, "The Grace of Giving," state and national leaders participated in what many called the most beneficial conference they had attended in years.

The December 1-2 gathering met at Nashville's Regal Maxwell House Hotel. Executive Secretary Melvin Worthington said, "We've needed this kind of solid Biblebased call for personal and denominational stewardship for a long time. This challenge could not have come at a more appropriate moment in our history with the denomination gearing up to move into the 21st century and take the gospel to the lost around the world."





Debe Taylor takes on the Worthington twins.

Frank Ingraham (L) and William Smith.



Billy Hanna ponders life.



Men listen to speaker.

Keynote speaker Al Taylor spoke four times stirring leaders with his open-Bible practical explanation and application of what

General Session.

tithing means to the Christian individually and the cause of Christ worldwide. Taylor serves as stewardship director for the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.).

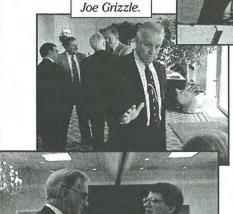
Nashville attorney Frank Ingraham presented an estate planning tutorial Tuesday morning, and then participated in an open forum with William Evans who directs the Board of Retirement. Mr. Ingraham is a member of the American Academy of Estate Planning Attorneys.

In addition to the conference agenda for all attendees, two other meetings addressed more specific groups. Dr. Melvin Worthington chaired a Monday afternoon fellowship meeting with the presidents of the Free Will Baptist colleges.



Dinner time!

Larry Powell has more fun than Howard Price.



Herbert Waid (L) and James Forlines.

National Association moderator Carl Cheshier chaired a twohour Tuesday afternoon meeting with the chairmen of all national boards. Cheshier said that the board chairmen plan to meet annually at the Leadership Conference to discuss mutual interests.

Three national boards took advantage of a four-hour window of free time Tuesday afternoon for committee meetings. Other attendees used the free time to fellowship or visit the national agencies in Nashville and Antioch.

Attendees paid \$125 each to participate in the conference. This fee included all meals, refreshment breaks, conference notebook and materials, as well as a book written by keynote speaker Al Taylor.

The 1998 Leadership Conference is scheduled December 7-8 at the Regal Maxwell House Hotel.

stronger than in recent years, according to Melvin Worthington. Tapes may be purchased at a cost of \$4 per tape plus \$2 per order for postage. **Tape Order Form** 000 Leadership Conference December 1-2, 1997 Name_____ Address City Mail Orders Only
· · · \$4.00 per tape \$2.00 per order for postage/handling Theme: The Grace of Giving Speaker Session Quantity Al Taylor — Session One **Monday Evening** Al Taylor - Session Two Monday Evening Frank Ingraham — Session One **Tuesday Morning** William Evans — Session One **Tuesday Morning** Frank Ingraham/William Evans -**Estate Planning Forum Tuesday Morning** Al Taylor — Session Three **Tuesday Evening** Al Taylor — Session Four **Tuesday Evening** Make Checks Payable to Sandy Goodfellow

Tape requests for the seven general session workshops have been

Sandy Goodfellow 500 Wilclay Drive Nashville, TN 37209 Sherwood Lee.

1998 State Association Meetings

State	Date & Time	Place & Address	State	Date & Time	Place & Address
Alabama	510115. 11010111501 5/ 1100 411	Madison FWB Church Madison		Starts: May 15, 7:00 pm Closes: May 16, 4:00 pm	West Michigan District Church selected later
	Starts: March 14, 10:00 am Closes: March 14, 3:00 pm	Community Fellowship FWB Ch. Phoenix		Starts: October 30, 9:00 am Closes: October 31, Noon	First FWB Church Amory
	Starts: August 5, 7:30 pm Closes: August 7, 9:00 pm	Camp Beaverfork/ Conway High School	Missouri	Starts: June 8, 7:30 pm Closes: June 11, Noon	First FWB Church Monett
Atlantic Canada	Starts: June 25, 7:30 pm Closes: June 28, 7:00 pm	Conway St. John Valley Bible Camp New Brunswick	New Jersey District	Starts: March 20, 7:00 pm Closes: March 21, Noon	Thompson Memorial FWB Ch. Vineland
District California	Starts: May 28, 7:30 pm Closes: May 30, Noon	Garden Grove FWB Church Garden Grove	New Mexico District	Starts: April 16, 1:30 pm Closes: April 18, 4:00 pm	First FWB Church Artesia
Colorado District	Starts: May 16 Closes: May 16	First FWB Church Cheyenne	North Carolina	Starts: June 8, 10:00 am Closes: June 9, Noon	Tabernacle FWB Church Kinston
Florida	Starts: May 6 Closes: May 9	Holiday Inn Convention Center Deland	Northeast District	Starts: November 6, 4:00 pm Closes: November 7, Noon	Linneus FWB Church Houlton
Georgia	Starts: November 12, 7:00 pm Closes: November 14, Noon	First FWB Church Albany	Northwest District	Starts: May 15, 7:30 pm Closes: May 16, Noon	Tri-Cities FWB Church Kennewick
Idaho	Starts: May 15, 7:00 pm Closes: May 16	Airport Road FWB Church Twin Falls	Ohio	Starts: June 26, 9:00 am Closes: June 27, Noon	Heritage Temple FWB Churc Columbus
Illinois	Starts: March 20, 9:00 am Closes: March 21, 3:00 pm	Bear Point FWB Church Sesser	Oklahom	a Starts: October 12, 7:30 pm Closes: October 15, 3:30 pm	Faith FWB Church Glenpool
Indiana	Starts: June 19, 7:00 pm Closes: June 20, 3:00 pm	Peace FWB Church Indianapolis	South Carolina	Starts: February 26, 9:30 am Closes: February 27, 3:00 pn	
Kansas	Starts: June 11, 7:30 pm Closes: June 13, Noon	First FWB Church Wichita	Tennesse	e Starts: November 9, 7:30 pm Closes: November 11, Noon	First FWB Church Elizabethton
Kentucky	Starts: June 19, 7:30 pm Closes: June 20, 4:00 pm	Hoods Creek FWB Church Ashland	Texas	Starts: June 10, 7:00 pm Closes: June 12, Noon	First FWB Church Duncanville
Louisian District	a Starts: January 17, 10:00 ar Closes: January 17	n Heritage FWB Mission Shreveport	Virginia	Starts: June 11, 7:00 pm Closes: June 12, 9:30 pm	First FWB Church Roanoke
Marylan	d Starts: June 18, 7:00 pm Closes: June 20, Noon	Mt. Calvary FWB Church Perryman	West Virginia	Starts: June 12, 9:30 am Closes: June 13, 3:00 pm	Heritage FWB Church Inwood
Mexico	Starts: July 30 Closes: August 2	El Uro Camp Monterrey			

CURRENTLY . . .

The Gold City Quartet gave a concert on behalf of the **FWB Children's Home** in **Turbeville**, **SC**, according to superintendent **James Wilhide**. **Tommy Barron**, Sumter County criminal investigator who coordinated the event, spent 13 years in the Home. More than \$8,000 was raised.

Pastor Lucian Baker reports 17 baptisms at Pleasant Hill FWB Church in Delaware, OH.

Ohio evangelist **Clovis Vanover** logged 33 revivals, kept an additional 82 preaching appointments and reports 178 professions of faith in 1997.

Eighteen conversions and rededications during Vacation Bible School have Pastor Kenneth Frisbee smiling at Akron FWB Church in Akron, OH.

Reverend Marion Markin celebrated 40 years in the ministry. He pastors Black Oak FWB Church in Jackson, OH.

Pastor Brad Duncan reports five conversions and four baptisms at Victory FWB Church in Margengo, OH.

Members of Lockbourne FWB Church in Lockbourne, OH, paved their parking lot and built a fellowship hall. Pastor Bert Miller reports 10 conversions, 11 baptisms and nine new members in two months.

Twelve conversions and eight baptisms at Victory FWB Church in Springdale, AR, convinced Pastor Bruce Thurman that it was high time to start a new converts class.

Something is happening at Calvary FWB Church in Springdale, AR. In three years attendance has surged from 120 to over 400. Pastor Clark Snow reports 37 conversions and a dozen new members.

During homecoming at **Beech Springs FWB Church** in **Saltillo, MS**, members raised more than \$7,200 to pay off the church's indebtedness. Then, one member stepped forward to pay off the debt himself and told the church to put the \$7,200 in the treasury. Pastor **Earl Langley** received two sport coats as an appreciation gift.

The Alabama FWB Children's Home at Eldridge celebrated 50 years of service in 1997. Executive Director Levy Corey renamed the Home's newsletter to begin their second halfcentury—*The Village Voice*.

In preparation to relocate the former Randall Christian Academy, Cross Creek FWB Church in Olive Branch, MS, began construction on a 6,850square-foot annex. The new building will house school offices, classrooms and a fellowship/recreation area. J. L. Gore pastors and Dick Williams serves as school administrator.

The **Mississippi Master's Men** set a new attendance record when 77 registered for the state retreat. Evangelist **Van Dale Hudson** preached to the men. President **Bobby Birmingham** predicts that more than 100 men will attend the 1998 retreat.

Pastor James Sellers says that people sometimes use unusual modes of transportation to attend Bethlehem FWB Church in Berlin, GA. Since Mrs. Ruby Johnson no longer sees well enough to drive her car, her 13-year-old grandson (Curtis Akridge) brings her to church on a golf cart! Pastor Sellers also reports 13 new members. The church replaced the roof and purchased a steeple—without going into debt.

New Hope FWB Church in Empire, GA, reports 14 new members. Tony Howell pastors.

Pastor Carl Miller baptized 14 people at Double Branch FWB Church in Unadilla, GA.

More than 400 people attended the 35th anniversary celebration at Cavanaugh FWB Church in Fort Smith, AR. Former pastor Wade Jernigan spoke to the assembly. Will Harmon pastors.

Blue Point FWB Church in Cisne, IL, cheered in their centennial year, according to Pastor Ernie Lewis. All attendees received a printed history of the church and a commemorative bookmark. Former pastor Gene Norris preached during the morning service. The church then released 200 balloons in praise and thanksgiving.

Home missionary Ron Parker re-

ports nine conversions and 11 rededications at **Heritage FWB Mission** in **Shreveport, LA.** Their growing bus ministry brought 31 children to one Wednesday evening service.

First FWB Church in Weleetka, OK, placed a 25-foot steeple atop the church, according to Pastor Jerald Bass. Some 190 people attended the church's 55th anniversary celebration and heard Ernest Harrison, Jr., speak.

Members of **First FWB Church** in **Henryetta, OK**, celebrated their 50th anniversary, according to Pastor **John Staggs.** The church organized in November 1947 with 23 charter members. Nineteen pastors have served the congregation. Former pastor **Albert Collier** (79) preached the anniversary sermon.

Dibble FWB Church in Dibble, OK, has served the community for 92 years. Lewis Cox pastors.

After retiring in 1995, Reverend **Bailey Thompson** never expected to pastor another church. But 40 people who wanted to start a new church in **Roland, OK**, asked for his help. Now Pastor Thompson leads **Roland FWB Church**, a congregation averaging 90 in attendance. The group paid \$30,000 for three acres on which to build.

Pastor Dennis Keen reports 27 baptisms at Mt. Calvary FWB Church in Perryman, MD.

Ahoskie FWB Church in Ahoskie, NC, reports 10 baptisms and 12 new members. The church also organized a men's fellowship and implemented a number of youth activities. David Harper pastors.

High Point FWB Church in Lancaster, SC, is on the grow. Pastor Stuart Snow reports 42 conversions and rededications, 13 baptisms and 10 new members.

Southside FWB Church in Aiken, SC, broke ground for their first building, according to home missionary Mark Barber. Ninety-one people attended the special service. State home missions director Earl Hendrix was guest speaker.

BOARD OF RETIREMENT

Retirement, How do you find it? . . .

By William Evans

What kind of money are you putting into your Retirement Account?

Money is money, isn't it?

The answer is yes, but . . .

Participants in the Free Will Baptist Retirement Plan are given a personal account number upon enrollment. Each contribution is credited to your personal account. How is it credited within each account, is the important question.

Deposits may be credited to your retirement account as Émployee, Salary Reduction or Employer contributions or combinations of two or more areas.

Employee contributions (EE) are received directly from the participant. Deposits are generally drafts on the participants personal checking account. Taxes have already been paid on the principal of these deposits. Earnings on these personal deposits are taxable and in the year earned are reported to the participant on a Form 1099. However, if the participant has a Salary Reduction Agreement on file, the earnings from EE funds will be considered SRA accumulations and be tax-deferred.

Employee contributions and vested earnings are available for withdrawal upon 90 days written notice. All the funds may be borrowed for a modest rate of interest repayable over five years.

Who should make EE Contributions:

- · Those with income not subject to taxation.
- Those whose church/employer will not make ER contributions or service a SRA program.
- Those who contribute the maximum taxsheltered funds.

Salary Reduction contributions (SRA) are taken from the participants pay by the employer and forwarded to our office on an agency check. This requires an agreement signed by both the participant and employer stating the percentage or actual dollar amount to be withheld. The SRA is a legal contract that can be revoked by the participant at any time. Change in employment automatically revokes the existing agreement.

All deposits and earnings in an SRA accumulate tax-deferred. SRA accumulations when paid out will be subject to income tax in the year received unless paid as retirement housing allowance.

SRA funds may be borrowed by the participant. Loans are limited by federal regulations to 50% of the SRA account or \$50,000, whichever is less. Interest is reasonable with repayment over five years. Settlements from SRA funds are available at age 62 or thereafter, or the earlier disability or death of the participant.

Who should make SRA contributions?

- All ordained workers and others whose income is subject to tax. Contributions should be large enough to fill the income gap between Social Security, employer provided benefits and your income needs in retirement.
- Most financial advisors recommend maximum contributions to 403(b) and 401(k) plans before IRA investments.
- Those who want to take a active role in preparing for retirement.

Employer Contributions (ER) are those contributions made by the employer over and above the agreed salary.

Employer contributions are paid by a church/company check. All ER contributions and earnings accumulate tax-sheltered. Full participant access to the funds are available at age 62 or later, disability or death.

Which employers should make contributions?

•Every Free Will Baptist Church or agency with an employee *full* or *part-time*.

The IRS limits tax-sheltered contributions to 403(b) plans to the lesser of 25% of taxable pay or \$10,000 for 1998. Contributions of both SRA and ER funds must be included in calculating these limits.

Each individual should consider these three deposit and accumulation options. Ask yourself, how will this impact my income tax picture now? in the future? Which way will provide the greatest retirement benefit for me?

If you are participating in the plan, increase your contributions for a better future. If not, call for an enrollment packet today. Starting today is very important.

DEPERTMENT PAGES



FOREIGN MISSIONS

Our Inheritance

By Nathan J. Weidner

Not long ago, my wife and I were invited to a housewarming party for a couple in our church. They had purchased land in the country years earlier and had to wait until they could acquire the financial means to start construction. Once this was achieved, they



Nathan and Kreszena Weidner

spent over a year pouring their time and energy into its completion. It was a long, tedious project, but in the end we could all witness the good fruit of their labor.

A Shelter

People walked from room to room, examining the handiwork of the architecture and the decorations. It is a beautiful house by all standards, but by far what is more enchanting about the structure is its purpose. That house will be a shelter for a husband, a wife, and three children. They will experience many joys there, and they will grow up, grow together, and grow old within its walls.

We have had numerous occasions to go into a couple's home and observe what is being done to improve its appearance or function for the needs of the family. It is a blessing to see how God is providing stable, lifelong environments for the families who are serving Him, and it creates a yearning in our hearts to have the same. Yet we know that we shall never have these things.

No Permanent Home

We are preparing to be foreign missionaries. We cannot establish a home here in America because God has called us to a nation in need of His Word and His love. We know that, if we achieve our goal as missionaries, we can never expect to stay in one place for life. We will pitch our tent in a city until the people there have a church with a national leader which can support itself and is capable of spreading the gospel to its own community. Once this goal is achieved, we will pull up our tent and move on to an unevangelized area.

Sometimes when my wife and I discuss this aspect of a missionary's life, we can easily become downhearted. At those times we have to remind ourselves of the promise that God made to the Levites in Deuteronomy 18:1,2.

The Levites, like us, had been called from among the others of their time to be spiritual leaders. Their calling was to lead the nation of Israel in worshiping the one true God. God needed them to live in each of the regions occupied by other tribes, so He did not set aside any land for them. "Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren:" He stated, then added, "... the Lord is their inheritance"

God Will Provide

When I read this not long ago, it encouraged my heart. What a joy it must have been for the Levites to know that, even though they were not given land to call their own, God would provide for them. They would have a place to lay their heads and food to eat, yet their work for the Lord far exceeded the importance of owning earthly territory. Their treasures were to be laid up in heaven.

My wife and I may never have a dwelling that we can call our very own, but wherever we go we will always have a home where our loving God will watch over us as we carry out the work to which He has called us. He is our inheritance, and that is more than sufficient for us.

Heartbeat Changes

Heartbeat, the official publication of Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions, will be changing appearance with the July-August issue. Watch for its new look and for the supplemental publications planned to meet specific needs. For information, write to *Heartbeat*, P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002.

Nathan J. Weidner is a second-year missionary intern at Heritage Temple FWB Church in Columbus, Ohio. He and his wife, Kreszena, are hoping to go to France as career missionaries.



WOMEN NATIONALLY ACTIVE FOR CHRIST

Woman's Window on the World

By Mary R. Wisehart

From My Window

"Look at these bananas," I said to Karl, supervisor in the cafeteria. "I've opened three and they were all bad."

"I know," he said. "These bananas are bad, but you can't tell until you open them."

He was right. The skins looked good, but when I peeled the banana, I couldn't eat it.

"You can't tell until you open them."

I thought about Karl's statement as I sorted through my mail that evening.

Do you get as many appeals as I do from this organization and that charity wanting a contribution? Some of them seem very worthy of support. Some mention things I really want to be involved with.

I want to give where the giving really counts. I want the funds I have to distribute to do as much good as possible. I know some organizations and charities merit support.

But how do we know which ones are really worthy of support? Can we peel back a layer and check out the group? Yes, in this instance, I think we can.

Organizations that have been around for many years and are known for using their funds wisely and well are worthy of support. Those are easy to spot.

Sometimes you can simply check the Better Business Bureau. If they have a record or have received calls and complaints, they will be glad to let you know.

Ask for a financial statement from the organization or charity. Any group that operates as a solid charitable organization will be happy to send a financial statement.

Check to see how much of your gift will actually go to the charity or purpose of the organization.

An organization that spends 90% on administration and fund raising and 10% on the program it sponsors, is not worthy of support.

How about the man or woman you meet on the street asking for money? Certainly, we should give to the poor. The Bible is clear on this matter. We should, however, be as "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" in our giving.

Do you give regular tithes and offerings to

your church? Does the church have an outreach to the needy? Do you have a rescue mission in your town? These missions are generally well operated and seek to serve the homeless and needy people on the street. Trust your funds to these groups.

We should be generous in our giving. We should be cheerful givers. We should support our churches and our denominational enterprises. (Check the church covenant and you will see that we obligate ourselves to support when we join a Free Will Baptist church.)

But remember to peel away the layers before you give to every appeal that comes to your mailbox.

A Letter from Silas, Scholarship Recipient

My family and I are happy to give you all our thanks for the help you have sent us for a second time to pay our cost at the institute.

Please receive our heartfelt thanks. The Lord has done great things for us all the time we've been in school. We think that it is also a challenge he has prepared for us.

Pray for us that we will take up this challenge in a way worthy of His Name.

We pray that WNAC will work effectively for the progress of the gospel.

Our affectionate greetings in Christ, Yao Kouassi N'Guettio Silas Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

WNAC maintains a Foreign Student Scholarship Fund for use in areas where Free Will Baptists have work abroad.

Silas and his wife are taking classes at the CMA Bible Institute in Yamassukro. His wife may take the same classes as he as an auditor without charge.

The above letter came from Abidjan because Silas is doing his pastoral internship with the group in that city.

February is the month WNAC emphasizes gifts to the fund. We have a great opportunity to assist in the training of young men and women for the work of Christ.

Your gift to the Foreign Student Scholarship Fund will help to provide these scholarships.

GREEN TREE BIBLE STUDY

Judas—The Betrayer

o borrow from President Roosevelt in 1941, here's a name that ranks high in the annals of infamy. The name has become a synonym for traitor. We wouldn't even put it on one of our dogs. The other apostles can hardly mention him—not even in the lists (Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke.6:16) without adding that he is the one who betrayed Jesus.

We are hard put to conceive that one of the 12 could betray the beloved Lord Jesus—until we look deep in our own souls and find the same potential there. Then we reluctantly acknowledge that Judas was one of us and simply yielded to a temptation we all find pulling at us.

What was he thinking? Why did he betray the Lord? We won't know for sure until we can ask Him who knows all that is within man. Some suggest he was severely disappointed that Jesus was not aggressively seeking to take the reins of authority, that he wanted to force His hand, never dreaming He would submit to arrest and execution. Perhaps. Others suggest that he was money hungry and the temptation of the 30 silver pieces overcame him. Even more likely.

Judas plays prominently on several occasions, and they all reveal his character. When Mary "wasted" precious ointment on Jesus a week before His death, Judas protested that it might have been sold for the benefit of the poor. But by the time John described this incident he had come to understand that Judas was thinking only about himself, and about the moneybag he carried and helped himself to, from time to time. (See John 12:3-8.)

His arrangement with the priests, whatever else his motivation might have been, also reveals his self-centered greed. (See Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6.) For several days, then, he was occupied with seeking just the right opportunity to give Jesus over into the hands of His enemies as quietly as possible.

We can only wonder what he felt at the Last Supper.

Jesus as good as told him He knew his heart and purpose (Matt. 26:21-25; cf. John 13:21-27). Surely he must have felt some tug, some echo of accusation in his own soul, some sense of shame.

How much more in the Garden when he led the priests and palace guard to the quiet place where Jesus often prayed! (See Matt 26:47-50; Mark 14:43-46; Luke 22:47,48; John 18:1-5.) Could he at all look into the eyes of the One who called him "Friend"?

Did his own respectful greeting "Rabbi" want to stick in his throat? The scenes fairly cry out for some insight into his emotions, but we are left to wonder at the tragedy of a man who had so much opportunity and threw it over for his own gain.

Not that the profit did him any good. Overcome with remorse (I can not bring myself to say repentance), he flung the blood money back at those who suborned him and took his own guilt-ridden life (Matt. 27:3-5). Here is one of the lessons for us. Ill-gotten gain often turns on us and destroys us. When we love ourselves at the cost of principle, or of others, we love ourselves to death.

Just how did Judas die, anyway? Matthew, who certainly should have known, says he hanged himself. But Acts 1:18 records the words of Peter, who also certainly should have known, that "falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out."

There is no need to imagine a contradiction here; both are no doubt true—even if we can't tell ex-

actly how. One very plausible suggestion is that he hanged himself from a tree limb over the edge of a precipice and the rope broke, followed by what Peter described. This way, observers wouldn't have been sure which part, exactly, killed him.

What shall we say about Judas' spiritual condition along the way? That, too, is difficult to be sure about. Calvinists have no "problem," since they're quite sure apostasy isn't possible and he never was saved. And we can't dogmatically deny that possibility; as early as John 6:70-71, Jesus revealed that one of the 12 "is [present tense] a devil."

We also can't deny that Judas might well have come to know Jesus as his Savior and subsequently committed apostasy. At least it's clear that "by transgression he fell" from his place of ministry and apostleship, if not from a saved condition (Acts 1:25).

Regardless, we have no doubt about the destiny of this one who "went to his own place." And there lies the tragedy, as I've already suggested. One who had such opportunity, who walked closely with Jesus for many months, who heard clearly the gospel and its various implications, who witnessed first hand the miracles, who joined in the discussions about the meaning of Jesus' words that one failed to obtain eternal life.

In I Corinthians 10:1-5 Paul has something similar to say about the Israelites in the wilderness. He concludes (v. 12) with the lesson that we also ought to see in the experience of Judas: "Wherefore let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."



ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PREACHERS

Hospital Visitation

isiting sick church members in the hospital is a responsibility and pleasure for the young preacher. He should attack this challenge with great enthusiasm and vigor. Hospital visitation is a wonderful opportunity of ministering in the name of Jesus Christ, showing His love and reaping a bountiful harvest. Accept this pastoral responsibility with a determined purpose to be a blessing and produce spiritual fruit.

Some Don'ts

- Don't sit on the bed.
- Don't stay too long.
- Don't talk about yourself.
- Don't quote Romans 8:28.
- . Don't visit if you are sick.
- . Don't stand on the oxygen tube.
- Don't tell the nurse the patient's illness.
- Don't ask the nurse to take your blood pressure.
- Don't eat the patient's food.
- Don't volunteer to move the patient back to bed.
- Don't pray for the Lord to punish the patient even more.
- Don't inform the patient's family that he probably won't live through the night.
- Don't tell the patient about someone who died with the same illness.
- Don't ask the sick person how much the hospital room is costing each day.
- Don't tell the patient's roommate how great his sins have been in the past.
- Don't tell a joke when the sick one is in pain.
- Don't fall asleep.
- Don't keep saying you have to leave and continue to stay.
- Don't sneeze on the patient's food.
- Don't forget to pray.

Some Do's

Visit with a plan. Write the names of those to be visited in a small book. Keep their names, praying for them even after they leave the hospital. In church services when you learn about those who have been placed in the hospital, immediately record the names in your small hospital visitation book. Ask your church congregation to keep you informed.

Visit with a purpose. Sick people have not only physical needs but spiritual burdens. Read or quote scripture. Pray. Promise your continued prayer support—and keep your promise.

Once I read Psalm 23 to a lady in a coma. When she came out of the deep sleep, she stated that the only activity she remembered in intensive care was my reading Psalm 23.

Visit with patience. Yes, you are a preacher. But respect the hospital's rules. Wait until the doctor leaves the room. Detain your visit while the nurse dispenses medication. Exercise your pastoral privilege with care and concern.

Visit with preparation. Appropriate gospel tracts, booklets and church literature should usually be left in the hospital room. Because many patients are so heavily medicated that they may not remember your visit, leave your card or church brochure.

Visit with personal care. Place a mint in your mouth, assuring that your breath is pleasant. Park your automobile as far away as possible and walk the steps to provide exercise for your body. Always visit the restroom before leaving the hospital to wash your hands. Take vitamin C with extra dosage when you are in the hospital regularly. As you get older, be sure to get a flu shot annually.

Visit with perception. It is possible to exaggerate the illness of a church



Dennis Wiggs

member. The young preacher may feel qualified to play doctor as he visits often in hospital rooms. That's dangerous. It is best to be preacher/pastor and minister to the spiritual needs of those who need you so very much.

Visit, producing spiritual fruit. Some patients will trust Christ as Savior. Others will renew their vows to the Lord. Many will become more committed to Christ as they travel through illness. Still others will learn to cope successfully with a terminal illness.

The young preacher can have a vital part to play in these eternal decisions. With a small New Testament in his hand, a notebook to record names of patients, wearing appropriate clothing and a prayer in his heart, the young preacher will find hospital visiting productive and fruitful.

Directory Update

LOUISIANA

Stanley Vandergrift to Hillview Church, Bastrop from Fellowship Church, Stillwater, OK

MISSISSIPPI

Tim McDonald to Pearce Chapel Church, Smithville from Marvin Chapel Church, Marianna, FL

OHIO

Kevin Brice to Community Church, Silver Grove Herb Davis to Forest Valley Church, Springfield Tony Evans to Mount Hope Church, Wheelersburg Wendell Combs to New Hope Church, Chillicothe

SOUTH CAROLINA

Michael Walker to Black River Church, Andrews

OTHER PERSONNEL

Carroll Bazen to Grace Church, Lake City, SC, as associate pastor

Lee Patrick to First Church, Florence, SC, as coordinator of outreach and youth ministries





With all the hustle and bustle of 21st century life, it's a wonder we can even concentrate on our own families, much less the kids in our churches. Some times it seems as though our kids follow Christ in spite of us, not because of us.

Perhaps its time to slow your life down for a weekend and concentrate on renewing your relationship with your Savior, then you can with more confidence tell your kids, "Follow Me As I Follow (hristi"



If you feel you are fighting a losing battle, perhaps a weekend of regrouping, developing a new battle plan, and stock-piling your rations will help you face the situations your kids face everyday!



Join us in February for the National Youth Worker Retreats. Our guest will be Les Christie, veteran youth pastor and Youth Ministry professor. His teachings have helped thousands of churches implement strategies of outreach and activity for young people in the church and community. He has authored more than twenty books for youth leaders and teens. Don't miss out on this special opportunity to hear a premier youth worker trainer!

Les Christie

NYWR WEST Branson, MO February 20–22, 1998



NYWR EAST Carter Cave, KY February 27-March 1, 1998

TOP SHELF

A Primer on Postmodernism

By Stanley J. Grenz

(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996, 199 pp., paperback, \$13.00).

he word "postmodernism" is often used both by Christian and secular writers to describe the age in which we live. It is more than an obscure system of philosophy or theology debated on college and seminary campuses. It describes our mind set, our view of life and the way in which we view our world. Postmodernism affects how society views God, the Bible, morality and religion in general.

Postmodernism challenges traditional values and assumptions. For example, it presents a different view of authority.

In traditional Protestantism, the Bible is regarded as the final authority in matters of faith and practice. In liberal Protestantism, human reason is regarded as the final authority. In postmodernism, there is no concept of final authority.

Individuals are left to decide what is true for themselves. There is also

in postmodernism a strong group consciousness, and each group decides what is true for that group.

This philosophical system reflects a radically different view of the Bible. In traditional Protestantism, the Bible is regarded as the inspired Word of God and without error in all that it affirms.

In liberal Protestantism, the Bible is regarded as a great piece of religious literature comparable to the great books of other religious faiths. It is a very valuable book, and there is much we can learn from it, but it is not inspired in any traditional sense.

Once again, postmodernism presents a view which differs sharply from earlier views. According to postmodernists, the Bible is filled with the prejudices and wrong ideas which were widely accepted in ancient times; it reflects only the views of men of the upper classes in society.

According to postmodernist inter-

pretation, the Bible is anti-woman, anti-poor and anti-minority. If the Bible is to be useful at all, it must be reinterpreted in light of more modern understandings of human relationships.

This work by Grenz is a good introduction to the complex and difficult phenomenon which we call "postmodernism." He explains this philosophical system and makes it understandable to people who have grown up accepting a traditional Protestant understanding of reality. He outlines the history of postmodernism and summarizes the views of leading postmodernist writers.

The final chapter of the book is titled, "The Gospel and the Postmodern Context." In this chapter, Grenz analyzes how we can effectively proclaim the Gospel in a world in which postmodern ideas and concepts are widely known and accepted. ■







BRIEFCASE

The Four Best Dan Cronks



Jack Williams

he first time I saw Dan Cronk, he was sitting cross-legged on the stage at Free Will Baptist Bible College, barefooted, dressed in flowing white cloth and beating a drum. That was 35 years ago in a chapel service I never forgot.

Dan and his wife Trula were on furlough from their mission station in India. I knew right off that whoever this Cronk fellow was, he was certainly different, and I wanted to meet him.

Unfortunately, my name started with "W," so I sat at the back of the auditorium with 350 people between me and the barefooted drummer. I missed him that day, and it was years later before Dan Cronk stuck his head in my office and said in that waterfront voice of his, "Hey! I've been hearing about you. Let's talk!"

That began my 30-year adventure with the multi-layered man known as Dan Cronk. He was many men to the people who knew him. Let me tell you about four of the best.

The man who got what he wanted out of life. Dan believed that a man could always get what he wanted out of life, if he wanted the right things. And he proved it. More than anything else, he wanted to be God's servant.

He ordered his life so that he gave priority to the work and people of God. He chained himself to the King's chariot to be led wherever the Lord required regardless of circumstances.

Dan wanted to be a problem solver, not a problem. He took the long view and considered all sides of an issue. Whatever the problem, you knew that Dan would be part of the solution, willing to work through impasses that stopped others.

He wanted to rise above pettiness. Dan refused to be offended. Oh, he could be hurt. But you had to work at it. The normal give and take, disagreements and sparring that is part of healthy interchange energized him.

He wanted to encourage others, and he succeeded. At his memorial service, numerous people of all ages stood to give impromptu testimonials of how Dan helped them confront their fears, gave them courage to try again or counseled them with biblical principles and a ready sense of humor.

The man who was bigger than a label. Dan Cronk's mind had been stretched by classic books and great thinkers of the 20th century. No one label fit him, except "Christian."

We called him a missionary, and he was that for 25 years in India. We called him a preacher, and he did preach 55 years as an ordained Free Will Baptist minister. A college professor? Yes, for nine years he nettled students at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

But Dan was also a sociologist, a missiologist, a sometimes mystic, an unconventional guerilla warfare expert who saw beyond numbers, noses and dollars. He studied people. He understood how society moved in a living tapestry of theology, government, social structure and change.

A voracious reader, Dan made books that matter grist for his hungry mind. He understood the power that comes to a man who lives by principles and values instead of grasping things to himself.

The man who did it God's way. Dan was one of the few men I've ever met who lived without bitterness. He simply didn't haul around much emotional baggage.

He focused on others, not himself. I never saw him make a decision to benefit himself if it would hurt others. He was one of those tough Detroit street kids who gave up all his rights for somebody else.

He became a peace maker in times of denominational turmoil, reaching out to the angry or troubled with understanding and compassion. He had an incredible balance in life, and could bounce back when misunderstood or misaccused.

Dan saw the urgency of multi-cultural and ethnic ministry before the rest of us knew there was such a thing. His head may have been in the clouds of philosophy and the latest missiological theories, but his hands were filled with the grit and reality of life. It was a powerful combination.

The man who became my friend. If Dan Cronk had been a computer, we would identify him as user-friendly. He was easy to approach and quick to understand. He could wrap his creative mind around a problem and hand it back with a different perspective.

If Dan believed in you, he made you a bigger person. His confidence gave you courage to dare, to experiment. He was an American original, a true entrepreneur, the stuff of legends.

During our conversations, Dan poured from a five-gallon bucket of knowledge. My cup ran over and I sloshed knee-deep, adrift in Cronkology and Dan-isms.

I considered him God's mockingbird who sang many songs while I listened as a one-note sparrow on the housetop.

The last time I saw Dan Cronk, he walked into my office with a grin as wide as the Ganges. This time he was wearing shoes and didn't have a drum. Then he said in that booming waterfront voice, "Hey, Jack! I don't have long to live. Let's talk!"

And for 45 minutes he did it to me again. He opened the secret door in my soul where only God and Dan Cronk ever go and left my mind spinning.

On Thursday, November 20, 1997, at 10:45 p.m. the voice of the four best Dan Cronks fell silent. ■

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