



# EDITORIAL



**T**oday, when most people speak of a neighborhood, they mean a geographical location, not a group of families. In today's neighborhood practically nobody "neighbors"; close and friendly neighbors are the exception, not the rule. Things weren't that way in the neighborhood where I grew up.

I lived in the same Texas town, the same neighborhood—even the same house—from the day I was born until the day I was married twenty-three years later. My twenty-three years in that house and neighborhood included the Depression decade of the 1930's.

By today's standards most families in our neighborhood would have been classified as poor or underprivileged—eligible for welfare. But in those days, most people didn't consider themselves as "poor," only as "having to scrimp." Nearly every family kept a backyard garden or raised chickens. Some even had a cow or goat or a few pigs. Besides the vegetable garden we had, we also raised chickens, and before I was ten years old, I was killing and dressing chickens and peddling eggs to the neighbors for twenty cents per dozen. (My dad let me

keep a nickel from every sale.)

I remember the iceman dumping huge fifty-pound blocks of ice in our kitchen icebox and how angry he got with us when we became the first family in the neighborhood to buy an electric refrigerator.

I remember sitting on the front porch with my two brothers on 100-degree summer evenings, watching the stars and the fireflies, listening to my folks telling stories of their childhood and patiently waiting for the house to cool down enough to go inside to sleep. Some nights stayed so hot we ended up spreading cots and quilts in the backyard and sleeping outdoors.

I remember big Sunday dinners with local aunts, uncles, and cousins as well as bigger family picnics at the city park with distant relatives from far-off places like Kansas and East Texas.

My childhood was secure not only because our family was happy, but because our neighborhood was secure and stable. Neighbors liked and respected one another and were nearly always courteous and helpful. My dad was foreman with the pipeline division of Texaco. I had close (if somewhat noisy) friendships, not only with my two brothers, Hal and Fred, but with Joseph, whose father was city postmaster; Sonny, whose dad sold automobile tires; John Morris, whose widowed mother worked in the city library; the three Sartin sisters, whose father was city judge; and the Emerson children, who had migrated from Minnesota and whose "yankee" accents made us Texas kids laugh.

What was most characteristic of families and neighborhoods five decades ago? Well, families knew who they were. Nobody had ever heard of an "identity crisis" in those days. Neither did people waste time searching for "roots." Fathers knew they had to find work and keep it to support their wives and children. They weren't above digging ditches, selling shoes or chop-

ping cotton if that was the only work available. They didn't complain—they found dignity in hard physical labor. Wives and mothers took pride in "making do," in feeding and clothing their children on meager incomes, since—let nobody say different—the Depression years were hard years! But nobody worried about "keeping up with the Joneses" because most times, the Joneses were as hard up as everyone else.

But that was nearly fifty years ago. The neighborhood we live in today is much like many others: nice homes, pleasant surroundings, with families too caught up in their own pursuits to find time to be neighbors.

However, for a few days in September, 1979, not many months after we moved to Mobile, Alabama, things were almost like they were "back then." For a few days, strangers who lived next door to each other became neighbors—helping and caring for one another all through our town.

What brought the momentary change was Hurricane Frederic, spreading two and a half billion dollars worth of wreckage and debris over our community. Strangely, with damaged homes, streets blocked by fallen trees and almost total disruption of electric power, water and telephone service, people found time and heart to help one another.

Sad to say, a few days later much of life was back to normal. Lights and water were restored, streets were cleared and businesses reopened, and people didn't need neighbors anymore.

I sometimes wonder what kind of crisis or catastrophe it will take to blast us into a lasting realization that we really do need one another and that it is truly God's intention for us to be good neighbors.

*Don W. Basham*

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Editor



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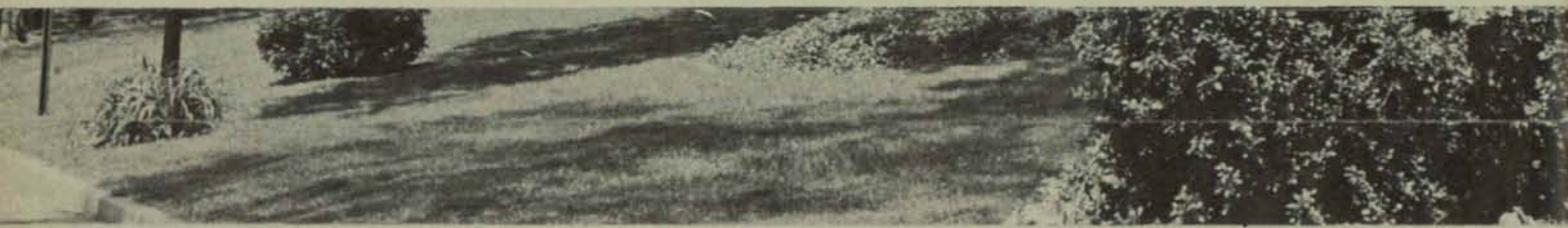
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# Covenant: The Cornerstone of Community

by Charles Simpson



**I** grew up in a small town—so small, in fact, that the saying “everybody here knows everybody” was literally true. Weddings and funerals were community occasions. We had one church and one school. If you got in trouble one place in town, you were in trouble everywhere in town.

Thirty years and several moves later, my environment has changed. Now I live in a suburban “subdivision.” I have sidewalks and paved streets that I didn’t have then. Like most subdivisions, ours has a prestigious-sounding name and houses in the same general price range. I suspect that most of the other citizens in this subdivision also grew up in small towns and neighborhoods where most of the people knew each other at least casually. But now we all live together in this subdivision with better homes and cars than we once had—and we hardly know one another. What has happened to the neighborhood?

A few weeks ago something happened to make us examine whether we were a neighborhood or merely a subdivision. A developer proposed to put a new

street through a vacant lot to the adjacent undeveloped property. He proposed to build an additional thirty or fifty houses on the undeveloped property. This immediately concerned the nearby residents because of the possibility of a dramatic increase in traffic and noise in our rather quiet subdivision.

The first time I heard of the proposed project was when a lawyer in our subdivision called a meeting to discuss the matter. At the meeting I met a doctor, a businessman and others who lived nearby. While we were gathered in the lawyer’s den he read to us from a document called “The Covenant Restrictions.” This document was the official covenant that determined how the land and houses in our subdivision could be used. Everyone listened in rapt atten-



tion, as if he were reading from the Bible. Our corporate interests and future home values would be affected—perhaps dramatically—by this covenant. Most of us hardly knew one another, but we shared the covenant together. From the moment we bought our houses we shared rules which none of us had written, and most of us had scarcely read. But we were bound together by their provisions.

Sure enough, the “neighbors” got together, and the road was not built because apparently the covenant forbids it. But more importantly, need and circumstance had driven us to find one another in a common relationship. As limited as this particular covenant was, it may nevertheless provide clues to understanding what a neighborhood is all about.

### The Mayflower Compact

Covenants are not a new ingredient in what we call communities or neighborhoods. Our nation was pioneered by people who had covenants with kings, governments, commercial companies and each other. Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower signed a covenant (the Mayflower Compact) which was the basis of the Plymouth Colony’s survival. Because their commitment to God’s purpose and to each other was placed above personal interest, they served one another through famine and plague in order to survive. Not all Mayflower passengers signed the covenant, and not all who signed it survived. But their commitment was the foundation of overcoming their mutual challenge. Their strong commitment to God and godly character is what enabled them to keep their commitments. For some it was a commitment to life; for others it was a commitment to death so that others might live.

A few years ago, as I walked through Plymouth, Massachusetts (reconstructed to depict the original settlement) I saw a real neighborhood—no sidewalks or streets, but a real neighborhood. That fledgling colony was a tribute to community sacrifice.

### The Problems of Isolation and Fragmentation

Since the days of the pilgrims, our nation has changed in countless ways. We have certainly built better sidewalks, streets and houses. Our technology is second to none—for the present. But what has happened to the neighborhood? In order to find self-fulfillment, vast numbers of Americans apparently refuse to accept the sacrifice necessary to maintain social institutions.

We are a uniquely mobile people. We can go almost anywhere at any time in a variety of styles. Families and individuals are relocating and detaching themselves from their past in steadily increasing numbers. Career interests and simple

restlessness motivate us to search for greener pastures.

Last year my high school class had a twenty-fifth year reunion. Ours was a small class in a country high school. But in twenty-five years we have scattered to the four winds. The neighborhood school and the neighborhood church—in fact, the whole neighborhood—have been transformed into a suburban commuter community with a totally different internal structure. Today we live in our “subdivisions.” Perhaps it would be more accurate to drop the prefix “sub”—for what was once a cooperative culture of common interests is now fractured into numerous divisions. Our streets, sidewalks and houses are nice, but the streets don’t lead to the other subdivisions. What was once a “great lake” of social mutuality has dried up now into countless “puddles” of isolation, alienation, and self-interest, puddles divided along social, economic and racial lines.

The average American has become increasingly detached from government, city, family, church and schools. The average assembly line worker is detached from the final product. He only sees a part. The individual and his part of the product are somehow divorced from the whole.

### The Problem of Self-Interest

I was privileged recently to meet with a small group of religious, political and civic leaders from one of America’s major cities. I listened to the litany of urgent problems: crime, poverty, narcotics, illiteracy and alienation. A sense of weariness



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and near-hopelessness hung over these dedicated men. All of them seemed to be committed Christians and I was impressed by their grasp of the issues. But solutions were scarce. Sympathizing with their frustration, I offered an observation from my own experience: "Until you can build relationships with one another that result in mutual commitments, you cannot solve these problems." They agreed.

Leaders of various constituencies can no longer strengthen their own positions by appealing to the special interests of their followers. If healing is to come, it must come to the whole social order. "Holism" is a word that describes the needed perspective. Our strategy and solutions must be inclusive. God has hidden His wisdom in our fellow Christians. Only as we find each other will we find the necessary strategy.

In our age of extreme specialization, a union member has difficulty believing that his future is no better than the company's and its future no better than his. Government and citizen, pastor and church, professional and client, manufacturer and consumer, majority and minority, find it difficult to believe that we stand or fall together. But we do.

While our special interest groups have been competing, the Japanese, for example, have formed a cooperative partnership among labor, management and government that has taken huge sectors of the world markets. The auto and electronics industries are clear examples of their success and of our frustrations. Some would blame our predicament on the energy crisis or on our lack of economy cars. But I strongly disagree. Many of our foreign competitors are approaching the market with a corporate commitment to quality and to each other that is often lacking in our fractured, self-indulgent society. In short, they give more than they take. Too often we take more than we give, and we try

to cover our quality deficiency with slick advertising.

The goal of individual "self-fulfillment" has promised more slices than there is pie. We frequently try to take more than we give. Tragically, our children will inherit the huge debt of our indulgences, and unless there is a dramatic change in our way of life, they will one day curse us.

### Spiritual Fragmentation

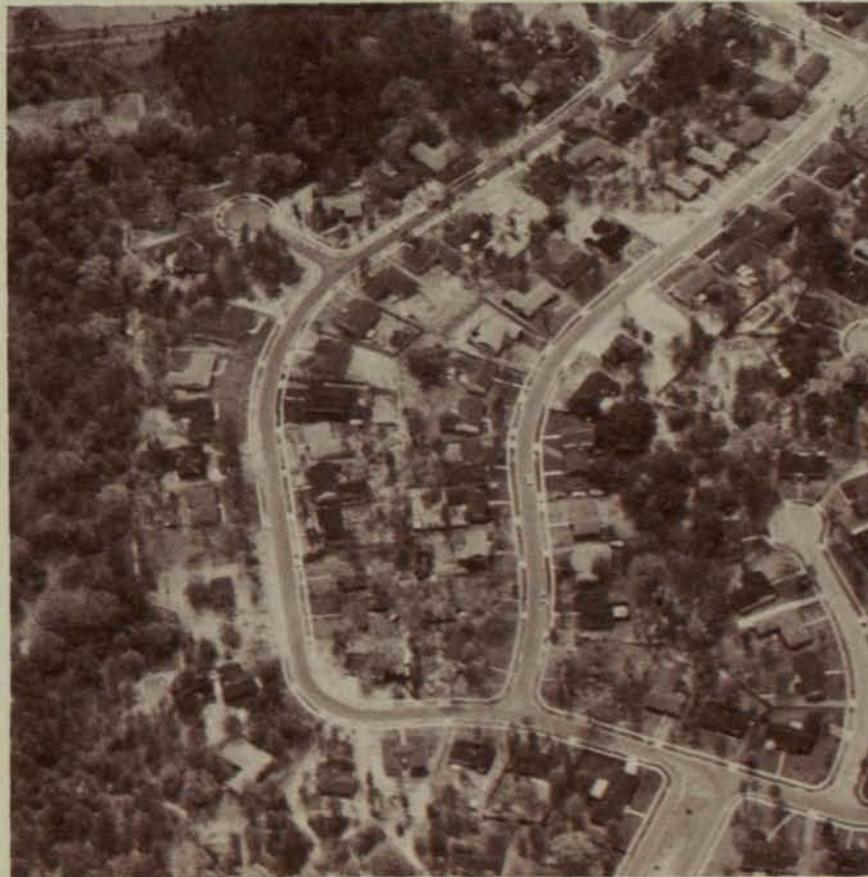
American secular fragmentation is parallel to our spiritual fragmentation. Our spiritual neighborhoods have long been withdrawing into Catholic, Protestant, liberal, fundamentalist, evangelical, pentecostal, and charismatic "ghettos." When we consider as well the racial and economic divisions and the internal fractures of these groups, we begin to realize the extent of our nation's spiritual fragmentation. Only the problems seem to transcend the divisions. Resources and cooperation remain locked in

our immediate ghettos of fellowship.

When Christianity degenerates into factionalism, it loses its power to bring the world together under the lordship of Jesus Christ. As a friend of mine put it, "A broken and divided Church has no answer for a broken and divided world." Self-seeking Christianity is a mutation consigned to history's "sideshow," and it will never captivate attention in the main arena. But a Church under the lordship of Christ can address the nations.

### The Basis of Unity

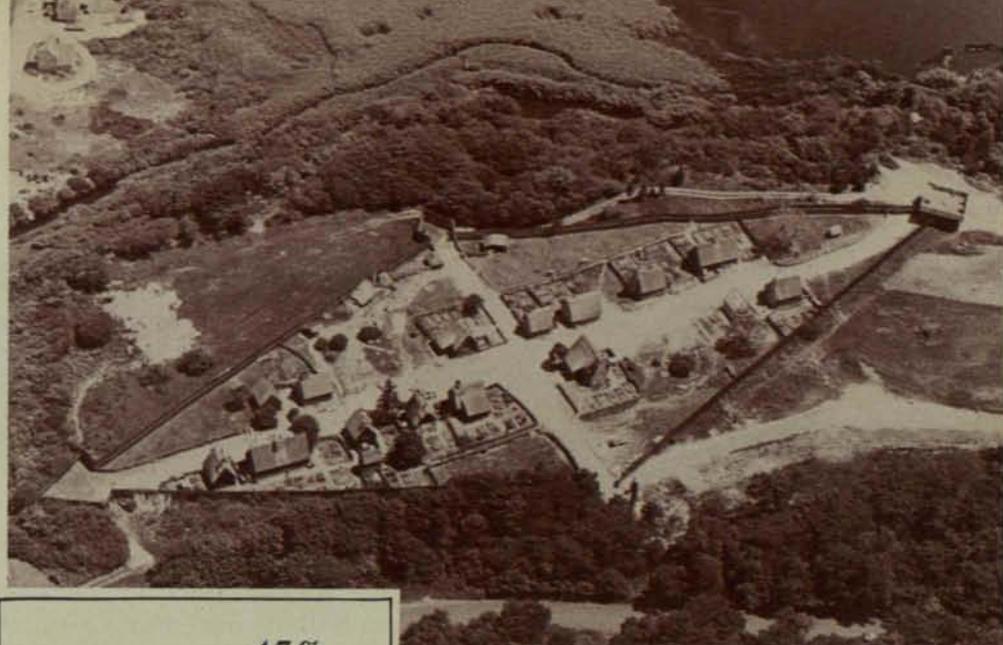
I have gone to many meetings seeking to encourage unity in the Body of Christ because I think it is an important cause. I am privileged to be a member of a Christian organization called John 17:21, which is led by David Du Plessis and Ron Haus and is dedicated to the pursuit of unity among Christians. At meetings such as these, this question



usually arises (or should arise): "What is the basis of our unity?" In the context of our concern for the neighborhood the same question should be asked: "What holds the neighborhood—or any community—together?"

Most responses to that question seek to explain our unity on a theological basis. But theology rarely unites us—on the contrary, our doctrinal differences usually "ghettoize" and divide us. The same is true of our church structures and methods. Although these factors certainly cannot be ignored, they obviously don't hold us together. And tragically, even while our bolder brethren reach hands across great chasms, new schisms form daily.

An example of this tragedy is described in a letter I received recently. A concerned pastor and church board were analyzing the results of a recent "Victorious Life Seminar" conducted in their church. They concluded that the experience had so di-



*The 1627 Pilgrim Village at Plimoth Plantation, Plymouth, Massachusetts, is a re-creation of the original settlement of pilgrims in 1627.*



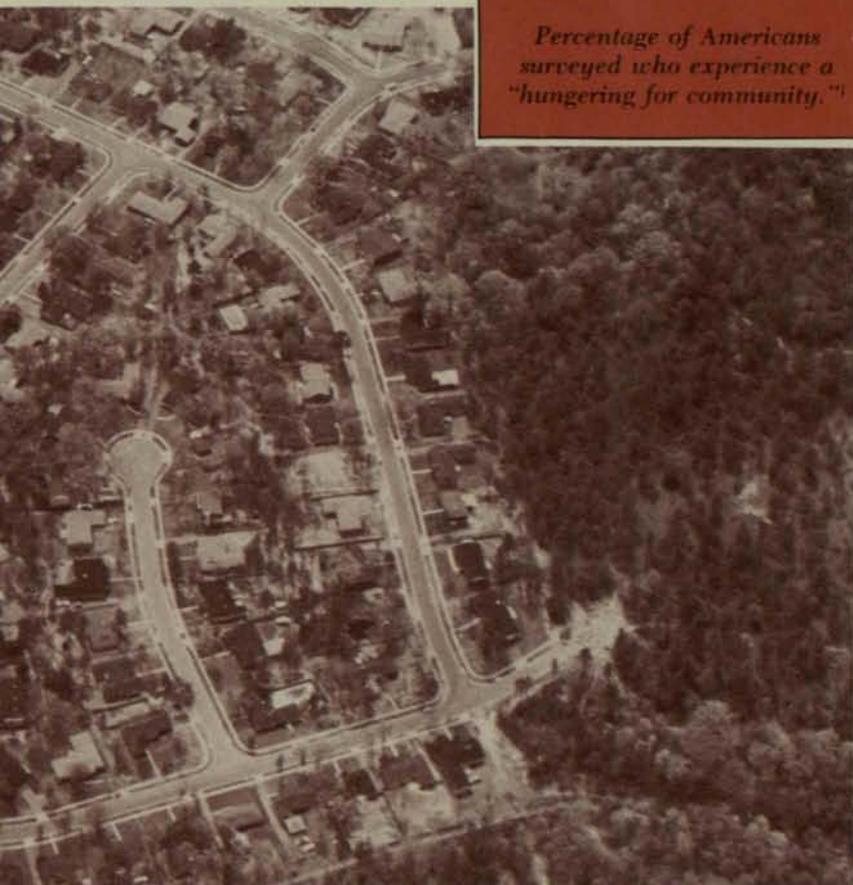
vided the church that they were reluctant to explore the "victorious life" any further.

So tenuous and fragile are our relationships that when God reveals significant new truth, or reveals Himself to us in new ways, there is a constant risk of fragmentation. His options seem to be: 1) withhold new insights; 2) reveal Himself and fragment us; or 3) show us a much more effective way to relate to one another. Virtually every historical awakening in the Church has further divided it in general while uniting some segment of it around a particular emphasis. Must this continue to be the pattern? Are our only options stagnation or fragmentation?

### The Covenant Foundation

America is a relatively young nation, and many of us belong to young churches. Consequently our social and spiritual structures are young as well. We would therefore do well to examine communities that have kept their cohesion over the centuries. Abraham provides a good example. He fathered a family and religious culture that is still with us after nearly four thousand years—the world's most enduring and influential culture. This is especially remarkable considering that Judaism has been without its own land and government for most of its history. Genesis chapters 15 and

<sup>1</sup>Daniel Yankelovich, *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Random House, 1981), p. 95.



17 make it clear that covenant is the foundation of Judaism's cohesion. God made certain promises and established certain restrictions in order that the descendants of Abraham would receive the promised blessings. He bound Himself to them and them to Himself and to each other by His eternal word. To

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...our first steps must not be toward the problems themselves, but toward one another.

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the degree that the descendants of Abraham have kept their word to God and each other, they have endured as a cohesive people.

A descendant of Abraham named Moses stood before a burning bush four hundred years after God spoke to Abraham, and there God renewed the covenant of Abraham with him. Based upon a commitment from God, Moses went to Egypt and successfully gained the freedom of more than two million Hebrew slaves. Then he led them to the same mountain where he had stood before the burning bush, and there Jehovah God renewed the covenant with all the Jews, thus making them a nation—a community. The basic provisions of that covenant—the Ten Commandments—are with us today as the fundamental code of most of the world's civilizations.

Years later when Jesus came to a decadent Judaism and a chaotic world, he created a new society which we call the Church. He initiated this history-dominating community by making a covenant with its earliest builders—the Apostles. He bound Himself to them with a blood covenant. By accepting His covenant, these men were bound to Him and to one another in His blood to do the will

of God. The covenant assured them of a oneness of fellowship and a commitment to world redemption that transcended merely personal interests. In spite of its faults and fractures, the Church lives on by the sheer endurance of this blood covenant. But history is littered with the ruins of lesser structures that had no such covenant cornerstone.

### Can These Bones Live?

Covenant is the awareness that Creation is the product of a single mind, and that we can only function successfully when we function together. The question facing us is, "Can we bring our spiritual neighborhood back together around the covenant communion?" When God showed the prophet Ezekiel the bleached and scattered bones of Israel's defeated army, He asked a similar question: "Ezekiel, can these bones live?" Israel's situation was bleak indeed. Ten tribes had already gone into captivity and were scattered among the nations. The other two were in the process of being conquered. Nevertheless, Ezekiel gave a wise answer: "You know, Lord, whether or not they can live." But God spoke further. He commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones to come together, and to prophesy to the wind to enter the reassembled bodies. And finally there was a mighty army.

Today as we look at the scattered remnants of what was once a mighty Christian army, God asks, "Can these bones live?" How shall we answer? Indeed, can we prophesy to these scattered bones even at the command of a faithful God?

Too often modern Ezekiels have already decided that these dry bones cannot come together and live. These would-be prophets of redemption have embraced an eschatology of rejection and despair. Such prophesying only adds to the isolation and fragmentation of the Church. But the call to conciliation in the covenant is still valid. Its demands to love one another

even as He loved us are still valid. We cannot cast the law aside simply because some break it. The covenant has not been nullified simply because some forsake it.

The faithfulness of our Lord remains and His covenant blood has not lost its validity. In the face of modern challenges to our spiritual neighborhood we must take a serious look at the New Covenant. We must call our neighbors together to search out its terms. For even our adversary knows that it is a legally binding document in the courts of God.

Trouble has been God's tool on many occasions to drive us back to our constitutions, laws and covenants, and to cause us to find one another. The crisis in Iran brought our nation closer together than at any time in recent years. The energy crisis brought about car pools and conservation. The murders of children in Atlanta brought hundreds of thousands of people together in prayer and concern.

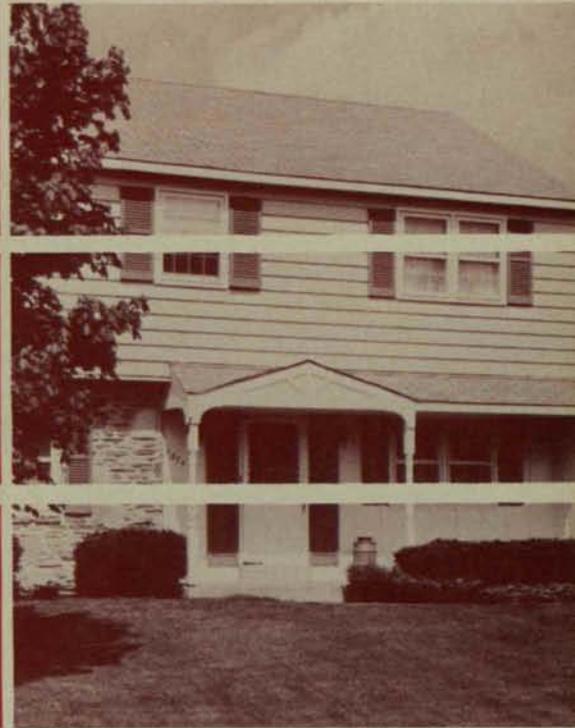
Many problems are common to all our communities. Narcotics, crime, divorce, and economic problems are but a few of them. In solving these problems, our first steps must not be toward the problems themselves, but toward one another. Private solutions will no longer work. Mayors, bankers, judges, ministers, laborers, industrialists, men and women, young and old, majority and minority, must come together or the neighborhood will totally come apart. Any solution which does not embrace the entire community will be no solution at all.

On what basis shall we come together? The same Jesus that brought together rich and poor, slave and free, liberal and conservative, Jew and Gentile, in His covenant blood stands before us now to renew the covenant. If we will trust Him He will teach us once again how to trust each other—and we will learn once more the real meaning of the word "neighbor." ▼

**A "home  
improvement"**

**will increase  
the value**

**of your  
neighborhood.**



**The Home—A Cornerstone  
by Charles Simpson**

Our neighborhoods offer many opportunities for us to communicate God's grace and goodness to others. However, if our own homes are not an example of what we believe, our testimony will be seriously weakened.

This series of messages by Charles Simpson portrays the home as the cornerstone of our society and instructs us how to make our homes a testimony to our neighbors of the reality of the grace of God. The series consists of four tapes:

C21	.....	<b>The Home—A Cornerstone</b>	.....	<b>\$4.95</b>
C22	.....	<b>Relationships in the Home</b>	.....	<b>\$4.95</b>
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PAK55	.....	<b>All Four Tapes</b>	.....	<b>\$16.95</b>

**Evangelism by Example  
by Ern Baxter**

As Christians, we have an obligation to demonstrate the Kingdom of God in our particular sphere of influence, and one obvious area where this applies is our neighborhoods. In this tape Ern Baxter clearly establishes the fact that one of the greatest elements in our outreach to others is our example.

WS60	.....	<b>Evangelism by Example</b>	.....	<b>\$4.95</b>
PAK56	.....	<b>All Above Tapes</b>	.....	<b>\$20.95</b>

**P**erhaps no one sees the extent of the problems our neighborhoods face as clearly as the police chief of a city. For this reason *New Wine* interviewed George Napper, chief of police for the city of Atlanta's force of 1300 officers. In this interview Chief Napper identifies some causes of the problems Atlanta and other cities are experiencing and challenges the Church to take an active part in revitalizing the neighborhoods.

**“We Cannot Do Our  
Job Alone...”**



**an interview with George Napper**

**NW:** *In your work as the chief of police for the city of Atlanta, what are some of the main problems you are encountering right now in your community?*

**GN:** The problems that we have here in the city are not unique. We have the same basic problems other cities are now experiencing, in particular a crime rate that is higher than all of us would like it to be. We have a problem with unemployment, especially among the youth—and in the city that means predominantly black youth, because sixty-percent of this city is black. We have as well a budding drug problem that we need to get under control because we see that as a problem that is directly related to a number of other kinds of crime in the city.

So in a real way—though perhaps to a lesser extent—we have many of the same problems that other major cities have.

**NW:** *How does the people's concept of "the neighborhood" affect community life in general and the policeman's role in the community in particular?*

**GN:** From the point of view of the police, it is clear that we cannot do our job alone—we must have the support, the cooperation and the participation of the citizens that we serve. There has to be a shared partnership between police and citizens to handle the crime problem in the city. So we must get involved in developing the kind of strategies and programs that are consistent with this approach. For this reason, we are trying to revive and recapture some of the basic qualities that are characteristic of the neighborhoods and little country towns that you and I grew up in—qualities such as people caring about one another and getting involved in the life of the community and with each other. This is very difficult in large cities like Atlanta. In many cases you don't even know your own neighbor, and that creates some real problems.

When I was a kid, if I went up the street and did something wrong, I often got a whipping or a reprimand right there on the spot and another one when I got home. But now we have situations in which eight-, nine- or ten-year-old kids intimidate a community, and people are afraid to deal with them because the kids—or even their parents—might respond in a hostile way. So people resort to calling the police in a situation where the police really need not be involved.

**NW:** *You said that community life in large cities lacks some of the important qualities of neighborhood life we experienced a generation ago. What are some of those qualities and why does their absence cause community fragmentation?*

**GN:** I think a small community has certain qualities that are just not to be found in a big bustling city environment where people come from all over and people don't know one another. There is a lack of the shared roots, the



*George Napper holds a BA in psychology from the University of California at Berkeley as well as an MA and PhD in criminology. He is the Chief of Police for the city of Atlanta, where he resides with his wife, Imogene Delores, and their three children. They are members of the Antioch North Baptist Church.*

shared understandings and the sharing of other kinds of experiences that bring people together.

In a large city, one doesn't really feel as if he's a part of a community—he's out there doing his own thing. There is a sense of individualism, and of not getting involved with other people's lives. There is a breaking down to some extent of the basic institutions that characterize a small community, such as the family. The churches are not always being as responsive as they need to be and therefore are not really ministering effectively to the community; the schools are facing all kinds of challenges and problems that sometimes keep them from carrying out their primary purpose; and all of these situations seem to conspire in a negative way to create many of the problems that we see in big cities.

**NW:** *It seems that neighborhoods once revolved more around strong family ties and, in particular, the strong authority of the father. Do you think the breakdown of the family has been a major factor in the decline of the neighborhood?*

**GN:** Yes, and vice versa. I think that these social problems and the problem of unemployment in particular have had a very negative impact on the family. They make it difficult for the family to sustain its viability and the role that it needs to play. By and large people define themselves in terms of the jobs that they have, and if they don't have a job, then they lose self-esteem. Often anger and hostility are then manifested in the family context, and that's why we have so many domestic killings and other kinds of problems that happen

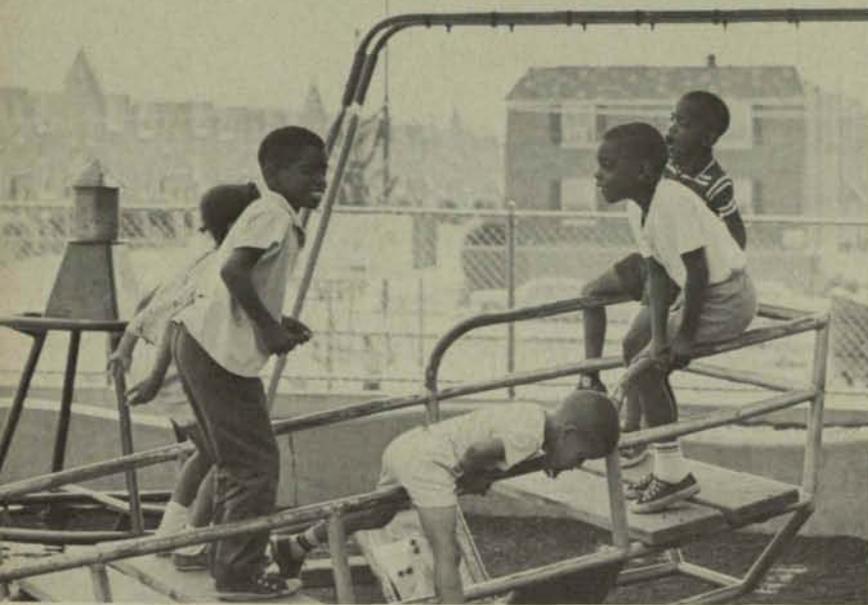
within the family setting. This anger also carries over into the larger community, with people killing people they grew up with—acquaintances, lovers, neighbors and relatives, for example.

Unemployment also has figured into the most recent rash of murders in Atlanta. If you look at what most of the murdered children were doing at the time they were abducted, you find that they were trying to make ends meet, trying to help their families by going out and being enterprising in finding jobs. For the most part these children came from low-income areas.

In a real way, unemployment is the root of a great percentage of the problems we are experiencing in the city. That problem is coupled with a lack of spiritual guidance. Such guidance is critical in holding people together so that they can face crisis. If people don't have solid spiritual training and background, then the community becomes all the more chaotic.

**NW:** *What are some of the things you are doing to revitalize the neighborhood?*

**GN:** One of the things that encourages me about Atlanta is the quality of the response that the citizens have made in order to deal with the problems that exist in the city. We have what we call a Neighborhood Planning Unit, or NPU.



There are about twenty-six of these throughout the city. They are designed to encourage people to get involved in helping to plan for the city. Each NPU represents a specific geographic area or neighborhood within the city. People get involved in the NPU's, addressing the concerns and problems of their particular neighborhoods and making their concerns a part of the budgetary process in the city so that the issues of concern can be dealt with.

**NW:** *Are there other organized groups besides these Neighborhood Planning Units that are revitalizing the neighborhood?*

**GN:** The Neighborhood Planning Unit is really something that has developed in the last seven or eight years. But there has been a whole new realization of the importance of "neighborhoodness" (if I can use that term) in the city of Atlanta. The NPU's are just one expression of this realization, and there are many other community organizations—in many cases side by side with NPU's and in existence longer than NPU's—that reflect the politics, the concerns and the issues of particular geographic areas in the community. There has been a back-to-the-city movement in which the people who had gone outside of the city some years ago are once again revitalizing neighborhoods and getting involved in neighborhood life. These are very exciting times in the city of Atlanta, despite the particular nightmare of murders that we have been experiencing.

**NW:** *In addition to these organizations, can you suggest some other concrete ways in which people could begin to contribute to the solution rather than to the problem to strengthen the community and the neighborhood?*

**GN:** Well, I think first of all it certainly starts with one's own home. We need to be expressing the kinds of feelings and doing the kinds of things that give people within our own family a sense of self-respect and a feeling that they are cared for and loved. There needs to be a togetherness and a sense of unity in the family setting.

**NW:** *What should we be doing beyond what we do at home?*

**GN:** I think it's important for people to get involved in the neighborhood and community, rather than assuming that the job's going to be done by someone else—like a professional of some kind. We must understand that we have a shared responsibility, whether in the matter of crime prevention, or what goes on in a school system or any other community concern. We have the responsibility to get involved and try to make the system a better system and try to do the kinds of things that serve notice to would-be criminals and to others who would in any way try to disrupt the community that those kinds of offenses are not going to be tolerated in our community—and we must do this together.

There has been an over-reliance on the professionals—on agencies, on the criminal justice system, on the police, on the teachers—to do everything, and parents have assumed that they need not get involved at all. The police have the same problem that the teachers do: the teachers need *parents* to get involved in the PTA and in shaping the curriculum and taking other responsibilities in a way that lets the kids and the school system know that they care. In the same sense,

there is a need for citizens to get involved with the police, to let the police know when there are things "going down" that are not right, to have the courage to step forward as witnesses to help the legal system prosecute criminals and just to have the courage to stand up and say, "Hey, I care, and I'm not going to have people disrupting the quality of life in this community where my kids are being raised, where my parents live and where I live."

**NW:** *What is the goal that you have for the Atlanta community at large? What is your hope for this community?*

**GN:** I spend a lot of time talking about the importance of community involvement. That can be expressed in many ways, and to the extent that it is expressed, we're going to have the kind of community, the kind of leadership, that we want and deserve. There has been a history in Atlanta of people coming together—black and white, young and old, poor and rich to deal with the challenges that we've encountered in this city. I'm hopeful that this will continue in an even more meaningful way.

One of the things I've been concerned about is the "Green Ribbon." Many people all over the country—even around the world, I think—are wearing a green ribbon as an expression of their sympathy for the Atlanta children who have been slain. In a sense, I think there needs to be a second green ribbon to express a similar kind of concern and commitment to all the children who are still living and growing up in circumstances much like the situations of the slain children. There needs to be a commitment to ridding our cities of those particular conditions that give rise to the kind of problems that led to this situation.

**NW:** *What do you think the role of the Church should be in revitalizing the neighborhood?*

**GN:** The spiritual side of the whole matter has certainly been important in my own life. I'm a Baptist and very involved in my church. The fellowship of the church and the type of involvement that my pastor has had in my life have helped me to deal with the problems that I face as chief of police.

It is important for all of us—especially the preachers and pastors and those who are part of the ministry—to understand that the ministry and even the Church itself cannot be contained within the four walls where we meet on Sunday. The ministry of the Church and its leadership needs to extend throughout the city wherever people are. To the extent that such a concept of the Church can be accepted by those in the ministry—to the extent that we realize that the cities and the neighborhoods as a whole are a concern of the Church and something that God has given us—I think that we're all going to be better off.



Beyond this, there are spiritual values undergirding all that we've been talking about. Such values can do much not only to minimize the extent of the problems, but also to give us the strength and the courage to deal with those problems in a meaningful way. I think it takes courage and a spiritual strength to refuse to be passive and uninvolved and instead to stand up when it's unpopular to do so and say, "This is not the way things are meant to be, and we must be involved in changing them." ♥



# CONCERNS

SOCIAL



## Kingdom Culture: Rediscovering Our Mandate

by Ern Baxter

**C**ulture is an order of life, the manner of living of a species. The Bible makes a further distinction in terms of culture—one between unregenerate mankind and regenerate mankind.

In Romans 5:19, Paul says, "By the disobedience of one man, men were made sinners." That is one culture. He then goes on to say, "By the obedience of one man, many became righteous." That is the other culture. The first culture is unrighteous; the second is righteous. In other words, unregenerate man is a distinct species and regenerate man is another, for as Paul says later in the New Testament, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation," that is, a new species. James concurs with him, declar-

ing that we are the first fruits of a new species.

Of those two species or orders of life—the adamic order and the Christ order—the latter is what I call "Kingdom culture." It is the ultimate culture, the culture that must emerge because the Bible says that Jesus must reign until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. In other words, until the lordship of Jesus Christ becomes the norm, the ultimate culture hasn't been fully manifested. It has come ideally in that Christ came and rose from the dead, but in time and history it must yet come through the Church.

The Bible record indicates that God's intention from the creation of Adam was for man to fill the earth with his kind, supervising and ruling the earth. But Adam failed through disobedience, and after him came a procession of both faithful and unfaithful men up to the time when God called Abraham and said to him, "In your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Abraham symbolizes

the beginning of the corporately redemptive purposes of God, God's establishment of a culture pleasing to Him. Abraham begat Isaac; Isaac, Jacob; Jacob's twelve sons became a nation. That nation was given a place in the earth from which to evangelize the nations, and it did a great job until the time of Solomon. Solomon made many mistakes, and from there it was all downhill.

But then the prophets began



speaking of One who would come—and the government would be upon His shoulders. When Jesus came, He was God's final word to humanity, clearly setting the whole divine history in focus, and establishing the Church to carry out God's purpose.

Where we in the Church have failed throughout history has been in losing our vision and a sense of our mandate. Rather than working toward the vision of Kingdom culture, God's government in its ultimate form, we have been taken up with lesser things and have been satisfied with incomplete emphases. Our calling as the "Christ society" is not just to be a group of people who are "saved" and going to heaven when they die, but a people who in history are manifestations of divine culture.

To put it rather daringly, we are to be an extension of the Trinity in the earth—just as Jesus was. John said of Jesus that "we beheld His glory." "Glory" in that sense is the visual manifestation of the invisible attributes of God. In other words, Jesus was a walking counter-culture—everything that Jesus said and did was an extension of the Father. And to the Church Jesus says, "As the Father sent me, so send I you" (Jn. 20:21). Thus, what He was as a one-man culture we are to be as a corporate culture. We must become "Christ people" in the same way Christ was the Father's cultural expression in the earth.

### Preaching the Gospel

The first priority I see coming out of Kingdom culture is the necessity of preaching the gospel. That is God's first priority. In these days of perplexing issues and varying viewpoints, we must be clear about what is our foundation and our source. We must not allow our involvement in political, economic or cultural forums to pull us off our primary ground, which is the proclamation of the gospel.

I am, in the final analysis, a

servant of God, a proclaimer of the gospel, a pastor to my local community and a messenger of the Kingdom. These roles must be my first priority. If I leave the ground of my *primary* responsibility as a proclaimer of the gospel and go totally into politics, for example, I move out of the area of my gift and training to an area in which I am no match for what I may encounter. *On* my ground, I can speak into a situation, but *off* my ground where there are no rules, I am less effective. While this may sound self-protective, I realize that my security rests in my staying within my ground. This may well be a stance all of us need to take—even though some may label us biblicists or obscurantists.

The question that may arise from what I have said is, "Does the gospel then have no application to society?" The answer, of course, is that the gospel has *tremendous* social implications. However, over the past seventy-five years, such application has been classified by the term "social gospel," which is inaccurate. The social gospel in recent years has been perceived as total involvement in social action. We are not disturbed by social action; we *are* disturbed by the fact that much social action has forsaken the areas that we consider to be foundationally essential. In other words, some have become so completely involved in feeding the poor, for example, that they have forgotten to preach the gospel to them.

So then, our first priority must be to clearly perceive our place in the Kingdom. We must be those who, having come into a definite relationship with God through Jesus Christ, are governed by the Word of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit and committed within the redeemed community to its government and oversight. We must be a part of a manifestation of the heavenly culture in the earth and we must be involved socially—first within the redeemed community, taking care

of our widows, our poor, and those of our own household, and then within the community at large. We must be alert to unrighteousness wherever we see it and speak to it to the degree that we are released to do so. But we must not divorce our social involvement from the gospel, as many have often done.

If we are firmly grounded in the Kingdom, then there will be a foundation for our involvement outside of it. But if we are not grounded here, we will probably become so involved that we forget the gospel.

### Conservative, Liberal or Christian?

In the political arena we find Christians taking many positions: conservative, liberal, Democrat, Republican, left, right. I presume that as Christians these people love the Lord Jesus, but I fear that some of them are interpreting their Christianity in terms of their political positions rather than interpreting their political positions in terms of Christianity. For example, if I am "conservative," then my tendency may be toward conservative policies. In that case, as I develop Christian views I would be constantly discriminating to accommodate my conservatism. The same could be true if I were a "liberal."

Ideally, we must be constantly coming out of the biblical concept of a Kingdom culture—the culture of King Jesus. This means that there will be times when we will appear to approach an issue from a conservative perspective because it is closest to the Christian position. Other times, our



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approach may appear to be from the liberal side. Such variation may be interpreted as ambivalence on our part, and people may ask, "What is he—conservative or liberal?" But those labels are not biblical concepts. I am not conservative or liberal; I am a Christian.

Paul says, "He who is spiritual judges (or evaluates) all things, for he himself is not judged (or evaluated) by any man." That is to say, when we are acting out of Kingdom culture, we have the supernatural ability by the spirit of the Word to make evaluations of what is going on, but we ourselves cannot be cataloged or labeled because the man outside the Kingdom does not understand where we are coming from.

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## Saving my own skin is not really the first priority; the first priority is doing the will of God.

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If we take an issue—abortion, for example—in which we are on the pro-life side where most conservatives are, we would seem to be conservative. But in the matter of mishandling wealth, which tends to be a conservative shortcoming, we may be more inclined to speak about responsible stewardship of wealth, and may consequently sound somewhat like left-wing socialists. But we are not. All we are saying is what James said to those who withheld their riches from the poor: "Go too, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you" (Ja. 5:1). That is purely a biblical stance, but it could make some conservatives

angry with us. They might say, "Well, those people are as left-wing as can be. They believe in the redistribution of wealth." That is not what we are saying. We are simply saying that the wealthy have a providential responsibility to handle their wealth as a stewardship before God; but that approach may disturb a man who is theoretically, politically and philosophically conservative and who, at least up until that point, may have considered us to be his political compatriot.

A protest to a biblical approach may indicate that a person is not coming out of Kingdom culture, but out of a conservative or liberal culture. It is debatable how much in that conservative or liberal philosophy may be compatible with Kingdom culture; but the point is that there are other things in those respective philosophies which are not coming out of Kingdom culture. We are not conservatives or liberals; we are Christians, and that may cause tension between us and both our conservative and liberal friends.

We must take issues as they come, and we must speak into them out of Kingdom culture. Many people who became involved in the drug culture of the sixties did so because they were reacting against the establishment. Certainly there was much in the establishment deserving a reaction. But we had to say, "Although there are wrongs in the establishment, the Kingdom reaction to the misbehavior of the establishment is not mindless protests and dissolving your brains with LSD." So we found ourselves in the middle of the issues, and both sides were unhappy with us. But a prophet does not have the luxury of placating anybody; he must please God.

We must constantly act out of the Kingdom culture base, and that puts us in a perpetual tension, because when we do we will not be in total agreement with anybody outside that culture. They will like us when we

speak one way and hate us when we speak another way. We will constantly be in hot water. But that is our prophetic expectation, and in spite of the hot water the person who lives that way can expect the Father's highest involvement in what he is doing. Saving my own skin is not really the first priority; the first priority is doing the will of God. If I do the will of God, I have the Father's highest blessing. Therefore it is incumbent upon us that we constantly act out of this matrix of the Kingdom culture.

### We Are Not Called to Everything

We must look at how Jesus conducted Himself on earth. Certainly Jesus must have seen things that needed correcting, but Jesus did what the Father told Him to do. That is what we must do. I must admit, to my own shame, that it is only in recent years that I have been able to quiet myself and assume the same posture that Jesus took. In the past, I angrily and passionately involved myself in many things that the Father never told me to do. But if we can patiently wait on the Lord—not letting patience become laziness—we will be able to speak out of His mandates into situations of concern.

Even if I act out of my Christian compassion for a world in need—trying to help it by feeding its poor and ameliorating its suffering—if I do so without the gospel being in the vanguard of what I'm doing then I assume an unscriptural posture. Yet it is a great temptation to make that mistake for two reasons: first, because I have the compassion of Christ; and second, because I am goaded into action by persuasive yet misguided men who say, "You're a Christian. Why isn't the Church doing something?" Though it is not their prerogative to tell us what to do, we are sometimes goaded into action because we respond to *their* set of priorities and this is entirely the wrong stimulus. It is a shame for

a man of God to be imposed upon by people who only want to use his gifts and ability for their own ends for the sake of expedience.

I have been involved in a number of activities over the years. Eventually I had to tell my associates in some of those activities, "Look, I totally affirm what you are doing; but God has not called me to that, even though I believe He has called *you* to it." Involvement which may seem good in itself may be a violation of my personal call if I am not to give myself to it.

I agree with Charles Simpson when he says that he has had to differentiate between what he can bless and what he can serve. Some activities entirely within the providence of God are not for me to be involved in. I cannot do everything; I was not *called* to do everything; but the something I do must be *the something God wants me to do*. If I am not doing the something He wants me to do, it does not matter what else I am doing—it is in vain. Since we cannot do everything, we had better know what it is He wants us to do.

### Speaking to the Government

One thing we *are* called to do is to speak out of Kingdom culture to the government. In Romans chapter 13, Paul speaks of government as the divine agency of God in the social realm. Paul says that "the powers that be are ordained of God and the magistrate bears not the sword in vain." Civil government is an agent of God to providentially supervise human behavior and to keep it from breaking down into self-destructive anarchy.

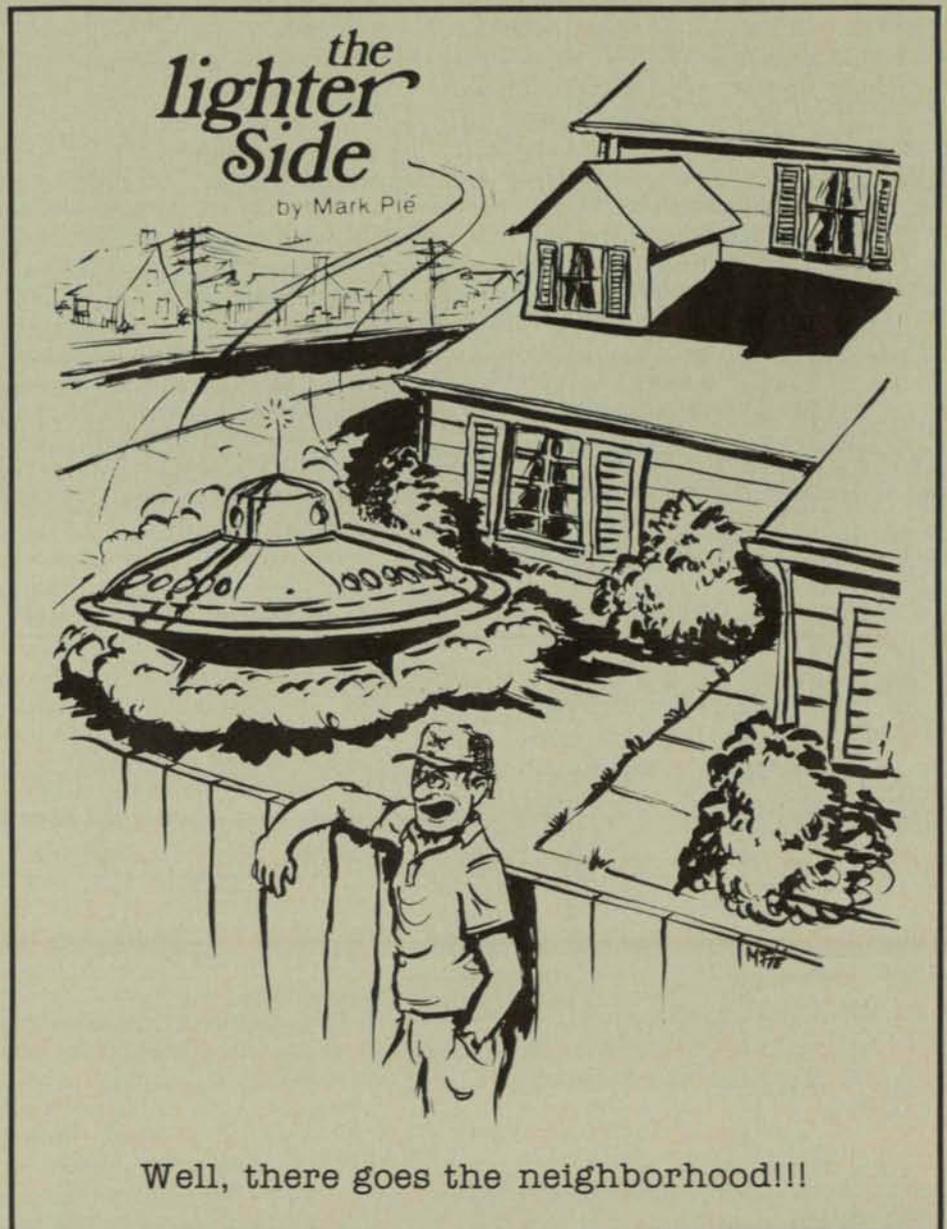
The redeemed community is also directly under the oversight of God as the redemptive arm of God. These two institutions are supposed to act together. The Church is not over the government, nor the government over the Church. Ideally each should be holding a responsibility from God. In fact, government men should be good members of the

redeemed community. Ideally, they should come out of the redeemed community, fed with the culture of the Kingdom which they seek to translate into the governmental realm. Government is an institution we must address.

God ordains the powers of men. Rulers may come to power by vote or by revolution, but God ordains them. And in the Church, God gives us the leadership of apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherds. If we hold these two poles of government in the Church and government in society properly, then we will

understand that the Church must deal with the government as the heart of the culture. Jesus appeared to Paul and said, "You will stand before Caesar." And that is where Paul ended up—he stood before government; he spoke to government.

Our stand against abortion, for example, is valid. I wish all the issues were that clear-cut, because all we are doing in this situation is declaring to the government as God's people that murder is wrong. But again, I would want to ride herd on my involvements in it to be sure that I am not violating a more fundamen-



tal priority. I would not want to go off on some kind of crusade that would keep me from fulfilling my primary calling.

Of course, some Christians are called to deeper involvement in certain areas than other Christians. In fact, there will be godly men in education, in economics and in other areas, starting to interpret Kingdom culture to those areas. It is absolutely essential that the message of the Kingdom of God eventually influence the whole social process. It will not be simply apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers called to this task; it will be the whole redeemed community. With the infinite variety of God's gifts, there will be people in government, in education, in the legal profession, in industry and in all areas of society who will speak righteousness into those situations, acting out of a foundation of the Kingdom culture.

This presupposes that Christians are teaching and embracing the concepts of Kingdom culture themselves, for we cannot very well talk of a thing we don't have. We must first understand the government of God in the

Kingdom before we ourselves can address governments. My concern is that the whole of God's people must themselves come under Kingdom culture, so that all Christians can speak out of our culture firmly, humbly and redemptively against violations of God's moral government such as abortion or sexual permissiveness. And we must do so without neglecting our main priority—preaching the gospel.

We must crucify the emotions of the self-gratifying aspect of our nature so that we don't act out of our passions, but out of revelation. If we are going to do God's job it is essential to have God's wisdom. And that can only come as we function and live in the culture of the Kingdom.

### Acting Corporately

In all of this we need to respond out of corporeity. Although it may not always be possible to have total corporeity, it is very important that in decisions which influence community policy we act in symphony rather than unilaterally. We are in a time in the Body of Christ when we need to function corporately for protection and for clarity, because none of us has the whole picture.

Our strength is our plurality. As long as we can act out of council, recognizing that we are the people of God, committing ourselves to the culture of the King and approaching all our challenges and confrontations in council out of a Kingdom culture, we will hopefully be protected from grave mistakes. Through the years I have observed many who have gotten into situations where they had the right ideas, but because they did not have counsel, ended up doing something intemperate.

In the past year, I have come to see the indispensability of dialogue. Now, in discussions about matters of concern, I find myself listening for the "divine throb," the holy consensus, which indicates that God has spoken.

I remember once when the

five of us who serve on *New Wine's* Editorial Board were discussing a particular matter. Each of us expressed his opinion and every one of our opinions was different. Two hours later we came up with God's opinion, and it was different from all five of ours. Without anyone's suggestion or prompting, we spontaneously stood up together, raised our hands and began to praise God.

There is a security in council—a security to say what we may only have begun to think about because we know it will be corrected eventually. If we can understand the nature of Kingdom culture—that it is not a matter of mere human philosophy but of God's intention for mankind—and if our decisions come out of council where our hearts have been humble and open to revelation which is aligned with the Word of God, then I believe we will effectively and responsibly fulfill God's ultimate purposes for His Church.

### Faith in God's Ultimate Purpose

If I did not believe in the ultimate purpose of God, I would die of discouragement. I believe that in *all* that we are seeing and hearing in our generation, God has some purpose. There is something positive in all we are doing. I constantly think in terms of foundations and ultimates, and the ultimate is that God is going to gather together all things in the Body of Christ. All of God's people must discover that they are a Kingdom culture.

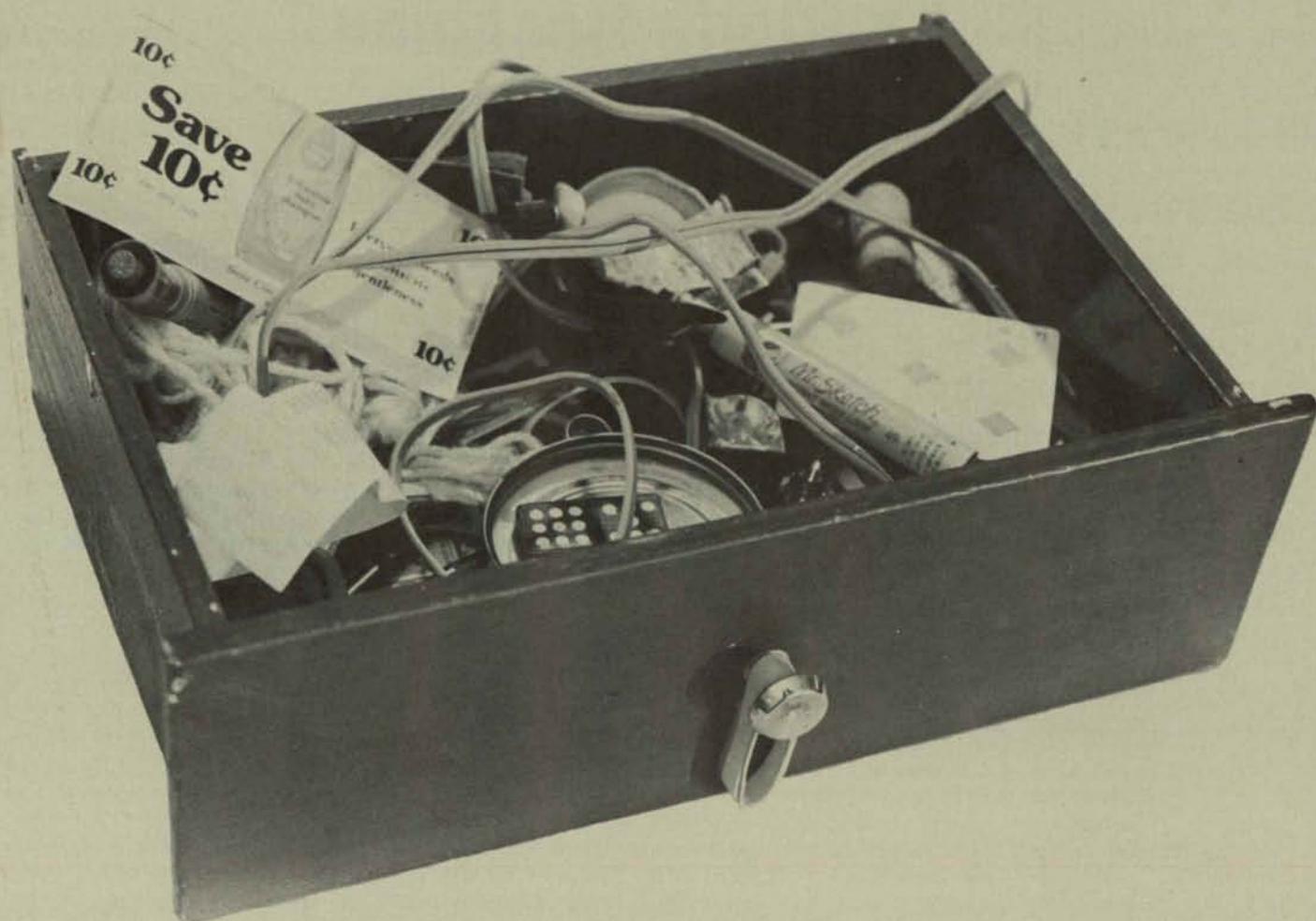
I don't know how God intends to accomplish that ultimate purpose, but knowing He *will* do it gives me hope. Were I to look at what is going on among Christians without that hope, I would despair. But I do not despair because my faith is in God and in His ultimate purpose. My job is to do what He tells me to do—no more. And the promise we can trust is that God is causing all things to work together for good. ♥

## Tips for Fathers

**D**o your children know how to take their concerns to the Lord? Have you ever gotten into a serious prayer with them that really mattered? Find an important issue and encourage your child to exercise himself in prayer about it. Give some thought to the depth of your child's spiritual life. Does he or she know the Lord Jesus? Do they have real faith? Has their nature changed? These are questions for which you are answerable to the Lord. Seek Him for your child's well-being and future.

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# A TOWN WITHOUT HEART ATTACKS

by Gloria Hochman



A medical study of the impact family and community relationships have on our health.

Only by chance did Dr. Stewart Wolf learn of Roseto, a town whose residents were all but immune to heart disease. Wolf's interest led to a landmark nineteen-year study which has just been released on the relationship between mental and physical health. It reveals, says its authors, the "real" reasons that heart attacks are the number one killer of Americans, and suggests how the trend might be reversed.

"It began quite innocently," remembers Dr. Wolf, who is a professor of medicine at Temple University in Philadelphia. "One July evening some friends, my wife, and I were sitting around outside on our farm, not too far from the Italian-American village of Roseto. We noticed fireworks over the mountains, and laughingly said, 'Someone must have forgotten them on July 4.'

"'Oh, no,' said one of our guests, 'Roseto is having a festival.' A few months later a doctor who lives there told me, 'I've been practicing in Roseto for seventeen years and I have never seen heart disease in anyone under fifty-five.' I decided then I'd like to look into it."

Dr. Wolf's "look" resulted in a two-decade study which uncovers why, until 1971, residents of Roseto rarely had heart attacks and why, today, their incidence of the condition has come to match that of other Americans. "What we learned," says Wolf, "holds important lessons for all of us."

The first hurdle was getting the cooperation of Rosetoans. "You had to know the community to understand," Dr. Wolf says. "It had a clannish quality to it. Houses, on narrow streets, close together where residents sitting on their porches could chat with neighbors. Roseto's thirty businesses were clustered on Garibaldi Street, where a pair of cousins had Italian bakeries and the village's five restaurants occupied the first floor of their owners' homes.

"Oh, there was some wealth there," Dr. Wolf says. "But you would never know it. Everyone dressed like the typical Italian villager—shirt buttoned at the neck, no tie.

"And there was a village leader, someone like a mayor, without whose consent nothing happened. But I got lucky," Wolf recalls. "A man who was painting my house was the leader's son-in-law, and he arranged a meeting for me.

"I told the leader about the study I wanted to do. The Rose-

toans are very hospitable, but the first twenty minutes were like the first round of a boxing match. Then I guess the leader decided I was all right, and pledged his cooperation."

A few months later, Roseto's town council building had been turned into a clinic with residents handling most of the clerical work.

Wolf and his colleagues were by this time also comparing Roseto's mortality statistics with four neighboring communities—Nazareth, Bangor, Stroudsburg and East Stroudsburg—for a period dating back seven years.

The results were stunning. They revealed that the death rate from myocardial infarction (heart attack) in Roseto was less than half that of the neighboring towns, and half that of the rest of the country. The remarkably low death rate was especially striking in younger persons: there had been no coronary deaths in persons younger than forty-seven.

The researchers found, too, that Rosetoans were equally unaffected by mental illness. The overall rate for treated mental illness in Bangor was nearly twice and in Nazareth nearly three times that in Roseto. There were, in fact, no male first admissions from Roseto under sixty-five.

For five consecutive summers

clinics were set up in the three cities where histories, physical examinations, blood studies, urinalyses, blood pressures and electrocardiograms were recorded for much of the population over twenty-five.

Results showed that Rose-toans seemed to be incredibly immune to myocardial infarction. But once they moved from their village, their resistance to heart disease vanished and they became as vulnerable as other Americans.

It was even more startling that the traditional precursors of heart trouble—overweight, consumption of animal fat, smoking and poor exercise habits—were just as prevalent among Rose-toans as their neighbors. In fact, Rose-toans tended to be more obese than the people of Bangor and Nazareth.

What, then, made the difference?

Wolf and Dr. John G. Bruhn, a medical sociologist, conclude that there was a striking feature that set Roseto apart from its neighbors and insulated its residents from heart problems.

The results of their study, funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, have been published by the University of Oklahoma Press under the title of "The Roseto Story: An Anatomy of Health." The study said:

"The people of Roseto adhered to a tenaciously held life-style, which reflected Old World values and customs," say the doctors. "It was characterized by predictability and stability. We found that:

- Family relationships were extremely close and mutually supportive.
- This quality extended to neighbors and to the community as a whole.
- There was a well-defined man-woman relationship where the man was the uncontested head of the family.
- The elderly were cherished and respected, and they retained their authority throughout life.
- The atmosphere was friendly,

and residents had an optimistic attitude.

● Most striking, there was no 'keeping up with the Joneses.'"

The cornerstone of Rosetoan life was the family, and families were tied to each other through intermarriage to form "clans." The authors explain that personal and family problems were usually worked out within the clan or with the priest. Family celebrations were frequent and social life revolved around the town's twenty-two civic organizations.

In the 1960's, Roseto changed:

- The number of first-generation Rosetoans diminished through death.
- Young Rosetoans went away to college, sometimes never to return.
- Interethnic and interdenominational marriages became increasingly frequent.
- The birth rate began to decline.
- Church attendance decreased.

At the same time, social restraints against displays of wealth and vanity started to crumble. Women became more concerned about their appearances and several joined weight-reducing programs. Men joined country clubs and initiated golf tournaments. Between 1966 and 1976, Cadillacs, some Mercedes-Benzes, even a new Rolls Royce, appeared on Garibaldi Street. Several expensive houses (\$100,000 and up) were built.

"Their egalitarian standards broke down," says Wolf. "We predicted that Rosetoans would pay for this. And the price would be that the town's relative immunity to death from myocardial infarction would gradually come to an end."

The prediction came true. Beginning in 1966, there was a striking increase in death rates from heart attack. In 1971, death from myocardial infarction occurred for the first time in Roseto in men under fifty-five, a group previously immune. By 1975, Roseto's heart attack rate matched that of the neighboring communities.

## Emotional Drain

"The first cleavage in the traditional Rosetoan culture," says Wolf and Bruhn, "came when the young people moved away from their families to go to school or take jobs. Then, middle-aged Rosetoans contributed to the breakdown of tradition by becoming more involved in the broader community and their gradual indulgence in material pleasures."

But the doctors don't believe it was the strain of a new life-style or the pressures of high-powered jobs that caused the surge of heart problems.

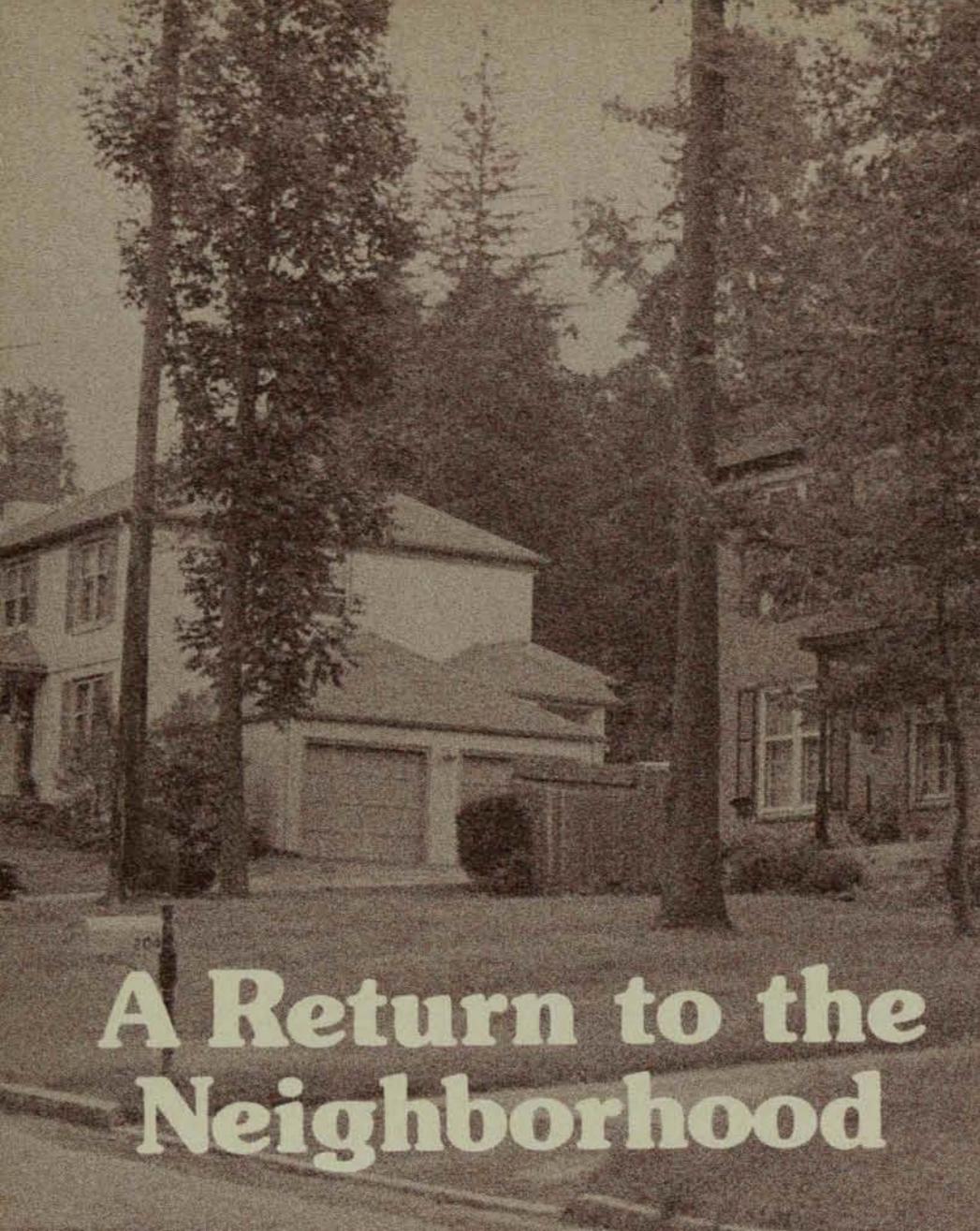
They insist it happened because of the erosion of supportive elements—the loyalty and closeness of family and friends, that once served as buffers against stress.

The findings of other investigators in this country and abroad support Wolf and Bruhn's research. They indicate that heart attacks occur less frequently where traditions of interdependence and family ties are strong. Sudden death often follows the rupture of human relationships and the emotional drain of bereavement or abandonment.

A Roseto woman, who recently moved into a big house with a broad lawn and swimming pool, says it simply and sadly. "I'm sorry we moved. Everything is very modern here, very nice. I have everything I need... except people. When we lived in town, the neighbors were always in my kitchen or I was in theirs. We talked. We knew what was going on there and there was always someone around to help you and to keep you from feeling lonely.

"I miss that, but I guess I will never go back."

Nor can most of us go back. But Wolf believes, "A person can tolerate a lot of hard abuse at work, for example, if he goes home to a welcoming and supportive environment." He says, "We don't pay enough attention to the importance of being appreciated, of belonging and of being supported unconditionally." ▼



# A Return to the Neighborhood

To focus on the practical reality of living in a community and relating properly to our neighbors, we talked with four pastoral leaders who represent a variety of community situations. We asked them to give us their views on the decline

in community life, how Christians ought to be relating to their neighborhoods, their successes and failures in doing so, practical steps they see for reaching out to people, and some goals for responsible involvement in our communities. The insights they shared were as varied as the neighborhoods they are involved in. We present them here, not as accomplished solutions to be implemented across the board, or as "the answer" for every other community, but as testimonies to the way God works in unique ways tailored to each individual setting and as food for thought as we all attempt to be God's people in our own neighborhoods and communities.

## Ron Wood Dallas area

*"Christians can't be a cloistered minority hiding from society."*

Ron Wood graduated from Southeastern Bible College in Lakeland, Florida, with a BA in Missions and Bible, and was pastor of a church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for four years. He is presently an elder in the Metroplex Fellowship of Covenant Churches in Dallas, Texas, where he lives with his wife, Lana, and their two children. Recently the Woods and many of the families Ron pastors moved from comfortable middle-class neighborhoods into Oak Cliff, a racially mixed area in the southwest quadrant of Dallas. Ron describes it as "a patchwork quilt of racial mixtures—a melting pot where people must learn to get along."

**T**he role of Christians in their community and particularly in their neighborhood is basically to be the salt of the earth. Christians can't be a cloistered minority hiding from society. We have something to offer to people, and if we can dare to believe that God will help us, we can share it with them.

One of the things that we are finding in our church is that the friendship we have to offer is a valuable friendship. When a person who knows the Lord is friendly to someone, the effect he has on people is different from the effect an unbeliever has when he is friendly to someone. The friendliness Christians can offer is more an extension of the mercy and the grace of God than you can find in any other type of setting.

In the past, most Christians have seemed to feel that to share the gospel with people we had to get them to our meetings, inside our structures. That idea is no longer adequate for the Church today. Most non-Christians are hardened to "hard sell" presentations of the gospel in a meeting or a media environment. In that context, they see no reality in the gospel. Where people really live is in their neighborhood and job situation, and that's where our people have an opportunity to make an impact—where they really rub shoulders with people.

### Moving to Oak Cliff

I have lived in neighborhoods where every family was an island, isolated from every other family. Their yards were well manicured and they had expensive homes and cars—everything they needed. But in these "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant" enclaves people rarely became friends with one another. You would count yourself lucky if you had two neighbors with whom you were on a first-name basis. Since moving down into Oak Cliff, we have found that there is a greater sense of community already here and it's a fertile ground for the witness of a people who know the Lord and who desire to become friends with their neighbors.

Oak Cliff was once an exclusive area of Dallas until people reacted negatively to racial integration and "white flight" began. But whites are moving back in, so that now there is roughly a twenty-percent black population and a five-percent Hispanic population, with whites comprising the majority of the rest. The area is a patchwork quilt of racial mixtures—a melting pot where people must learn to get along.

The vision I have for Oak Cliff goes back to about eight years ago when the Lord spoke to me while I was pastoring a small church in another state. A family brought a black family to church one Wednesday night and I was pleased to have them

come. After they had been coming to church for a while, their eight-year-old son came to me and said, "Pastor, would you baptize me?" I said, "Of course." But the deacons got word of it and warned me about the problems it would cause because no blacks had ever been baptized in that church.

When I was seeking God about that situation, the Lord spoke two things to me. He said, "Make no difference"—and I saw that the Lord didn't make any distinction between races. Jews and Greeks had come into the Church. And then the Lord spoke to me a second word: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them." The word for "nations" here is the Greek word *ethnoi*, which has to do with races, and I feel that word is still true today: God wants us to make no distinction, to make disciples and baptize all races.

Then about two years ago, I began to feel a desire to have an outreach to the poor. But I couldn't find a tangible way to give expression to that concern. In America it's sometimes hard to define who the poor people are—it's such a relative term. But the poor in most of our cities are collected in minority neighborhoods where few if any families have been able to climb up the rungs of the economic ladder. So I began to look for a racially mixed area, an area characterized by low-income housing. Parts of Oak Cliff fit that description.

At first I tried to "fish in the pond without living there," if you know what I mean, and I found out that wouldn't do. I was unable to make enough lasting contacts with people to feel satisfied that I was really helping them. About six months ago, I concluded that the Lord wanted me actually to move into Oak Cliff. My pastor and the elders of our church agreed. My first thought was to move just my family to Oak Cliff, but after we talked it over we felt that God wanted us to move a core

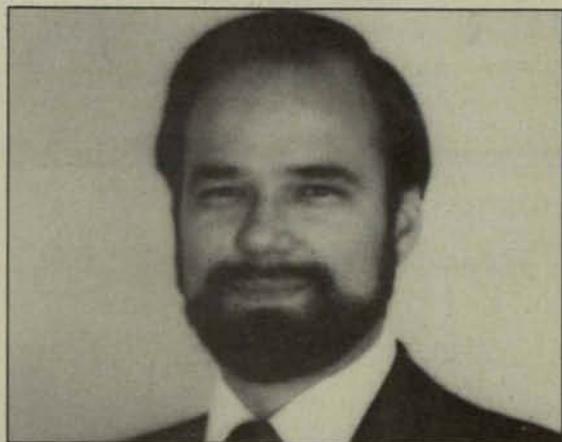
community of people here to be a point of contact with the poor.

Several things have impressed me in the Scriptures regarding outreach (which is simply attempting to share the gospel with your neighbors). One of them concerns the passage in which John the Baptist sends his disciples to Christ to ask Him, "Are you the one that should come or do we look for another?" Jesus' reply was that the blind were receiving their sight and the lame were being healed. But His final words were, "And the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Mt. 11:2-5).

I believe there is a mandate upon us as a people to share the gospel of the kingdom with the poor. We need to do it, and I don't think we can do it just with fancy sermons or buildings. We have to do it by sharing our lives with people, and we can't share fully with people we don't see on a regular basis. That was the problem I ran into—feeling a burden for taking the gospel to the poor, but living in an area that was predominantly well-to-do and "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant."

Many of us began as relatively poor people. While we are grateful that obedience to the gospel has prospered us, it's easy to forget where we came from. After a while the only people we meet are people who have prospered in the Lord as we have, with good jobs and nice homes. We have to remember our humble beginnings and learn again

Ron Wood



to associate with those who may not have prospered as we have.

### Practical Steps

The definite, practical steps we are taking in the neighborhood to reach out to people have been on two fronts. First, we are making friends with black leaders, and enjoying that very much. It's an education to me to be with men who love God and are loved and respected by their congregations yet whose ways are different from mine. Frankly, another reason we're making friends with black leaders is that we need allies. Whatever we do here we'll not be able to do properly by ourselves.

Secondly, we don't want simply to minister to religious people who already know God; we want to reach people that don't know the Lord at all, especially young men who can be won to the Lord and trained as leaders.

We had a picnic in a nearby park a few weeks ago, and after we shared a meal together, we played volleyball. Eventually several young people from different backgrounds came and joined us and enjoyed the fellowship. We plan to do some more of that. We must go where people are and then make friends with them in order to have a bridge for sharing the gospel.

I think that if our approach were one of coming here to "get" people, that would be sensed and resented. But if our ap-

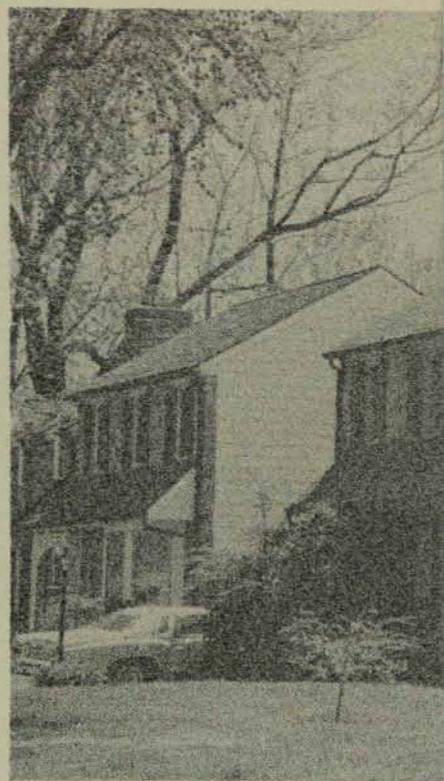
proach is to come here, "sow" ourselves and share with people what the Lord has given us, the Lord will bless that approach and people will be able to receive what we have to give.

### Reaching Past the Barriers

One of the things we sensed when we moved into this area was that if you are a white person and you are not accustomed to moving in an area that's racially mixed, you struggle with certain feelings of intimidation—even though they are mostly based on the imagination. There are good people of every race and there are bad people of every race—that's a fact of life. But the atmosphere of intimidation disappeared when we began to make friends. It proved to be a smoke screen of the enemy.

We have discovered there are walls that need to be torn down between well-to-do people and people that are barely able to make a living. And there are walls that need to be torn down between white people and black people as well. We have discovered that when we talk to someone from another background, often that person has been rejected and made to feel like a second-class citizen, and you've got to get through the resentment they feel toward you. But as we have begun to relate to people in an honest and open way, it's been gratifying to see that rejection stripped away and to realize our new friends really enjoy being with us.

My wife, for instance, waved across the yard to a lady across the street who happened to be black. The lady waved back, and just on the spur of the moment, my wife walked across to talk to her. We had only been in this neighborhood a few weeks when this happened. They began to talk together in the yard, and she invited my wife in. They sat down and talked, and after a little while, she said, "Did you know you're the first white person to be in our living room in the three and a half years I've



lived here?" Then she added, "When other neighbors see me out in the yard, they don't even wave, but you waved." My wife said, "Well, that's their problem; it's not mine."

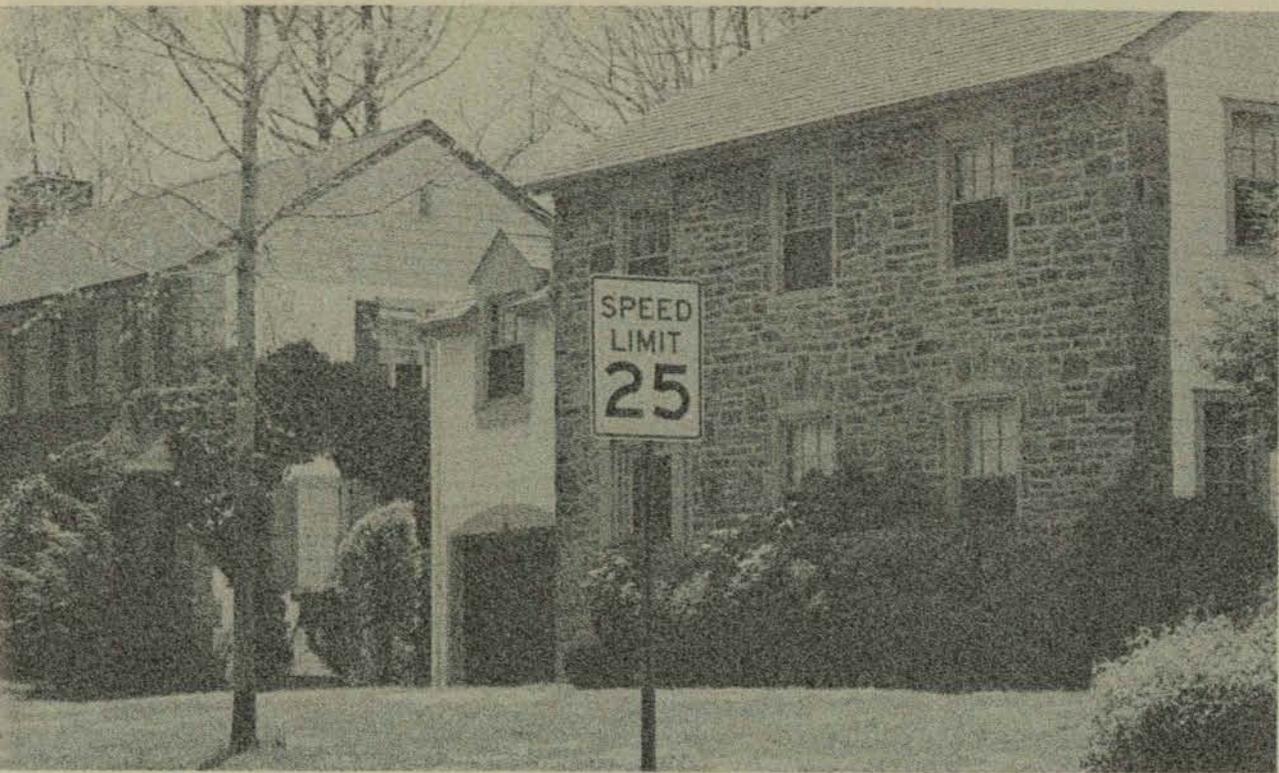
People who have encountered prejudice before naturally assume that we are prejudiced, that we are going to treat them disrespectfully rather than relate to them as equals. We've got to overcome that assumption and prove ourselves. Many of these people have been hurt and abused. Many times, they can't take the first step in becoming friends because they are the ones who have suffered rejection in the past. We have to take the first step. As Christians, we have the grace and power to tear down the walls of rejection.

Recently I was invited to attend a black church conference here in Oak Cliff with a black Pentecostal pastor who has become my friend and who was preaching at the meeting. The event was personally significant to me. There were twelve hundred black people and one white person—me. The shoe was on the other foot. This man had

## Just Around the Corner

### Morality (or the lack of it)

Who sets the standards?



come to our meetings and seen only white faces; now I was in his meeting and looked around and saw only black faces. I had two observations while sitting there. One was that God doesn't like it that we're divided in this way. The second was that somewhere someone must say, "Our forefathers mistreated your forefathers. Will you forgive us?"

### A Long-Term Mentality

Our involvement in Oak Cliff is progressing well, but of course, our work here is only embryonic. For one thing I don't have enough people moved in around me yet to support any fruit that comes from our being here. We are still in the initial stage of people relocating. But we're making friends, getting familiar with the area and making inroads.

We don't have a short-term mentality about what we are doing here. We're looking at least ten years down the road. We intend to bear fruit, and if the black, Hispanic, and white adults are too resentful to be won to the gospel, then we will

work with the young people so that ten years from now we'll see fruit in their lives. But we're here to stay. God has called us for a long-range job, to plant ourselves here, and I believe we have made a beginning.

We believe the Lord has sent us here to do two things. The first is to build relationships with our neighbors until we can truthfully say that the walls of prejudice are removed. Secondly, I believe

raise the children. Our message of the restoration of the home through the strong leadership of fathers is a message that holds the answers to many problems here.

We believe that God will help us to accomplish what He wants in Oak Cliff. We're grateful to be here and we feel fulfilled in what we're doing. We have just begun—but I think we are right on target. ♥

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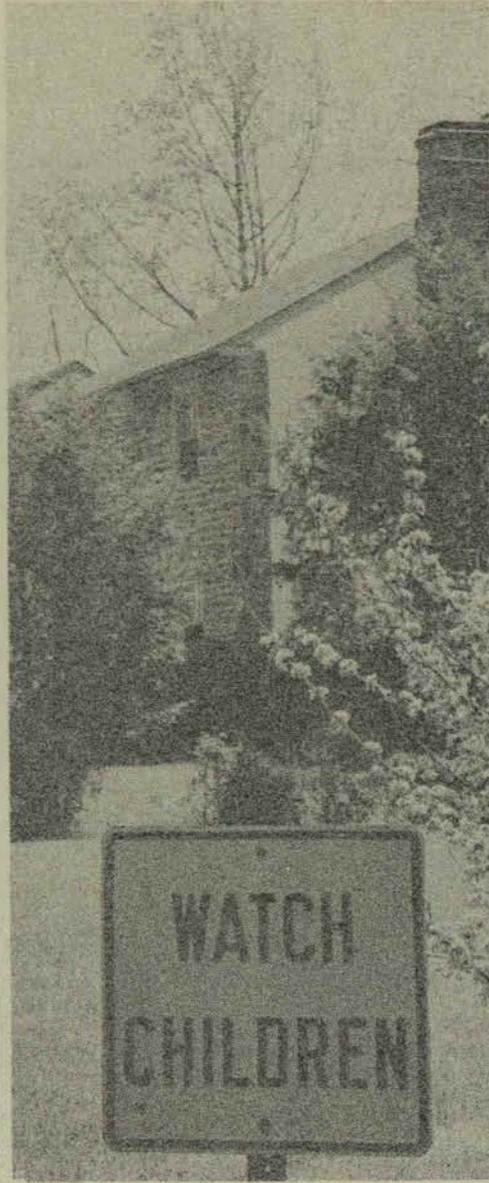
**As Christians, we have the grace and power to tear down the walls of rejection.**

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the Lord wants to raise up and train local Christian leaders who can lead and care for their own generation. One of the biggest areas in which they can make a difference is in family life. There is a desperate lack of fathers in the families here, particularly in black homes. In many cases, it is the mother, and sometimes even the grandmother, who has to

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**Remember:** Friday, September 4, is a national day of prayer and fasting.



### **Keith Curlee Houston area**

***“It’s not an accident or coincidence that we’re living in a particular neighborhood—God has called us to be there.”***

*Keith Curlee attended Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He directed an evangelistic and teaching ministry in Texas for three years and later was a pastor in Gautier, Mississippi. He is presently the senior pastor of Houston Covenant Church in Houston, Texas, where he lives with his wife, Betsy, and their two daughters.*

**I**n approaching what our role should be as Christians in the neighborhood, I view the neighborhood as a natural place to manifest what we have learned about commitment in relationships—without the high-pressure tactics we have previously seen in evangelism, such as going out in the streets or door-to-door with tracts. I believe that, after the family, the neighborhood is one of the most important testimonies we can have.

In the Houston area, one of the unique problems we face is transition. Houston is such a growing city that in most subdivisions you may have a neigh-

bor for only one or two years. I’ve been in my subdivision for four years and already we’ve had four new families within a radius of six or seven neighboring houses. Any kind of lasting relationship in a neighborhood like that is sometimes difficult.

On the other hand, one advantage is that each of our subdivisions has committees set up to govern the neighborhood, such as a “Deed Restriction Committee,” “Safety Rules Committee,” or “Community Planning Committee.” If a person desires to be involved in changing his neighborhood atmosphere, we have a system of self-government through these committees that gives us an opportunity to be involved with our neighbors. It’s a good way to communicate what we believe and also to have some vital input into our neighborhoods. I believe it is very important for us to be involved in these committees.

### **Natural Involvement with Neighbors**

One of the ways we have opened up involvement with our neighbors recently has been by having open houses in our neighborhoods. It’s a common occurrence in Houston to send out invitations to your neighbors saying, “Would you like to come and see our house?” Open houses provide an atmosphere in which we have opportunities to build good relationships in a cordial and neighborly way without trying to pressure them to join the church or “our group.”

My neighbor next door is someone whose needs we try to be aware of. Often Betsy, my wife, will bake something for them, or if I have barbecued extra food we will take it over to them. They know most of the people from our church who regularly visit us, and if our people are working in our yard, they always stop and talk with them. At times we’ve even helped our neighbor with his yard. Sometimes we’ve been able to get wholesale plants for him.

The men in our church go regularly to cut firewood together, and we have involved our neighbors who need wood for their fireplace in that very practical activity as well. Several neighbors have gone home with a cord of wood to help them through the winter.

So the things everyone in a neighborhood has in common—in this instance, a need for firewood—can be occasions for involvement. Outings and picnics in our backyard as well as other natural family occasions seem to be the door to establishing good relationships.

### Some Problems That Occur

Even with opportunities like these for developing natural relationships, we occasionally encounter problems in getting to know our neighbors. I think our primary problem has been helping them understand exactly what we're all about. I made a mistake with an elderly couple next door by not informing them about some of the activity going on at our house, and our lack of communication caused all kinds of suspicions to crop up. For instance, when we added a room to my house, it wasn't until just two days before construction started on the room that I went over and talked to the couple about it. By then, they were upset that they had been the last people to know, and that caused a great deal of tension between our households.

Lack of adequate communication with neighbors is probably the greatest problem we have faced. I have one neighbor with whom our communication is extremely poor. I have to accept some of the blame for that situation because I had to learn something the hard way: if we don't communicate with our neighbors, then situations will arise in which they will form opinions about us—not because of a lack of discernment, but because of our own lack of communication. I don't believe I would have the problem that I have today with one of my

neighbors if I had communicated properly in the beginning.

When I first met the neighbor who moved in next door to me, he couldn't understand what was happening when he saw so many people coming in and out of our house—especially young people working diligently in the yard. He had never before seen that kind of quality in young people. He told me, "I don't want you to tell me what you do for a living; I want to try to guess." So we had a little game going for about three or four days. He had me pegged as everything from a parole officer to a drug rehabilitator. Then when I shared with him that I was a pastor, we had a relationship going already because he was interested in us through that simple little activity we had together. I took the time to communicate with him the way our church functions and how we serve one another, and it relieved any concerns he may have had about us.

I don't believe we can have relationships with all our neighbors, but we have less chance of having good relationships if we don't communicate to them about what we are doing and help them feel involved rather than excluded.

Another problem we have is that the close relationships we have within our church seem to isolate us from the rest of the community. People feel somewhat threatened by our closeness. For example, some of our neighbors who are traveling salesmen may not be able to take care of their yards—yet they see our people helping one another in that chore. People often feel envious of such community, and that has been a hindrance at times. Cell group meetings, house church gatherings and other activities in the neighborhood also make some people very nervous.

Some confrontations we've had with neighbors have resulted in some positive results. We have adopted a policy that if a Christian neighbor is involved

## the lighter Side

by Mark Pié



This may sound crazy, but I haven't missed a weather forecast since he moved in.

in a problem with us, we involve the neighbor's pastor in the solution. In one situation where a neighbor lady was circulating negative rumors about us, I asked the person from our church to go to her husband and also contact their pastor. We asked the pastor to come into the situation and make some kind of judgment about whether the accusations were true or false, and we said we would abide by his judgment. In the end, this lady backed down when we began talking about Christian values—about gossip and slander in particular. The resolution of that situation opened up new lines of communication to pastors in the city.

### Some Practical Advice

From our experiences in our neighborhood, both good and

Keith Curlee



bad, we have learned some practical guidelines for establishing open, natural relationships with neighbors. One of the first practical steps is simply to *have contact with them on a daily or weekly basis*. If you're outside at the same time they are, it's good to stop for a few minutes and just chat. Many times that will only be for three or four minutes, but sometimes it opens

up a longer conversation, depending on how busy you both are. But taking the time to walk across the street or next door is important. If they are doing something new to their yard, such as putting in a flower bed, it's good to express your interest and appreciation for what they are doing. That kind of basic communication keeps you in touch with them.

Regular contact like this is important because it may lead to your talking about more significant issues in a way that will let them know where you stand—not in a dogmatic or religious way, but in a way that simply communicates what you believe. Sometimes, that may prompt them to depend on you for help if they ever get into a crisis situation in their lives.

A second practical step is to *be aware of what your neighbors are doing* and what's happening in their lives. This is not a matter of prying, but of having a sensitivity toward them. When someone in the church is having a baby, for example, or someone is sick, we usually find ways to minister to those needs. I believe we can serve our neighbors in the same way. By taking a cake over, or providing a meal, or being aware of their needs in those situations, we can be good neighbors. Small things can mean a lot—for instance, offering to pick up a neighbor's mail when they go on vacation. Such little things are important, because in these days of transient neighborhoods, often family members live too far away to help out in this way. It's up to us as neighbors to help them, to serve them, and to be aware of their needs.

### The Results of Neighborhood Involvement

I believe God has a number of purposes in Christians involving themselves in their neighborhoods and communities. First, I think, is the opportunity that involvement provides for us to establish the right kind of atmosphere for our families to grow up

in. My daughter goes to school with neighborhood children because they live on the same block. They spend time together outside of school as well. It's my responsibility to influence the atmosphere of our neighborhood for the sake of our family.

A second goal is the opportunity for the Spirit to draw people to us in critical times when God is moving in their lives. That kind of atmosphere, I believe, can also be fostered in the neighborhood. I believe that eventually, as we continue to invest ourselves in relationships with our neighbors, showing ourselves to be true Christians, the Spirit will move upon them at the proper time. We have a great opportunity there to sow seeds for that to take place.

Above all, we can't live in a neighborhood and isolate ourselves; we can't be independent of our neighborhoods. If we think that by simply staying uninvolved, we'll have no problems—we're wrong. The neighborhood is not a place where we just sleep and work and drive away from; it's the place where we *live*. That may sound trite, but it is true. I have learned through painful experience that even if I try to be the best person possible, not causing any trouble in my neighborhood, my lack of involvement there will cause adverse opinions to be formed about me.

We need to recognize that it's not an accident or a coincidence that we're living in a particular neighborhood—God has called us to be there. Acts 17:26 tells us that God has determined where every man is to live: "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and *the exact places where they should live*" (NIV).

That means that where we are is exactly where God has planned for us to be. If we receive that truth, we will find great opportunities right where we live to manifest the Kingdom of God.♥

## Did You Know?

Regularly we hear from readers who benefit from reading *New Wine* and wish they could express their appreciation for its ministry by financial support, but are genuinely unable to do so. One person recently wrote to say:

I cannot find words to express my deep appreciation for *New Wine* Magazine. It has helped me to mature in this walk with the Lord. I have been able to share and minister to many others with it also.

I am homebound because of a physical disability. I have contributed in the past but I am unable to send a contribution at this time. Please continue to send *New Wine* as long as you can. I can't imagine not having *New Wine*.

I. H. O.  
Ocala, FL

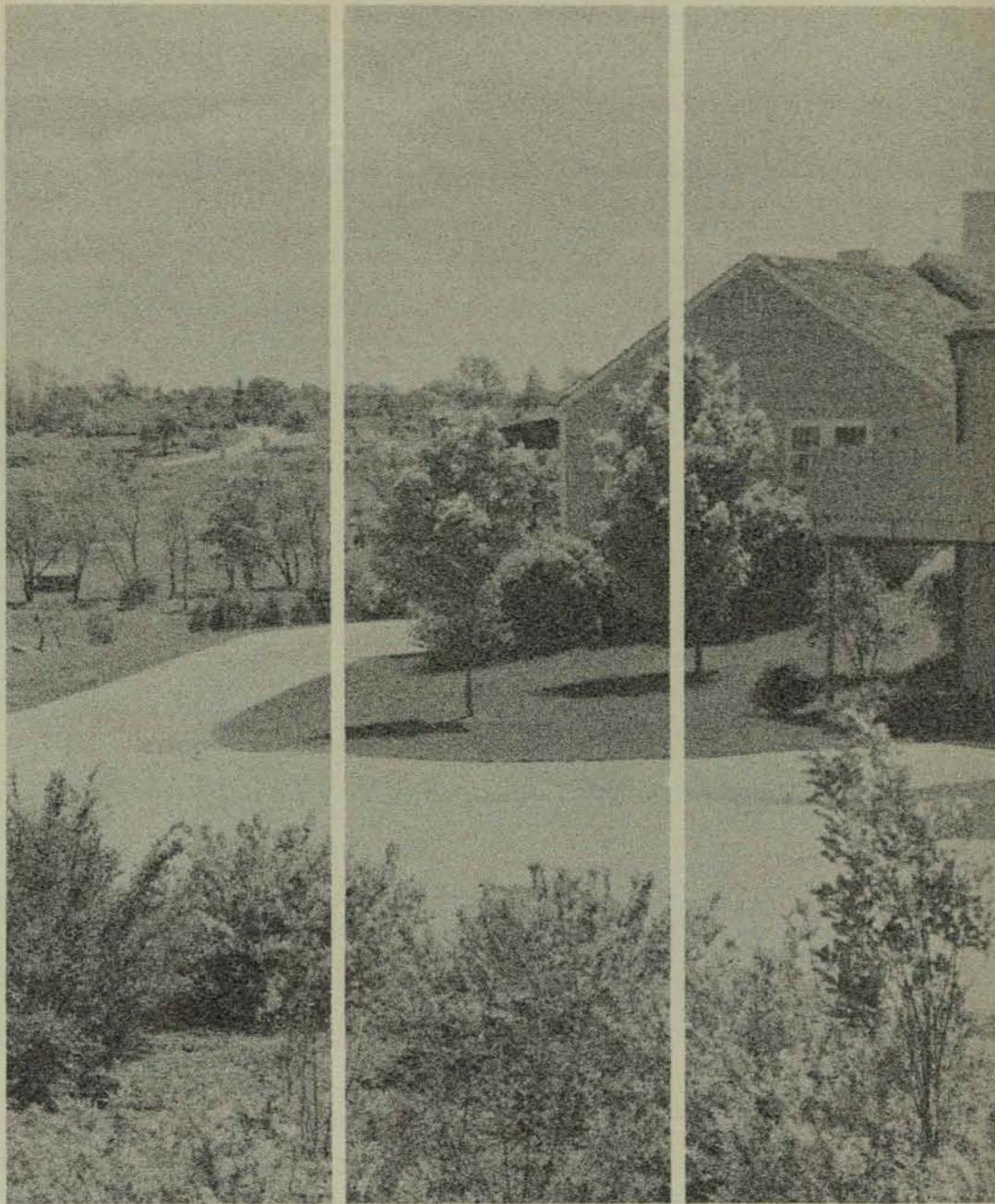
Expressions of appreciation like this make us grateful to be able to send *New Wine* to people who value the magazine but for legitimate reasons are unable to contribute to it. The generous support of other *New Wine* readers enables us to stand by the policy we have had for the twelve years our magazine has been published: we will send *New Wine* to anyone who expresses a desire to receive it, regardless of their ability to support it financially.

We thought you'd like to know.

## Dick Williams Chicago area

*“Our community involvement is a natural result of our focus on Christian maturity.”*

*Dick Williams, his wife, Karen, and their six children live in Downers Grove, Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago. After Dick attended Bible school in Canada, he and his family moved to Chicago in 1968 where he became associated with Ern Baxter, who was then pastoring in Chicago. Dick has been building a community of believers in the Chicago area since 1970. In addition to serving as senior pastor of Christian Fellowship in Chicago, he gives oversight to leaders of several other churches.*



**I**n describing what is happening here in the Chicago area, let me say first that we do not claim to be experts on the subject of community and relating to neighborhoods, nor do we have the final word on it. It is an area which is ever-unfolding and changing—there is no such thing as one “right answer.” No community has all the pieces put together.

Having said that, I believe that our community involvement is a natural result of our focus on Christian maturity.

From the very first, we began working with people to bring them into maturity in Christ, and as many of them began to mature, we then had to find out what they were going to do. So we began to turn them outward in order to find ways to express their gifts and abilities in Christian service to others, and we found that the people in our churches had all kinds of special interests. In light of that variety, we encouraged them to explore ways to involve themselves individually in the community with-

out the elders of our churches having to take the initiative. This resulted in many developments, but our primary realization was that spiritual growth should result in good works, first to the household of God and then out into the world.

### Natural Ways of Touching Others

As we talk about what we have done in our community here, it is important that it be seen as something that is an ever-growing and changing process.

What we are doing today may be adjusted later. Some things that we have done have failed, or we have laid them aside in deference to other priorities. It is very important that what we are doing not be viewed as "the only way" or the final answer.

Some things have simply unfolded quite naturally. We have a particularly evangelistically minded couple whose outreach is to teach Israeli folk dancing, first to church members and then to others in the larger community as well. This is proving to be an attractive endeavor to many people because they have a real interest in the culture of Israel. Not only is it an area of interest to people, but it is also rooted in our heritage as God's people. Offering free instruction in folk dancing has become a way of touching many lives and serving the community here at large.

Another area that has opened up for us is food co-ops. Rather than start our own, our people decided to join already existing co-ops. Though these were not primarily Christian co-ops, our folks began to be involved in them in various ways, and they have had an effect upon how they were operated simply by their quality of life and their character. Working with people in the co-op is giving us a way to touch others' lives, which is proving to be quite fruitful.

Another area of involvement has been with local schools. One of our elders and his wife have

become the co-presidents of the parent-teacher organization in a local junior high school. They are having a wide influence in their community because of the respect for their leadership and the kind of counsel they give. A number of the wives in our group have become teacher's aides in the school as well. Again, this is not only for the purpose of serving but also sharing the gospel of the Kingdom when they have opportunity.

There is also growing influence upon the community where people in our churches have moved into the same neighborhood to live near each other. Recently, five families moved into a block where originally just one of our families lived. As they began to serve each other in house remodeling and other ways, the situation there opened up because the people in the neighborhood observed their relationship. They saw a difference in them.

We have labored long and hard to help our families purchase older homes in need of repair and then restore them in order to have quality housing at minimum cost. So many brothers and sisters serving one another in this way has made a significant impact upon the neighbors, and most have responded positively to all they observe. They cannot understand it at first, but when we explain that helping one another is what Christianity is all about, it has a tremendous impact in the neighborhoods and gives us an opening to those people.

We have also become involved in the public softball leagues rather than in the church league. We usually don't do very well in the standings because often these teams import the best players. But it has given us a breakthrough into some lives and has begun to influence how the leagues work. Even though we usually are not on the winning end, they recognize our sportsmanship and the way we handle ourselves. It's another natural situation for witness that

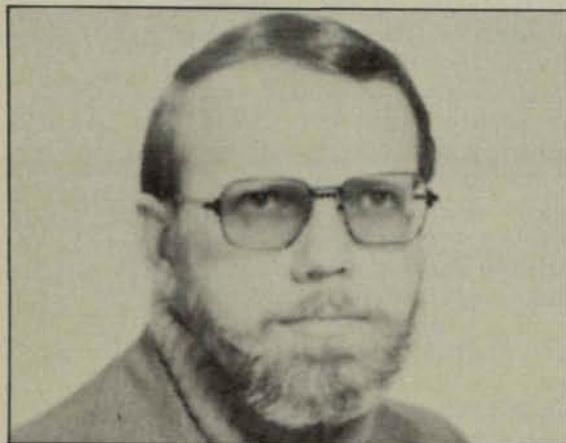
has unfolded.

We have a book shop with a literature ministry that is not at all ordinary. In fact, in our area there are so many large book shops that the field is highly competitive. But ours is successful because we are not there primarily to sell books; we are there to touch lives. People come as regular customers because they know they will receive help and counsel from the staff. They know that we are there to serve them more than just to sell them a book. The book shop is kind of a lighthouse for people. Both Christians and non-Christians come in, and because we know our literature so well, they have come to depend on our counsel.

Our people are also having an effect in their places of employment. Employers are finding desirable character qualities in our people, then asking where they can find more people like them. Thus we have an automatic opening for our folks to find employment.

Of course, we have had failures as well as successes. Two things in particular haven't worked out. One of them was a counseling center we had opened. It didn't work out very well for us, mostly because we didn't have the right personnel to staff it. However, closing it down has enabled a different type of counseling ministry to emerge to replace it. A second ministry that we are discontinuing is our school. We have had our own school for three years, but we have recently concluded that we should bring it to an end. Even though we have produced a very successful school, the costs involved proved prohibitive and we have concluded that for us it was not the wisest use of our funds. Our conviction about Christian schools is that we still see them as valid, although we are not against public schools. But since many of the families who have their children in our school will end up putting them back in the public schools, we will seek to influence what goes on there.

Dick Williams



## Being Out Where the Needs Are

A common attitude among Christians has been that we must somehow stay protected from the secular community—that we run the risk of “contamination” by being involved with people who aren’t doing the same kind of things we are doing. I would say that we started out with that kind of thinking, but as we matured and became more secure, we had a greater freedom to relate to situations different from ours. We are convinced that we are to be light in the midst of darkness, and our understanding of the essential way to accomplish that is by doing good works. And if we are going to do good works, we must go out where the people are in order to reach them. In that context, evangelism comes about very naturally.

The goal of what we do as Christians in our neighborhoods and communities is to have an ever-increasing influence based on our life-style and our love, so that we begin to be recognized as a source of health—as a people who love people in need. That also entails involvement in local affairs, even local government, so that we begin to affect the community’s thinking and the way life is lived in a local area. I think that is happening on a very small scale now, but it will grow as we increase in size and maturity.

### “What About the Poor?”

One of the obvious questions that comes up in all of this is, “What about the needs of the poor?” As soon as you begin affecting a community, this is an emotional area that comes to the surface. God has given us a good proving ground in that area as we labor in Haiti—one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere—through a native Haitian there who is associated with us. In our work with him in Haiti, we are learning how to help the poor help themselves.

Often questions about the poor are based on emotion

rather than on principles and wisdom. The attitude is often, “We’ve got to help the poor, so let’s give them some money and fight for their rights.” We are very conscious that the Lord said, “The poor are with you always.” Since it is a never-ending need, we must find a balance in the use of our resources. It is possible to give everything we have to the poor and have no resources for anything else.

In our early years here in the Chicago area, we worked among the poor for a time and didn’t make much headway. One day the Lord said to me, “Why don’t you go where I’m working right now?” I had to figure out what He was saying to me. Here I was, tackling something very hard because I thought it would appear to be more “spiritual.” But it wasn’t where God was moving at the time, and it took me quite a while to give up my idealistic approach and concentrate on the middle-class suburbs, where God was actually moving at the time. It was a good lesson for me—I had not been Spirit-led; I had only been emotionally moved to try to work among the poor. So now we are not apologetic when someone says, “What are you doing among the poor?” We say, “Whatever God leads us to do.”

### The Goal for the Years Ahead

Looking ahead to how we can best function as a community relating to the broader community, we have divided our main fellowship into four fellowships, allowing more diversity of ministry to emerge. We must periodically evaluate what we are doing, making a sober assessment of what we are truly accomplishing. We want to make sure we’re not busy in activities not related to God’s purpose for us. We evaluated our school situation in this way, and decided that we shouldn’t continue it. If what we’re doing isn’t really fruitful, if it isn’t pro-

ducing genuine good works, then we don’t want to be afraid to lay it aside and move to something else. If we’re faithful to do that, we will produce something that has real integrity.

Often when we teach, sharing new insights, other people hear us and try to apply our ideas in ways that may not be valid for their situation. For example, someone may read this article and say, “Oh, the way to evangelize is to have folk dancing.” But the couple doing this in our fellowship have always

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We are convinced that we are to be light in the midst of darkness . . . .

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had a burden in this area, and their ministry has evolved naturally. It is a combination of God using the uniqueness of His people and fitting their ministries to the uniqueness of the community. His approach is really an indication of His concern for the individual and for the uniqueness of each believer and each community.

There was a time when we thought that we had practically all the answers. But through God’s testings and siftings He has humbled us—we know that other parts of the Body of Christ have some answers we need. Our attitude has been born out of the dealings of God to make us walk in humility.

Five years ago you might have observed a “superior” attitude in us. We would not have admitted it—in fact, we didn’t even recognize it ourselves. But when God dealt with us and humbled us, we had to repent. We know now that people can sense whether you are working with them for *your* benefit or for *theirs*, and they know whether what you are doing is just another religious program or a genuine demonstration of love. ♥

## Dave Nodar Baltimore area

*"They saw a group of Christian families living a distinctly different pattern of life in their midst."*



*Dave Nodar is an elder in The Lamb of God, an interdenominational Christian community in the Baltimore area. He is also involved in the development of several other Christian communities on the East Coast. Dave, his wife, Cheryl, and his two sons have moved into a neighborhood where they are being joined by other Lamb of God members to strengthen their community life and witness.*

The involvement of the Lamb of God Community in the Baltimore area has come about as we have recognized the need for intensifying Christian culture. Obviously, American culture is becoming increasingly anti-Christian and therefore a powerful hindrance to our growth as believers. We have felt that to deepen our Christian culture we need to be more closely related one to another along natural lines—which immediately brings to mind some kind of neighborhood or community situation.

### Finding God's Will for Us

In response to our understanding of the impact Christian culture should have upon a community, people in our fellowship began taking time regularly to pray and fast for the Lord's direction: Did He want us to concentrate ourselves in one

particular area or in several areas? After a weekend of corporate intercession and prayer, we came to the conclusion that we were to move to one particular area, the Catonsville area, a suburb outside of Baltimore. It seemed an appropriate place for us to establish our community because it had a variety of housing alternatives and was financially viable for a wide range of families. In less than two years since then we have established fifty-six living situations within an area of a few blocks, ranging from apartments to homes. Some of them house families and others house groups of single people living together as households.

### A Stabilizing Factor

When we first began moving into the Catonsville area, we assumed a low profile. It seemed the best approach since people often became apprehensive about religious groups living as communities or "taking over" an area. Nevertheless, as we continued to move families into the area, it became obvious to everyone that our Lamb of God Community was concentrating in the Catonsville area.

Our presence in the area began to have an immediate impact on neighbors as they saw a group of Christian families living a distinctly different pattern of life in their midst. We have made it a point to be very open in relating to other people, and consequently people have responded by being open with us as well. So many people in society today feel "closed in"—they don't talk to their next-door neighbors; they don't know who their neighbors are or what they are doing. But as we got to know our neighbors, they gave us a very positive and warm reception.

At this point I think most people in the area see us as a stabilizing factor. We are in a racially mixed section that has experienced continual transition. People recognize us as a group of people who are committed to one another, with that

commitment lending stability to the neighborhood. So that is one way we are making a favorable impact.

### Goals for Affecting the Community

One of the immediate effects of our being here has been the personal evangelism which takes place just by the life-style that we live. Thus far in the two years we have been here, our primary impact has been on this individual level, family to family, and we are grateful for the reception we are getting from the neighborhood. Beyond the level of individual impact, however, one of our goals for the Christian community we have established is that it become a clear expression of an alternative Christian society to this neighborhood. It is much easier to "let our light shine" when we have a corporate witness glistening together. We want to share our lives on every level—from Bible study and personal prayer to cooperative food-buying and recreation. We hope we will be able to include the neighborhood in these activities so that the redeemed community will grow.

Our goal is not just to have a "showcase" situation—we want to have a definite evangelistic impact by allowing neighbors to participate in our life together. The lack of commitment in our society attracts people to the commitment they see in our Christian community. They are responding positively to the community, because they see it as a stabilizing factor.

We believe that God has called us to be what we are and where we are, not only for our own benefit, but also for the benefit of the larger community. We are to be a corporate witness to the reality that Jesus has called us to live as a new people, as a redeemed community, and we are to live our lives in a way which expresses that reality. We want people to know there is an alternative to the life they are living now. ♣

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Phil. 2:4

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

Is. 61:1-4

This is what the Lord says: "I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents and have compassion on his dwellings; the city will be rebuilt on her ruins, and the palace will stand in her proper place . . . Their children will be as in days of old, and their community will be established before me . . ." Jer. 30:18-20

If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday . . . Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. Is. 58:9-12

The righteous is a guide to his neighbor. Prov. 12:26 NAS

Now, therefore, ye are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God . . . Eph. 2:19 KJV

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Lk. 10:30-37

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# the WORD

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Love your neighbor as yourself. Lev. 19:18

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Mt. 5:13-14

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## A Return to the Neighborhood

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The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" . . . If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Cor. 12:21, 26-27

Scriptures are from the New International Version © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society unless marked otherwise.

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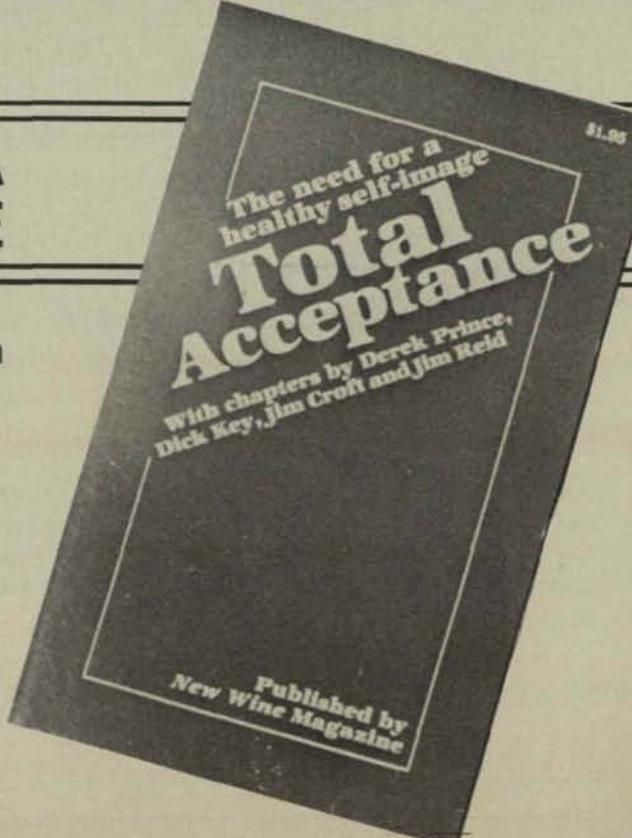
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# Dear New Wine,

## Other Biblical issues

I like *New Wine*. The articles are penetrating, Spirit-filled, and always clear. The staff is to be complimented on the way in which they get *New Wine* to overseas people without worrying about subscription costs, air mail rates, etc. No other magazine comes to me with such regularity and promptness. All I can say is "thank you" and as they say in Venezuela, "may God reward you."

Your editorial on Christians and political stands [Jan.'81] was splendid. . . . There are many biblical issues that *New Wine* treats often and well, abortion, secular humanism, etc. But there are other very biblical issues that don't get much attention. The Pope continues to condemn nuclear proliferation and we Christians take little or no notice. Social injustices are spreading. Ireland, the Palestinean question, the dictators in Latin America who do as they please with humans. . . .

These, too, are biblical issues.

Despite these weaknesses, I enjoy *New Wine* and am grateful for your sending it to me. Keep up your fine work.

Bill Nolan  
Caracas, Venezuela

## Renewal in Poland

We would like to thank you for the complimentary *New Wine* Magazine subscription that we are receiving. We are finding your magazine very enlightening for people in the charismatic renewal in Poland. May our gratitude be shown in the many and abundant blessings of our Lord.

Elzbieta Hincke  
Poland

## Deliverance from parochialism

For quite a few years I was a faithful subscriber then was turned off by shepherding and other dogmas which seemed to be "not for me." However, the Lord was not through with me, even though I was snug in a denomination which did not like these teachings, and I kept re-reading old issues and they became very meaningful to Christian growth in our family. Last year I was led to renew and each issue has been relevant to where we are at home, in the community and in the world. Thank God for deliverance from parochialism and for opening doors to new horizons through *New Wine*.

M.L. Foulsham  
El Paso, TX

## No cage rattling

The recent issue on dealing with conflicts was excellent. My main purpose, however, is to laud the fine, concise financial recap section. These highlights were interesting, adequately presented and without a "rattling of our cages" mentality that really was refreshing. The short article was very good and caused me to respond positively.

Thank you for the presentation of some cold hard facts.

Mike Skovron  
Kirkland, WA

## Hulk is revolting

For the first time in my many years of *New Wine* reading I must write with a criticism. Surely, a grave error in judgment—or worse—allowed you to print a large photo of the "Incredible Hulk" as illustration for "How to Get Angry the Right Way," June 1981. Much of TV showings are absolutely unfit to hear or see—how could *New Wine* use such trash in its publication? The photo illustrating "To Judge or Not to Judge" is almost as revolting. We are all created in His image. Granted our attitudes and behavior are frequently very ugly—but let's not *show* it. Let us edify, build up, encourage. Likewise the photo on page 33—ugly. I am almost unable to read this issue due to this ugliness of its presentation. I pray my next issue will be the joy and truth it usually is.

Peggy Deily  
Quakertown, PA

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P.O. Box Z, Mobile, AL 36616

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The editorial policy and purpose of *New Wine* is: (1) to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all nations, (2) to work with all Christian ministries for the maturity and unity of His Church, (3) thus making ready a people prepared for the coming of the Lord. We recognize that, according to the Scriptures, God uses men given as ministries to build His Church in the earth. However, the basis of our relationship is not primarily commitment to human personalities, but to Jesus Christ as Head, to the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate standard by which all revelation and practice is to be judged and to God's purpose for His people in the earth at this time, as interpreted by the Holy Spirit. *New Wine* is a non-subscription magazine supported by the voluntary contribu-

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