

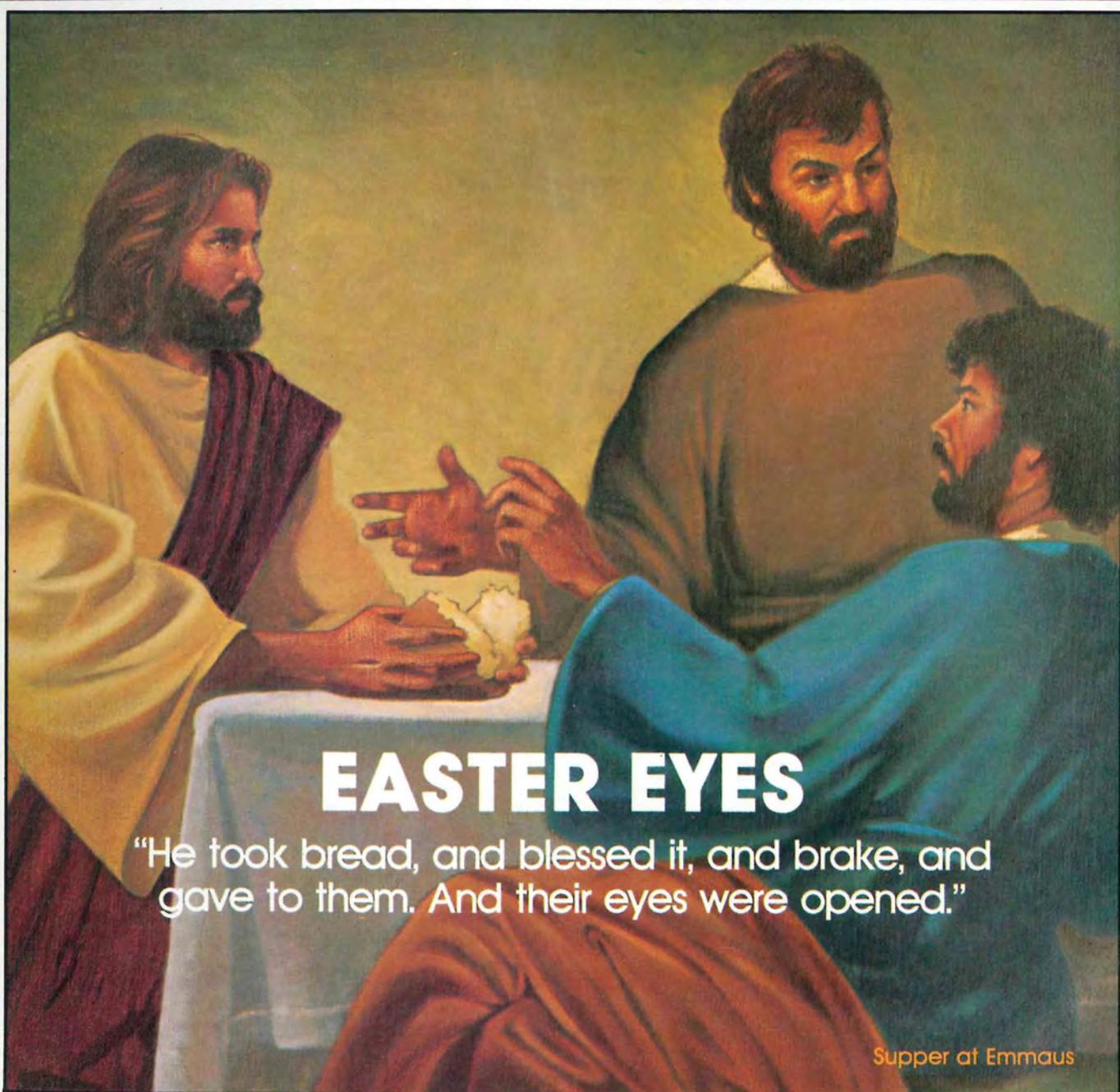
BOB MUMFORD:
How to see with
spiritual eyes

LARRY CHRISTENSON:
We are free
from sin's power

DON BASHAM:
Through the
Shadowed Valley

Magazine New Wine[®]

April 1985



EASTER EYES

"He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened."

Supper at Emmaus

"...the greatest reward I have found from our new life-style is enjoying Ern's new physical health."

RUTH BAXTER

NUTRITION AND HEALTH: A WIFE'S CONCERN

A NEW LIFE-STYLE

When Ern Baxter experienced a close brush with death, he and his wife, Ruth, realized that a radical change in their life-style was essential. With God's intervention and the help of the Weimar Institute, he and Ruth began to rebuild his health and vigor. Ruth's faithful and enthusiastic support of their new life-style has made the critical difference for Ern. Her creativity and ingenuity in meal planning and preparation have made "health food" a delight to enjoy.

8 STEPS TO BETTER HEALTH

These eight steps are based on using the natural healing and maintenance elements that God has placed in our environment:

1. NUTRITION
2. EXERCISE
3. WATER
4. SUNLIGHT
5. TEMPERANCE
6. AIR
7. REST
8. TRUST in divine power

RECIPES YOU CAN USE

Try this tasty, healthful sample recipe—one of the 22 recipes and menus you'll find in "I Almost Died!":

POLYNESIAN BARS

3 c. rolled oats, 1 c. whole wheat flour, 1 c. unsweetened coconut, 1 c. fresh orange juice, ½ c. chopped nuts

Mix flour, oats, coconut, and nuts. Add orange juice and moisten thoroughly. In a 9" x 12" Pyrex baking dish, put ½ of this mixture and pat down. Spread filling on this and put rest of oatmeal mixture on top and pat down. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until lightly browned.

FILLING: 2 c. chopped pitted dates, 1 20 oz. can unsweetened crushed pineapple

Mix together in saucepan and cook until consistency that can be spread.



Ruth Baxter

THIS BOOK CAN HELP

"The issues Ern raises in this book must be faced by everyone. His dramatic story provides us all with both a hope and a challenge: Death can be delayed, disease can be prevented, and health can be restored!"

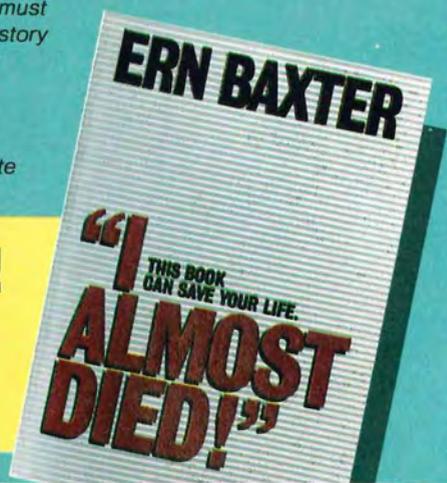
Dr. Henri Weibe, The Weimar Institute

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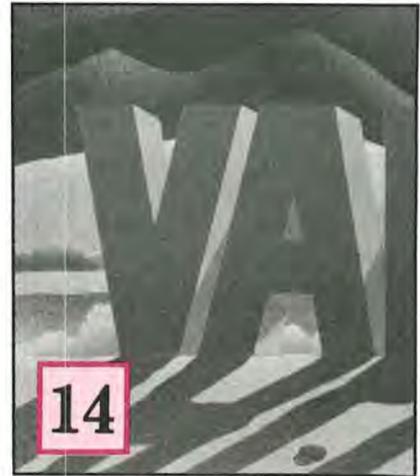
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Vol. 17, No. 4, April 1985

Cover Illustration: I.A.M.

Many times we're like those closest to Jesus

We See, But We Don't Really See

BY BRUCE LONGSTRETH

Poor Bartimaeus, his eyes were sick, he could not see." That's the opening line from a chapter in the book of children's Bible stories that I read to my daughters the other day. As I read to them the story of blind Bartimaeus, I became curious about this familiar New Testament character.

Every day he sat beside the Jericho road to Jerusalem, asking alms of those who passed by. He was so typical of Jericho's poor that no one paid attention to him. But one day when Jesus walked by, this beggar who had been a part of the landscape suddenly began to yell at the top of his voice!

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

The crowd with Jesus was always ready to help Him handle His ministry. They tried to shut the beggar up. But the more they tried, the louder he yelled.

"Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Attracted by the commotion, Jesus addressed the crowd. "Call him here," He said.

Bartimaeus heard the Lord, threw aside his coat, and ran to Jesus, who asked, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

"My Master, I want to regain my sight."

Without hesitating Jesus said,



"Go your way; your faith has made you well" (Mk. 10:47-49, 51-52 NAS).

Bartimaeus immediately regained his sight but he didn't go his way. Mark's Gospel says that he began to follow Jesus down the road. It was a difficult road that led to Jerusalem, to a trial before Pilate, to a death on a cross, to a borrowed tomb, on to a victorious resurrection, and finally to the mount of ascension.

I wondered as I read the story again, *How far did this "man of faith" follow Jesus down that road? With his eyesight restored, would he see what so many oth-*

ers would miss? Would he see beyond the cross to the triumph of the resurrection? Would he ever know the risen Jesus as the Messiah foretold by Moses and the prophets?

Bartimaeus had said, "I want to regain my sight," implying he longed to recover something he had lost. In that respect he was not unlike the women who arrived at the tomb and were amazed to hear the angel say, "He has risen; He is not here" (Mk. 16:6 NAS); or the disciples who were suddenly visited by the risen Lord as they hid in fear; or the men Jesus broke bread with on the road to Emmaus. All these regained the vision they had lost on the dark night of Jesus' trial and crucifixion. The Bible says that after the resurrection Jesus "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Lk. 24:45 NAS). The "slow of heart" (v. 25 NAS) were given faith to know the full significance of His life.

Many times we are like those closest to Jesus; we see but don't really see. Our daily struggles with the natural tend to obscure the supernatural. Our faith in God's word becomes clouded with doubtful opinions. Too often our view of life seems to come from somewhere down under when it should come from His throne looking over.

For the shortsighted or spiritually blind, Easter is a time to remember that Jesus still opens blind eyes; a time to receive mercy and regain hope; a time to rejoice in a renewed vision of the risen Christ. □

Bruce Longstreth graduated from Simpson College in San Francisco and did graduate study at Golden Gate Seminary, Mill Valley, California. Besides serving as editor of New Wine, Bruce is editor of Fathergram, a newsletter ministry to fathers. He and his wife, Janet, have two children.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear New Wine

The Victory of Endurance

"The Other Side of Miracles," by Don Basham (February), was a real blessing. I can't tell you what that little statement "Sometimes, just to endure is victory" has done for me. The last three years have been difficult for our family. My husband lost his job and it took him two and a half years to find another one. I was sick much of one year, and then I went into a deep depression. It lasted months. But now I know I have had victory because I have endured. I stayed close to the Lord through it all.

Sharon De Keyzer
Moline, Illinois

For the Hard Times

Don Basham's feature article "Returning to Your First Love" (February) and his column were both very timely for me. I found the theme of the whole issue to be that God is always there with you no matter what you're experiencing. So if you've got a seemingly unbeatable problem or are experiencing a dry time or are just plain burnt-out, there are answers and Jesus knows our needs and really wants to help. I think no matter how long you've walked with the Lord, you always need to be reminded of this.

Mary DiLoreto
Plymouth, MA

Beginning the Return

Your February issue was full of encouragement and I pray this is the beginning of my return to my "first love." Thank you for being a tool in this process. I look forward to your next issue.

Dolores Boles
Merrimac, MA

Thanks for Sharing Trials

I just received your February issue and was very much encouraged by it. I was very much delighted to read Don Basham's and Bob Mumford's contributions this month relating some of their difficulties in life. I was under the impression that you brethren had somehow "made it" and trials just didn't seem to bother you like they do us. Thank God for your honest testimony.

Shirley Wainwright
Kite, GA

Right on Time

My husband, who is a pastor, and I enjoy reading *New Wine* and eagerly await it each month. The themes, to our amazement, almost always coincide with what God is doing in our lives at that given time. The day we received your February issue, my husband was on a ladder outside our house, hacking away at the solid ice that had accumulated in our gutters from minus 18 degree weather and twelve inches of snow. We laughed as I flashed him the front cover of *New Wine* from my kitchen window. The theme? Breaking the ice!

Tony & Judith Cataneo
Bethel Park, PA

A Long Road to Recovery

Thank you for your February issue! Barbara Israel's article, "The Girl in the Mirror," struck a note of hope for me. I too had anorexia by the time I was fif-

teen. For nine long years I was worn away physically and emotionally. I became a Christian five years ago, and yet for two guilt-ridden years my efforts to stop were defeated. What a blessing it is when God reaches down sovereignly and gives a total deliverance, as He did for Barbara Israel! Sometimes, though, it seems that we have to walk a longer road to healing with other lessons to be learned along the way.

The path isn't always an easy one, though, and sometimes it is discouragingly long. But Don Basham's article "The Other Side of Miracles" is an encouraging and practical response to such times, and one that I appreciated having in the same issue!

Name Withheld

"If Only I Could Lose . . ."

How often I too have spoken those fateful words, "If only I could lose a few pounds." Having struggled with an eating disorder for more than fourteen years, I can relate to the deception, guilt, and isolation spoken of by Barbara Israel in "The Girl in the Mirror."

This past year I permitted the healing hand of the Lord to touch me. Two months in a hospital eating disorders unit, the prayers of many friends, and much hard work on my part have been the beginning of my recovery.

If my words may be of encouragement to any others gripped by an eating disorder: Step out in faith. Trust the Lord for healing.

Gretchen Poellot
St. Louis, MO

Scanlan Said It

I have been a *New Wine* reader from the very beginning. The coach in the public school where I was teaching introduced me to this great ecumenical magazine.

"Spreading the FIRE," the interview with Father Michael Scanlan in the February issue, said so beautifully what you stand for: "We're going to identify as brothers and sisters in Christ in a new way. Christian unity is not a matter of negotiating with each other; it's our pursuing zealously the Lord Jesus Christ, His gospel, and the power of the Spirit. When we do that, we end up in the same place."

Sr. Jean Stukenholtz, OSU
Nebraska City, NB

Pray for West Germany

I've been highly edified by *New Wine* for many years, but now that I'm living in Germany, *New Wine* has become invaluable to me. January's *New Wine* was very encouraging; the articles about seasons of change especially ministered to me and I was thrilled to see some coverage of the world scene.

There is great need and therefore great opportunity amongst the American service people in West Germany. In fact, a revival seems to be stirring. I have found excellent fellowship, and many open doors for outreach, through affiliation with a charismatic fellowship that meets in an Army chapel.

There are openings for the gospel of the Kingdom here. I want to ask the *New Wine* staff and its readers to please pray for Germany.

Roxanne Rogers
Wurzburg,
West Germany

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New Wine Magazine seeks to promote the unity and maturity of the Church and individual Christians by presenting sound biblical teachings and testimonies from a variety of Christian authors.

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Encouraging our children to seek the Lord

"God, Can I Ask You a Question?"

BY DICK LEGGATT

When I moved my family to Michigan recently, we hit some major snags in placing our middle son, Joshua, in the school we believed he should attend. We had pursued every possible solution and our final appeal was before us—a meeting with the superintendent of city schools. That upcoming meeting was very much on my mind as my son and I drove along one evening, and I'm sure he sensed the depth of my concern.

When we got home, Josh went straight to his room and closed the door. About twenty minutes later, he came downstairs and asked a rather startling question. "Dad, how can I tell if God has spoken to me?" By his serious tone, I knew something significant had taken place during his time alone. So in response to his question, I explained in basic terms how God speaks to us—and then asked what prompted his question.

"After our drive, I went up to my room to ask God about getting into Marble School. At first I was worried and just started to cry. Then I said, 'God, can I ask You a question?' And He said, 'Okay. Shoot.'"

I chuckled at the Lord's reply, thinking how much like God it was to speak to him in this way.

Josh continued. "Then I asked, 'Lord, what about my going to Marble School?' And God said, 'It's going to work out.'"

I sensed a real authenticity to the words and said, "Josh, I definitely think God is speaking to you." Beaming, he gave me a big hug, and from that moment on, it was a settled issue for him.

Frankly, Josh was much more certain of the outcome than we were. But when the day came, the superintendent, in a seemingly miraculous turnaround, ruled that Joshua indeed should go to Marble School. God had honored His word to Josh, laying a cornerstone of faith in the life of our ten-year-old son.

I realized then what a tremendous capacity our children have for their *own* faith, and that we must successfully cultivate it.

How do we do that? There is no one surefire method, but here are four practical tips to help create a healthy environment for our children's faith.

1. *Discuss.* A regular, natural topic of family conversation ought to be the faithfulness of God in His guidance and provision. Before our move to Michigan, we had a number of discussions over dinner about the fathers of the faith—especially Abraham, who set out in faith and obedience, although "he did not know where he was going" (Heb. 11:8 NIV).

2. *Disclose.* We need to let our kids in on some of the issues facing us—not in a way that will overburden them, but in a way that will allow them to be participants in seeking God's solution and celebrating His victory when

it comes.

3. *Delegate.* We can turn over to our children the responsibility for some of the more elementary decisions they face. It's good practice for them—and for us. They can learn to seek the Lord and to step out in faith with their decisions. If we select the right issues and commit ourselves to stick by their decisions, it will allow them to mature in faith. Sometimes, as with Joshua, God will meet their faith in amazing ways.

4. *Direct.* Our job is to help our children with each step of faith they take, supplying generous amounts of encouragement whether they succeed or fail.

If we can develop our children's capacity to walk in faith, we will have the excitement of seeing them grow and mature and the satisfaction of knowing that the next generation will follow the Lord in faith. □



Dick Leggatt is the former editor of New Wine. He and his wife, Cindi, now live in East Lansing, Michigan, with their children, Christopher, Joshua, Benjamin, and Elizabeth.

Integrity Communications also publishes a monthly newsletter for fathers, *Fathergram*. For a sample copy, write to *Fathergram*, P.O. Box Z, Mobile, AL 36616.



Jesus must have made mosquitoes for a reason

“O Bug, Where Is Thy Sting?”

BY DON GREENWOOD

Kids have a way of getting theology out of the clouds of lofty speculation and back down to the practicalities of life on earth.

Our home in southern Wisconsin lies in an area of gently rolling hills, shallow lakes, and extensive marshes. Dairy herds graze on the hills, fishermen troll the lakes, and a wonderful variety of migrating birds visit the marshes in the spring and fall each year. In the summer these same marshes provide ample breeding ponds for several less than wonderful types of mosquitoes.

Early one summer, during a particularly thick “bloom” of mosquitoes, my son Isaac came into my study with a puzzled look on his face. “Daddy,” he asked, “why did Jesus make mosquitoes?” (We have taught our children that Jesus, as the

Word of God, is the creative agent of the Father and that all of nature is His handiwork.)

I quickly scanned my mental file of pat answers for inquisitive five year olds, but came up empty-handed. Reasonably sure that my Bible commentaries and concordances were not going to be much help in this case, I gave Isaac the best answer I could muster. “Son, I don’t know why Jesus made mosquitoes, but He doesn’t make mistakes. So He must have made them for a reason.”

Isaac seemed more satisfied with this answer than I was. He left the room as I sat there wondering why the Lord had made mosquitoes.

I was not alone with my thoughts for long. Isaac returned with his younger brother, Ben, and a soccer ball, asking if I

would join them in a game on the field behind our house. As we headed out the door, Isaac made a request. “Daddy, pray that Jesus won’t let the mosquitoes bite us!”

Clearly my son had the faith of a small child in both the Lord and the effectiveness of his father’s prayers. I felt a bit on the spot, but I prayed according to his request. In honesty, I wondered what I was going to say to him when we got bitten anyway. I had usually considered mosquitoes as something to be endured, an evidence of the fall of creation rather than a matter of prayer.

It was early evening, and small clouds of mosquitoes billowed and buzzed around us as we walked through the ankle-deep grass. Quickly, we immersed ourselves in the game and played hard for the thirty or forty minutes that were left before bedtime. In the sweat and laughter of the game we soon forgot all about the bugs.

Later, as my wife, Susan, and I readied the boys for bed, Isaac remarked that he hadn’t gotten any mosquito bites. A quick check revealed that he was speaking the truth. Ben was also free of bites, and so was I! Although in other parts of the world a bite-free body might not be unusual after a summer’s eve spent outdoors, in our area such an occurrence is very much akin to Daniel emerging unscratched from the lions’ den.

We rejoiced and thanked the Lord for His faithfulness. When I was alone, I also thanked God for the faith of children—and for the way in which He causes all things to work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes—even mosquitoes. □

Don Greenwood is a New Wine reader who lives in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin.

THE WORD

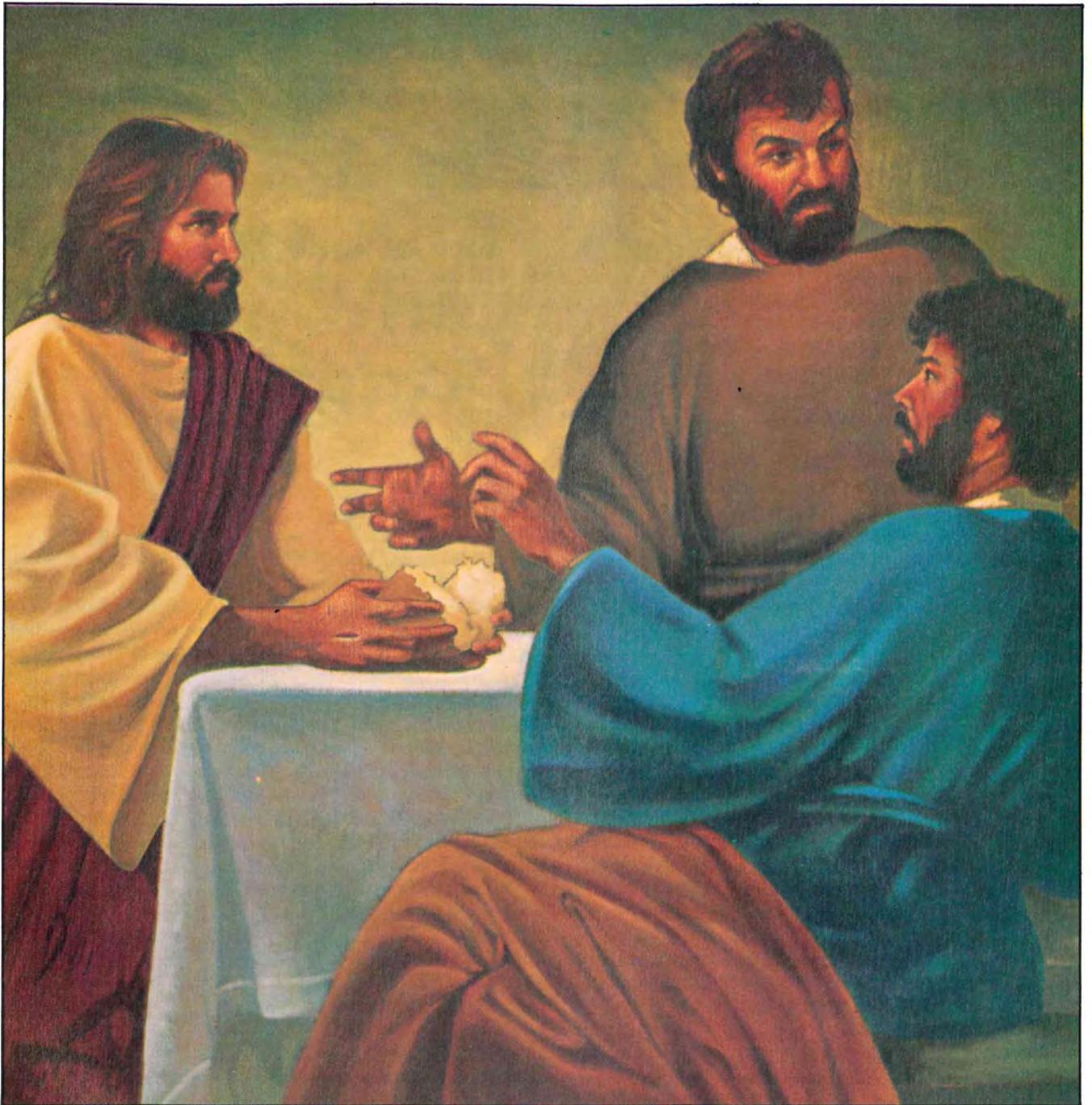
April 1985

I Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Our Savior, Who Is the Prophet, Priest, and King of Our Salvation.

- I. **Jesus' Threefold Ministry Foretold and Fulfilled**
- A. Prophetic Dt. 18:15-18; Is. 61:1-11; Acts 3:17-23 April 1
 - B. Priestly Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:1-28 April 2
 - C. Kingly 2 Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 132:1-18 April 3
- II. **Jesus' Prophetic Ministry**
- A. He knew His prophetic role Mt. 13:53-58; Lk. 13:31-35 April 4
 - B. His prophetic office recognized Mt. 21:1-11, 33-46 April 5
 - C. Power to raise the dead Lk. 7:11-23 April 6
 - D. Other miraculous signs Mt. 9:1-34 April 7
 - E. Multiplied loaves and fishes Jn. 6:1-14 April 8
 - F. Preached repentance Lk. 13:1-9; Mt. 4:12-17 April 9
 - G. Discerned hearts, predicted His future Jn. 4:1-19; Mt. 20:17-19 April 10
 - H. Spoke for God Jn. 1:1-18 April 11
- III. **Jesus' Priestly Ministry**
- A. God's Lamb for the world's sin Jn. 1:19-34; Rev. 5:1-14 April 12
 - B. The Savior of His people Mt. 1:18-25; Ti. 3:1-7 April 13
 - C. Cleansed us from sin by His blood 1 Jn. 1:1-10 April 14
 - D. Intercedes for the people Lk. 22:31-32; Jn. 17:1-26 April 15
 - E. High priest of the new covenant Heb. 9:1-28 April 16
 - F. Our high priest encourages a bolder faith Heb. 10:1-39 April 17
- IV. **Jesus' Kingly Ministry**
- A. The King declared Mt. 2:1-10; Jn. 1:43-51 April 18
 - B. His kingdom at hand; not of this world Jn. 3:1-15; 18:33-37 April 19
 - C. The Kingdom in parables Mt. 13:1-58 April 20
 - D. The King declares war Mt. 12:22-37 April 21
 - E. The King's triumphant procession Zech. 9:9; Jn. 12:12-19 April 22
 - F. The King on trial Jn. 19:1-16 April 23
 - G. The King exalted Acts 2:29-41; Phil. 2:1-11 April 24
 - H. The King's followers proclaim His kingdom Acts 17:1-3; 28:30-31 April 25
 - I. The King extends His kingdom 1 Pet. 2:1-10; Rev. 1:1-6; 5:9-10 April 26
- V. **The King's Rewards and Judgments**
- A. The ten virgins Mt. 25:1-13 April 27
 - B. The ten talents Mt. 25:14-30 April 28
 - C. The sheep and the goats Mt. 25:31-46 April 29
 - D. The last judgment Rev. 11:15-19; 19:11-21 April 30

"The Word," a monthly Bible study by Bruce Longstreth, is a seasonal study of basic teachings about the creation and fall of man, the person and work of Christ, and the nature and destiny of the Church. Next month, we will study the Holy Spirit, who is the promise of the Father, and how He is pictured in Scripture. We encourage our readers to use this feature daily, both for Scripture study and family reading.

SEEING WITH



EASTER EYES

by Bob Mumford

How Jesus' death and resurrection enable us to see life from His perspective

A man had a sign on his desk that said, "Keep looking down." Whenever anyone came into his office, they asked him, "Don't you mean, 'Keep looking up'?"

"It's all according to where you're seated," he replied.

The man said that he could "look down" on everything, because he was seated with Christ in heavenly places. As he beheld life's circumstances, he saw them with a new perspective—that which comes from looking at each situation through the eyes of the reigning Christ.

I like to call that kind of vision "Easter eyes." Easter eyes is the ability to see something beyond the present situation by understanding how Jesus' death and resurrection are applied in our daily life.

This Easter season is a good time to ask God to help us to see the resurrected Christ in a new way so that we too will be able to "keep looking down."

When we were born, God gave each of us a set of natural eyes and the ability to see naturally. When we are born again, God gives each of us a set of spiritual eyes and the ability to see spiritually. But there is a process involved in the opening and developing of our spiritual eyes.

For the disciples, the process of having their spiritual eyes opened included being forced to see beyond the circumstances of Jesus' death. They had to have

their eyes opened to see that He had risen and was alive again. When they finally understood what His death and resurrection meant, they were able to look at all of life with Easter eyes. Then, "He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Lk. 24:27 NAS). We can have that kind of vision too when we see Easter the way the disciples eventually saw it. But first it is necessary to see the process they went through to get that understanding.

The First Easter

It was a Sunday morning, most likely a beautiful Palestinian spring day, when two women who were totally confused by the death of Jesus arrived at His tomb. Imagine their surprise to find that not only was the enormous stone guarding the entrance removed but the body of their Lord was also missing. All that had happened was incomprehensible, because they were still viewing the situation with their natural eyes. Suddenly two men appeared and asked them:

"Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." *And they remem-*

bered His words (Lk. 24:5-8 NAS, italics mine).

Suddenly a light went on inside their minds. Their eyes were opened and they saw that what He had told them would happen, had happened. That's called illumination. As we read on in Luke chapter 24, we find the women were so excited that they went back to tell the others.

When they reached the disciples, they said, "We saw angels."

"Oh, brother," the disciples said to themselves. "Now these women are seeing angels!"

The disciples were so wrapped up in the natural circumstances of Jesus' death that they couldn't perceive anything in the spiritual realm. Jesus had been crucified and now He was gone. All their hopes were dashed. They could see only the tragedy, because they didn't yet have Easter eyes.

The words of the women were nonsense to them: "Angels?" "The stone removed?" But to themselves they said, "We'd better go check it out, just in case." So they ran to the tomb to see for themselves.

"Wow, there are the linens—just like they were laid. But He's not here!"

Another Encounter

Luke goes on to tell of two other disciples on the road to Emmaus who encountered the resurrected Jesus. He began traveling

with them, but they didn't recognize Him. Why? The key is found in verse 16. "Their eyes were prevented" (NAS).

Isn't that interesting? It was just like *Candid Camera!* Jesus, "behind the camera," knew exactly what was going on, but these men didn't have a clue.

"What are you men talking about?" He asked.

"What do you mean, 'What are we talking about?' Don't you know what happened?"

He feigned ignorance. "No, tell Me."

So they started telling Him everything that happened in Jerusalem that week. "He was the Son of God. He was the prophet, mighty in deed. We had all our hopes built on Him—but He died."

Then Jesus began to explain



to them the things concerning Himself from the Scriptures, but they still didn't recognize Him until something else happened. Verse 28 says Jesus "acted as though He would go farther" (NAS). But they invited Him home for dinner, and when He took bread and blessed it, "their eyes were opened and they recognized Him" (v. 31 NAS). Easter eyes are a gift from the Master!

A Key to Understanding

What might have happened if the disciples had not been so hospitable? Jesus was ready to move on, but they persuaded Him to stay. Jesus wanted to be wanted. The key to having Christ explain His word is to *want* Him. There's something about a loving response to the Lord that permits Him to come, break bread with us, and open our eyes. Only after they asked Him to stay did He sit with them at the table and open their eyes. "It's Him!" they cried. And He vanished out of their sight.

They returned to Jerusalem to find the other disciples also rejoicing that "the Lord has really risen" (v. 34 NAS) and that He had appeared to them as well. The word *really* has an important implication. It means that these men who had heard about the resurrection all of a sudden "really" knew about it. The doctrine was turning into experience. The truth that "the Lord has *really* risen" was breaking through into their spirits.

As the two disciples were telling the others about their experi-

ence on the road, the resurrected Jesus appeared in their midst. "It's a ghost!" they cried, still scarcely daring to believe.

"I'm not a ghost," He said to them. "Touch Me. Feel My hands. See these scars right here in My hands? See the ones in My feet?"

Then, as if to make sure they fully understood He was alive, He asked if they had any fish. "He's not going to eat," they must have muttered to themselves. Sure He was! Even though He had just come marching through the wall, He was as alive and real as they were. As He ate the fish, they watched very carefully (because they probably expected to see the fish go down, as if He were transparent!). They were watching Him to make sure He wasn't a ghost or a vision or something from another world. He was indeed the very same Jesus they had known.

Then in verse 45, the disciples attain their Easter eyes in the same manner we are required to attain ours: "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (NAS). It is important to know that the opening of our eyes is not something that happens all at once. It's a process. We come progressively to understand the Law, the prophets, and the Psalms, and God gradually gives us illumination concerning the unfolding of His purposes.

For the disciples, it was a gradual process. Seventeen different times in Scripture, Jesus had told them about His death and resurrection. "I'm going to

It is important to know that the opening of our eyes is not something that happens all at once. It's a process.

Belief in the final resurrection is easy, but do we have hope in Him for our present circumstances?



die and rise again—die and rise again.” Why couldn’t they comprehend it? Because they didn’t have Easter eyes. They were still seeing only through their natural eyes and interpreting everything from that perspective.

A Challenge

Most Easter messages challenge us to see life beyond death. But as we look at the disciples’ Easter experience, we see that the real challenge is, *Can we see life in the midst of death?* Can we see with Easter eyes? Can we see the resurrected Christ in every human situation? There is death working all around us—no question about that. The lesson of Easter asks whether or not we can “keep looking down”! Can we see resurrected life flowing in the midst of a people who are surrounded by death? We can answer yes only if we are looking at all of life with Easter eyes.

When Abraham took Isaac up to the mountaintop and the boy asked his father, “Where is the sacrifice?” Abraham replied, “The Lord will provide.” Yet he continued binding his son, putting him on the altar, picking up the knife, and getting ready to kill him and burn his body (see Genesis 22:7-10). Abraham had to have some kind of faith to believe that out of the ashes his son would come back. Nevertheless, he *expected* God to resurrect him (see Hebrews 11:19). Abraham could see something beyond his present situation. In type and by example, he was looking at the approaching death of his son with Easter eyes. Jesus requires nothing less of us.

Our Master can challenge us to see life in the midst of death because He overcame death. He was resurrected. And in the midst of the death around us, He “always lives to make intercession” (Heb. 7:25 NAS). All religions except Christianity have founders who died and stayed dead. Consequently, all their teachings fit neatly into little books, which their followers follow religiously. But we have a problem—our founder died and came back from the grave. He is alive, expecting us to recognize and relate to Him on that basis.

Some years ago, a missionary-evangelist who was used of God in a healing ministry went to Kenya, and in front of thousands of people, most of whom were Moslems, stood up and said, “Greetings. I’m a messenger of Jesus Christ, and I want to tell you that your god is dead.”

Now one just doesn’t say that to Moslems. But he went even further. “If you want me to prove that my God is alive, put your hands on your sickness, or whatever is wrong with you, and I’m going to pray. If my God is alive, He will heal you right now.” They put their hands on blind eyes, tumors, all kinds of sicknesses, and he prayed, “Resurrected Christ, heal!”

They spent the next three days listening to people testify of their healings. Our Lord is alive! That missionary-evangelist looked at the crowd through Easter eyes.

An Eye Test

Do we have Easter eyes? Here are three important questions that will help us find the answer: 1. Can we see life not only beyond death but also in the midst of death? There’s a critical difference. Belief in the final resurrection is easy, but do we have hope in Him for our present circumstances?

On Easter morning, all the disciples could see was tragedy. They could not see the resurrection, because they were still looking at the tomb. We often react the same way; when we’re faced with tragedy, it’s hard to see Jesus in it. We can do that only if we’re seeing with Easter eyes.

2. Can we see that life is no longer lived after the flesh, but after the Spirit?

Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him

Jesus' resurrection has made the Spirit available to us so that we can live the life He calls us to live.



thus no longer (2 Cor. 5:16 NAS).

The key to understanding resurrection life is understanding that we don't see Jesus according to the flesh anymore. That means we must see Him with Easter eyes. The physical Jesus who walked the shores of Galilee is no longer the one to be worshiped; we worship the Jesus who has ascended on high.

3. Can we draw on the Spirit rather than on our natural abilities? If we can, our lives will be noticeably different. His resurrection has made the Spirit available to us so that we can live the life He calls us to live. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal. 4:6 NAS). Our lives are no longer lived by human strength.

The Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul are two prime examples of the mighty changes that can come about as a result of the resurrection life.

Before the resurrection Peter made promises, commitments, and vows, but usually failed to keep them. One day Jesus said to him, "Once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Lk. 22:32 NAS). In other words, when you are converted, you will have Easter eyes and you'll begin to see that your supply of strength is the Spirit and not you." And, in fact, Peter did go through his own Gethsemane, his denial, his separation, and his eventual restoration. He became a changed man by anyone's standards. Afterward, his life demonstrated the power of the Spirit rather than the failures of the natural man.

Paul went through mighty changes too. He was a blasphemer and a persecutor. Then he was blinded by the light of Jesus on the road to Damascus. And when he regained his sight, he had Easter eyes. When he met Christ, God took his heart, changed it, and made him into one of the greatest witnesses of the resurrected Christ found in the Bible.

View From Above

Answering those three questions affirmatively means we have seen the resurrection with Easter eyes and our lives can be radically different. One change it has meant for me is that something has happened to my prayers. I used to pray to an

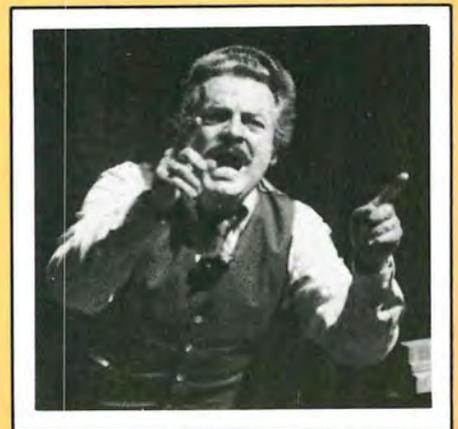
empty tomb. But now I understand that He came out of the grave and ascended. More and more I'm beginning to see the ascended Christ in my prayers. I'm able to picture Him clearly in my spirit. He is my resurrected priest, ever interceding for me.

I pray that it would be so for each of you. I pray the resurrected Christ will come by His Spirit and reveal Himself to you in such a way that His love will embrace you, that His purpose will challenge you, that He will lay hold of the strings of your heart until you're drawn by His love to pray: "Jesus, I want to follow You—through Gethsemane, through the trial, even through the crucifixion, if that's the necessary route. I want to follow You so closely that I will be quickened by Your Holy Spirit. I want to follow You so closely that my life will take on new meaning and fresh usefulness. And I want to see things from Your point of view instead of from mine. I want to start seeing with Your eyes—with Easter eyes." □

Bob Mumford has served as dean of Elim Bible Institute in Lima, New York, and as a pastor, evangelist, and seminar teacher. Bob, who travels widely in ministry to Christians of all backgrounds, has also written a number of books about the Christian life. He is a member of the Integrity Communications Board of Directors and resides in Mobile, Alabama, with his wife, Judy. They have four children, Beth, Keren, Bernard, and Eric.

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THROUGH THE SHADOWED

VALLEY

BY DON BASHAM

“Oh, Lord, has life been granted this precious little girl only to be taken away again?”

One particular area of the Christian ministry finds the young preacher at a decided disadvantage; that of pastoring the bereaved.

The small church at Burkburnett, Texas, where I pastored as a student, had its share of deaths, and I soon acquired enough experience to conduct the funeral service itself without difficulty. But bringing real comfort and consolation to the grief-stricken family proved something else. As

I sought to assure the bereaved of God's love and concern for them, I was always painfully aware that my own life had been singularly free from personal tragedy and grief.

At every funeral I found myself remembering the courageous and Spirit-filled testimony of Sybil Mae Archer, a friend of ours who at the loss of her husband displayed remarkable courage and strength, and knew, deep within, that the spiritual resources she

had called upon in her sudden grief were available for every Christian. Yet, somehow, so few church members seemed adequately prepared to face the experience of death. Secretly, I wondered how I would measure up when the time eventually came for death to visit my immediate family. Would the sustaining love and comfort of the Holy Spirit see me through the trial, as I so confidently assured others He would? No one knows for certain

until he faces such a time, and for each of us, personal exemption from life's ultimate experience is only temporary.

"Something Seems Different"

In the autumn of 1958, nearly two years after our ministry in Washington, D.C., began, my wife, Alice, became pregnant with our fourth child. From the beginning—although she was never seriously ill—this pregnancy seemed different. The baby was due late in May, and as spring approached, we were caught up in the busy schedule of church activities leading up to Holy Week and Easter. The days flew past and Alice, growing slow and clumsy as she approached her seventh month, suffered from increasing weariness. One day as we sat at the breakfast table, she glanced at the calendar on the wall and sighed.

"Just two more months . . . if I can hang on to this baby that long."

Startled, I dropped my fork. "What do you mean, 'If I can hang on to this baby that long'? Don't you feel well?"

"Oh, I feel well enough, I guess. It's just that . . . well . . . something seems different this time." Then she laughed and shrugged. "Just a case of nerves, I guess."

The chain of events which ushered us into the most tragic, and yet the most glorious, experience of our lives began, significantly enough, on Good Friday. There seemed to be something mystical and foreboding about the day itself. At noon I participated in the early minutes of a three-hour devotional service at the National City Christian Church in downtown Washington and stepped outside the church afterward to find daylight almost obliterated by a sky full of unbelievably dark clouds. It was as though the elements themselves had somehow

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conspired to commemorate, in a most startling and graphic manner, that terrible hour. We later learned that numbers of people downtown, fearing something more than coincidence in the sudden 3:00 p.m. darkness, left jobs and offices to rush home to be with their families.

The strange, oppressive atmosphere prevailed into the evening. Even our children seemed unusually quiet, and we all retired early. Sometime near midnight Alice woke me, saying in a strained voice, "Don, you'd better call the doctor. I'm afraid the baby's started to come."

The doctor's voice over the telephone was quiet and reassuring, but his words were not. "Drive Alice to the hospital and check her in. I don't know yet what this means, but we'd better be on the safe side. I'll call and tell them to be looking for you, and I'll be there as soon as I can, myself."

Calling on a neighbor to come in and stay with our children, I drove Alice to the hospital. As we slipped through the silent streets, Alice gently clasped my

hand in hers.

"Honey, I know everything will be all right, for we'll have the Lord with us every minute." Even as she spoke, a measure of silent assurance seemed to flood the car.

The Doctor's Report

By late Saturday morning the tests were complete, and Alice's doctor came to the room to explain the gravity of the situation.

"There's no easy way to tell you this, but I know the two of you are strong enough to take it. Alice, there's no chance for your baby to be born normally. Our tests have confirmed that you have a condition known as 'placenta previa,' which simply means that by some freakish accident the placenta has slipped beneath the baby and is blocking the birth canal. The only course open for us is to take the baby now, by Caesarean section."

The doctor paused, drew in a deep breath and continued, "The chances of the baby's survival are not good. After all, it will be two months premature. Could it be born in the normal way its chances would be vastly improved. But with surgery the shock will be so severe—well, all we can do is hope . . . and pray," he added belatedly, looking at me.

After he had gone, Alice and I stared at each other wordlessly for a minute. I sat on the edge of the bed and drew her close to me. "It's still going to be all right, Dear," she said, her voice muffled against my shoulder. Together we turned to Him in prayer.

The surgery was over so quickly, I was startled when the doctor entered the waiting room, still garbed in his surgical attire.

"Well, Don, you have a baby daughter."

"How's Alice?"

"Fine. She came through the

surgery wonderfully well."

"And the baby?"

The faintest shadow appeared behind his eyes. "She's doing as well as could be expected under the circumstances, but it's too soon to tell anything. I suggest you call Alice's pediatrician right away."

I thanked the doctor and hurried to the telephone and called the pediatrician, who promised to come to the hospital immediately. Then I walked down to the nursery to ask if I could see the baby. A nurse wearing a surgical mask removed her from her isolette and brought her to the window. I had only a few seconds to peek at the tiny figure almost hidden in the nurse's arms. She was a half-sized living replica of her sisters and brother, early struck from the same mold which had produced them, yet with such a shy, uncertain grip on this life. Silently I wondered, *Oh, Lord, has life been granted this precious little form only to be taken away again?* I simply could not reconcile the thought with my belief in a loving heavenly Father.

After a brief visit with Alice, I returned to the parsonage and told the other children all that had happened. "We just have to wait and see if baby Holly gets to stay here. She's awfully tiny; maybe too tiny to come and live with us." The children seemed satisfied with my explanation.

Life-and-death Issue

Soon the pediatrician called and in brusque professional tones informed me she had examined the baby carefully. The major problem was—as with most "preemies"—a respiratory one. "It's too soon to tell if her lungs will develop sufficiently to enable her to overcome her breathing difficulty," she said, and then her tone softened perceptibly. "At this point I am not too hopeful, Mr. Basham."



The rest of the day I moved about in a mood of strange suspension, busying myself in caring for the children and in putting the finishing touches on my Easter sermon. I kept remembering that these were the hours between the Lord's death and His resurrection—a strangely poised moment in history, a pause in the divine-human encounter when both earth and heaven seemed to be holding their breaths, as if the issue between life and death were in doubt. By a strange combination of circumstances, Alice and I and little Holly were caught in that moment.

After a brief visit with Alice that night—a visit during which we agreed that no matter what happened, my proper place was in the pulpit on Easter morning—I returned to the parsonage and crawled wearily into bed. I was still asleep when the telephone rang at seven the next morning. It was the pediatrician, and my heart sank as she spoke.

I've just seen your baby. Her breathing difficulty has greatly

increased during the night, and she's losing ground. I'm afraid it's only a matter of hours now. You should come to the hospital as soon as possible.

My careful explanation of our decision that I should conduct the Easter service before coming to the hospital met with a long disapproving silence over the telephone. "Well, if that's what you've decided," the pediatrician finally spoke. "But don't expect me to comfort your wife. I must stay with the baby." And she hung up abruptly. It was clear she felt I should be with Alice. Still, our decision that I preach had been made, in part at least, out of a total commitment of little Holly's life back into the hands of God. I was determined to act in the light of that commitment.

The Glory of Easter

The world outside gave no indication of our personal struggle. The day was alive with the glory of Easter. The church building and grounds were bathed in warm sunlight, and the woods behind the church pealed with the sound of singing birds. Native redbud was in rampant bloom, splashing purple color at random among trees as yet displaying only a grace edge of green. Wild dogwood blossomed in profusion through the woods, leaving white layers of blossoms floating like miniature snowstorms among their branches.

Walking from the parsonage to the church, surrounded by the beauty of that perfect morning, I breathed a fervent prayer. "Oh, God, let little Holly live! How can anything die in the midst of all this budding life?"

The service that Easter morning was alive with the presence of God, even from the opening strains of "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." The church was jammed to overflowing, and the chancel beautifully decorated

with white lilies whose perfume filled the air like incense. The choir sang with voices attuned to heaven, and when I rose to speak, I faced an audience made sensitive not only by the beauty of Easter but by heartfelt sympathy for the struggle our family was enduring.

My text was the twentieth chapter of John. I described how after the resurrection, Jesus gave each disciple all the proof needed to believe that He had conquered death. Those disciples were like us, I said, each at a different level of faith and understanding—and to each Jesus offered the evidence of His victory. Beginning with John, who believed when he saw the empty tomb; then to Mary, who believed when she heard the Lord call her by name; then to the disciples in hiding, to whom He miraculously appeared through closed doors; and at last to doubting Thomas, who would not believe until he saw the nail prints in Jesus' hands.

An Overwhelming Assurance

During the sermon, I became aware of the presence of little Holly, of Alice, and of the living Christ, and was overwhelmed with the assurance of our personal immortality. I saw that the implications of our salvation in Jesus are far more glorious than we've dared to believe. In that moment I knew that all of us—Alice, me, little Holly, the other children, the members of the congregation, all who are linked to Christ—are a part of the very life of God Himself, a life which is undefeatable, glorious, and unending! I felt with unmistakable certainty that the crisis was over and that little Holly was safe—that we were all safe. Immersed in God as we are, nothing could ever really harm us. Those were moments of sheerest praise in which I could ask God for nothing and thank Him for everything.

"The chances of the baby's survival are not good. All we can do is hope . . . and pray."

At the close of the worship service, I rushed back to the house and telephoned the hospital.

"I was on my way to the telephone when you called, Mr. Basham," the pediatrician said quietly. "Your baby daughter died at ten minutes to twelve. I'm sorry. We did all we could."

The shock of her words turned my spine to jelly. I hung up the phone and sank into a chair nearby. Little Holly dead? For a minute I could not accept what the doctor said. "Your baby daughter died . . . I'm sorry." How could it be? Just minutes before I had been so sure everything was all right—so sure!

Our two girls, Cindi and Sharon, gathered around my chair as Glenn, our two year old, clambered wide-eyed and innocent into my lap. With my arms around the three of them, I explained in halting words how little Holly had gone back to heaven to live and would not be coming to stay with us. Cindi, the oldest, sensing my sudden grief, put her arms around my

neck and in words poignantly similar to those her mother had spoken only hours before said, "It's going to be all right, Daddy. Jesus will take care of us. You'll see."

Feeling Safe

Leaving the children with a thoughtful deaconess who had come to the parsonage to offer assistance, I climbed in the car and drove toward the hospital. Half-blinded by tears, I began to pour out my grief in prayer to God. I was hurt and confused. "Oh, Lord, how could this happen after the assurance—the absolute assurance I felt during the morning service?" Suddenly, I was again ushered into that realm of understanding I had entered during the last minutes of my sermon. Once again the assurance of God's love swept over me, and I was surrounded with an indescribable sense of security. "It is true," I found myself saying. "We are safe. All of us—and most of all—little Holly!"

I entered Alice's room at the hospital praying for the right words with which to break the news, but I didn't have to say anything. Tears filled her eyes as I knelt beside her bed.

"I am sorry, Dearest. Everything humanly possible was done, but . . ." I couldn't go on. Alice reached out and put her arms around my neck.

"I know, I know . . . even the time it happened." She pushed me away for a moment and looked into my eyes. "It was just before noon, wasn't it?" I nodded.

"I knew it," she continued. "All morning I felt so close to her, and to you, and to Jesus. Then a few minutes before twelve, there came this great sense of peace; the feeling that everything was all right. Nobody would tell me, but I knew then that she had gone . . . no, not gone," Alice paused, searching for a better



word. Then, smiling through her tears, she said, "Gone home."

A Holy Presence

The days which followed were filled with the constant miracle of God's gentle, comforting presence. As any parents losing a child, we grieved deeply, but there was no bitterness. Our grief seemed transformed into something beyond sorrow by a holy presence so real and reassuring that it more than matched our sense of loss. Every time the cold fear of death threatened to break in on us, it was dispelled by the warmth of God's love enfolding and sheltering us, a love so vital and living it simply denied death. It was so real that we often found ourselves giving comfort to those who came seeking to comfort us.

Alice's recovery was astonishing, and the following Friday, just one week after she had been admitted to the hospital, I brought her home. Sensing her hunger to see and hold the children, I brought them with me in the car. Our reunion was a profound and tender one, and we

drove away from the hospital with the children sitting as close to their mother as they could. The day was fully as beautiful as Easter Sunday had been, and as we drove through the morning sunlight past the Potomac Tidal Basin, the famed Japanese cherry trees were blooming in their full blaze of splendor.

But the beauty outside was no more wondrous than the joy and love we shared there in the privacy of our car. The Holy Spirit seemed to rejoice in our reunion, as human and divine love mingled and flowed together. We knew that the visitation of that tiny precious life, which had paused so briefly in its eternal journey to grace our lives—just twenty-four hours—had somehow drawn us closer to one another and to the Lord than we had ever been before.

Little Sharon expressed it with the wisdom given only to the very young when she said happily, "Now there's really four of us children, isn't there, Mother? Except one is staying in heaven with Jesus."

Alice hugged Sharon to her and turned to me with the joy that is born out of suffering diffusing her lovely face.

"The greatest miracle of all," she said, "is that with Jesus, even when you lose, you win." □

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Don Basham holds bachelor of arts and bachelor of divinity degrees from Phillips University and its graduate seminary in Enid, Oklahoma. He is chief editorial consultant for New Wine and the author of several books, including Deliver Us From Evil. Don resides in Mobile, Alabama, with his wife, Alice.

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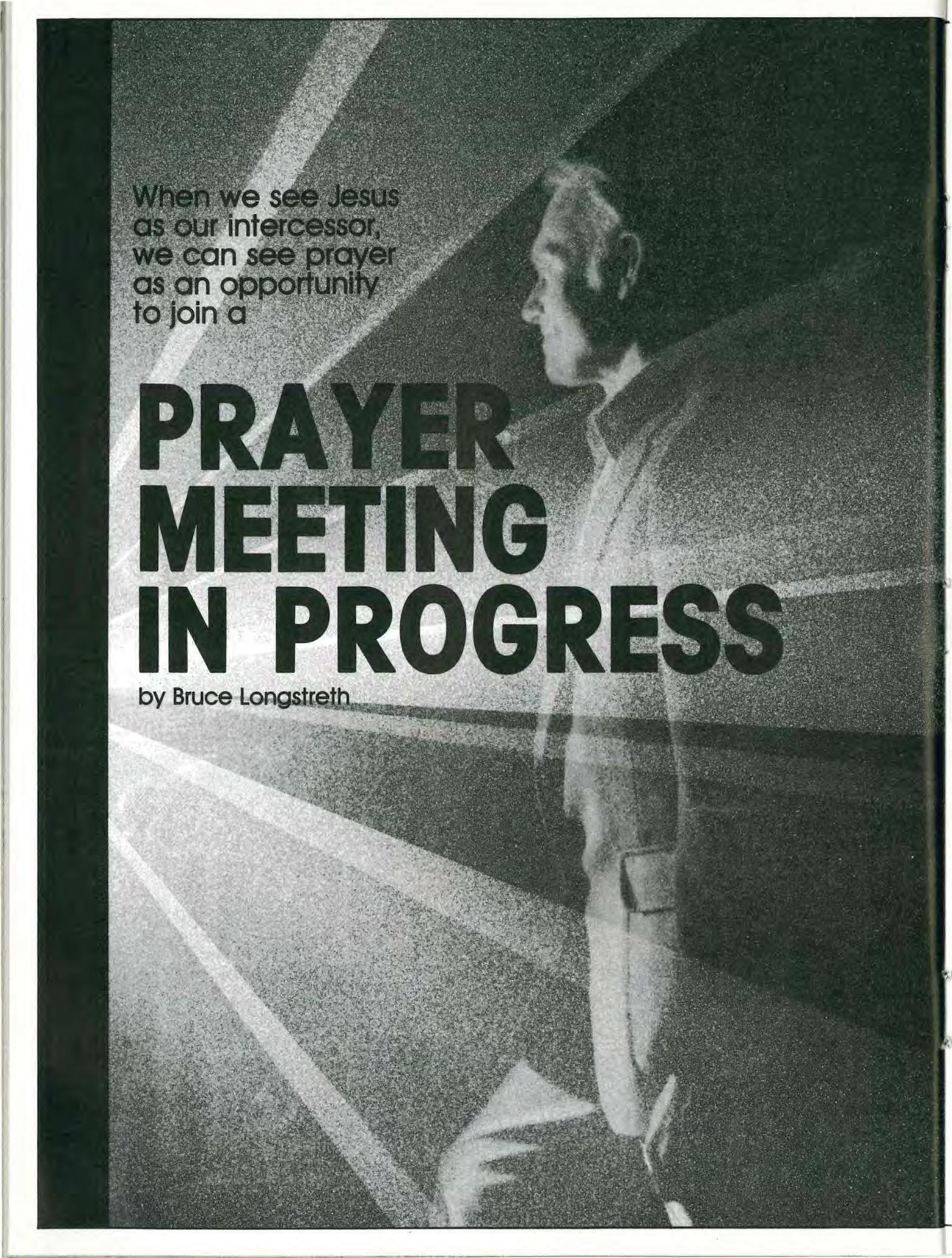
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When we see Jesus
as our intercessor,
we can see prayer
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PRAYER MEETING IN PROGRESS

by Bruce Longstreth

The ascension of Jesus started the most powerful prayer meeting ever recorded. It is not an average "hour of power"; rather, it is a prayer meeting that lasts throughout eternity. It is the prayer meeting where all our petitions are granted.

Paul says in Romans 8:34, "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (NAS). Christ is raised from the dead, seated at the right hand of the Father, and praying for us! He is conducting that everlasting prayer meeting.

The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus, our high priest and intercessor, identifies with every pain and human weakness and speaks to the Father on our behalf (see Hebrews 4:14-5:10). Our victory over every noxious attack in this life is the result of His full-time prayer ministry.

The crucial significance of this to us as believers is that Jesus' prayers in heaven on our behalf make our prayers on earth effective. To better understand what this means, we need to see what the heavenly prayer life of Jesus, our intercessor, consists of. One place to look is at the content of His prayer ministry for His disciples.

One of the first things we know for certain He prayed as He sat down at the Father's right hand was that the Father would send the Holy Spirit. John 14:16 says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." The filling of the disciples and other believers at Pentecost with the fullness of the Holy Spirit was the first answer to the intercessory prayer ministry of Jesus. The continued move of the Holy Spirit throughout history is also a result of His intercession.

We might safely assume that what Jesus prayed on earth the night before His crucifixion He

continues to pray for everyone who is born into the Kingdom: that His followers be kept from the evil one; that they continue to be a holy people through obedience to the word of truth; that they should live in harmony with every other believer; that they should bear witness of His resurrected life to the nations (see John 17:15-21). Certainly more things can be noted in the priestly prayer of Jesus, but we are on safe ground believing that His continuing ministry includes praying for our protection, our holiness, our unity, and our testimony.

A Group Prayer Meeting

Once we understand that one of the most important reasons for His ascension was to start a prayer meeting with the Father on our behalf, our perspective on prayer should change dramatically. When we see Jesus as our intercessor, and know some of the things He prays, we should see prayer not just as something we are to begin to do but as an opportunity to join in a prayer meeting already in progress! Our personal prayer life then becomes a group prayer meeting—Father, Son, and us! We are a part of a prayer group even when we appear to be praying alone.

As glorious as this prayer opportunity sounds, it does present a problem. Have you ever come in late to a prayer meeting and felt like you didn't fit? Did you find it hard to get involved in the burdens of those around you and really wonder why on earth you came? You may have noticed that the meeting slowed down or even stopped to make adjustments for your presence.

Much of our prayer life is an interruption of the Father and Son's prayer meeting. We rush into the presence of God and blurt out something that either slows down or stops the eternal

**Our every
victory in
this life
is the result of
Jesus' full-time
prayer ministry.**

dialog already taking place on our behalf. But we want to pray, are invited to pray, and have come to pray. We just don't know what to say in this "high-level" meeting. The answer to this dilemma is found in Romans chapter 8: "We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (v. 26 NAS).

The Will of God

A fourth party attends this prayer meeting with the Father, Son, and us—the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who has come to us in answer to Christ's first intercessory prayer, participates in two ways. First, He prays for us. But equally important is that He gives us words that help us fit in with what the Father and Son are talking about.

The main topic of the discussion in heaven is always "the will of God." Notice Romans 8:27:

And He [the Father] who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He [the Spirit] intercedes for the saints [holy ones]

When we pray,
the Holy Spirit
gives us words
that help us fit
in with the
Father's plans.

according to the will of God (NAS).

The Spirit helps us to pray according to the will of God. To better illustrate this principle, let's look at what happens as we pray: "Dear heavenly Father . . ."

As soon as we speak those words, the Son says to the Father, "This is the one I have been telling You about."

The Spirit says, "I am speaking through him to assist him with this petition."

The Father says, "I recognize the language of My will in this prayer. Give him the desire of his heart. His heart and My heart agree."

And on earth the will of God is accomplished through our prayer, because if we pray according to His will—according to the prayer meeting in progress between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—He hears us and gives us the desires of our heart (see 1 John 5:14-15). On earth we testify, "Let me tell you what the Lord did for me!"

We Are Holy

But many times we fail to pray

because we *feel* unholy. From the previous scripture in Romans we might safely say that if we are in fact unholy, the Spirit will not pray for us. He prays only for the saints, the sanctified, the holy ones. But we are not holy because we feel like it. We are holy because Christ died and shed His blood for our sins.

Hebrews 12:24 is an interesting scripture with a unique impact. The thought begins in verse 22, "But you have come . . . to the sprinkled blood, which *speaks* better than the blood of Abel" (NAS, italics mine).

Abel's blood speaks of a curse, of judgment, of God's wrath. It says, "Away from the earth, from the presence of God, from the family."

But Jesus' blood says, "You are reconciled and cleansed. Draw near."

What's interesting about the word *speaks* in that verse is that it means "to chatter," "to prattle." It means overabundance, loquaciousness, or prolific speech or speaking.

The sprinkled blood, the atoning blood presented to the Father as the once-for-all sacrifice for sins and sinners needed to speak abundantly of the reconciliation provided by the Son. It needed to speak prolifically and everlastingly, because of our inclination to speak of our unworthiness and our reluctance to come into God's presence.

Jesus' blood chatters continuously, saying, "Forgiven, forgiven. Draw near. Draw near. You are free. You are free." Like a bubbling brook cascading down a mountainside, it tells us to come confidently and join in the prayer meeting.

And when we pray, we join the heavenly conversation already in progress. The Father and Son have been talking about us and we desire to petition the Father, but don't know how. So the Spir-

it volunteers to give us a petition that will be according to the heart of the prayer meeting in progress.

At first, we feel unworthy and draw back, but then we hear the sprinkled blood saying over and over, "Draw near. Draw near." With confidence we present our petition and He hears and grants our prayer, because we have prayed according to the will of the Father.

Confidence in Prayer

In conclusion I want to point out three vital aspects of this perspective on prayer.

First, we can have confidence in prayer because of the high priestly ministry of Jesus on our behalf. Consider the story of Simon Peter during a difficult time in his relationship with the Lord. Jesus said to Peter, "Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail" (Lk. 22:31-32 NAS).

Christ also continuously prays for us that our faith will not fail. When we are at our very worst, we need to remember His unceasing eternal prayer is that we not only survive but also thrive in life's most difficult moments. As we cry out for deliverance and help, we can feel confident that we have joined in Christ's prayer for us that we will be victorious in life.

This prayer again appears in John chapter 17, where Jesus prays, "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one" (v. 15 NAS). Also, in Matthew chapter 6, He says, "Pray, then, in this way . . . Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (vv. 9, 13 NAS). The most powerful thing to realize in our prayer life is that Christ is already praying this kind of prayer on our behalf and we merely join our words to His.

Every day we can see the kingdom of God extended through our lives "on earth as it is in heaven."

A Listening Posture

The second point is that we need to learn to approach prayer in the *listening* posture. If a prayer meeting is already in progress, we need to listen to what is being said by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I remember driving to work early one morning, feeling prompted to pray that the Lord would give us a second child. We had adopted our first child three years before, and my wife and I both felt the time was right for a second child. Driving in the quietness of the early morning, I merely said, "Lord, our first daughter is three years old and I believe that it is about time for another child. If it would please You, we would be delighted to have a new addition to our family."

Within two hours of that prayer, a lawyer friend called. "Bruce, would you and your wife be willing to adopt a baby? You have only an hour to make up your mind." One week later Abigail Leigh had come to live with us.

The significant thing about this simple prayer was the prompting of the Holy Spirit in me to join in a conversation that

the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had already been having about this matter. When I simply breathed my own heart's desire, I actually joined my desire with theirs. God gave me the desire of my heart, because it was according to His discussion with the Son. But the prayer was initiated after getting quiet enough to hear a prayer meeting already in progress.

The Speaking Blood

The final thing to notice is the speaking blood. I never realized the importance of "a blood that speaks of better things" until recently when I faced one of the darkest times of my life. I was not in the darkness of personal tragedy or any catastrophic event, it was simply a dark time when because of a sense of personal failure, I really despaired of ever coming into the Lord's presence again.

One morning, as I got very quiet before Him, I came across Hebrews 12:24 and it was as if I began to hear the blood speak on my behalf. As I confessed my relationship with the Lord, it spoke to me, "Forgiven, forgiven, forgiven. You are cleansed. You are cleansed. You are cleansed." I realized the speaking blood had never ceased calling to me or petitioning the Father on my behalf. Even when I felt the worst,

I could confidently come in prayer to the Father and He would hear my cry. In a quiet moment I had found the "river whose streams make glad the city of God" (Ps. 46:4 NAS).

Our participation in a continuous prayer meeting can touch every area of our lives. When someone comes for prayer, it has become very important for me to listen first to find out what is being said in this situation. I listen carefully to the Spirit as He intercedes and join in the petition for that particular person, knowing that God will grant me the request, because I pray according to the will of the Father.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, He began a powerful prayer ministry for us. Even more remarkable is that we are invited to join in that prayer meeting at any time of the day or night. Every day we can join in the everlasting prayer meeting of the risen Christ. Every day we can see the kingdom of God extended through our lives "on earth as it is in heaven." Every day, in strength and weakness, hope and despair, we are invited to come boldly and expectantly and share in a prayer meeting in progress. □

Bruce Longstreth is editor of New Wine and Fathergram.

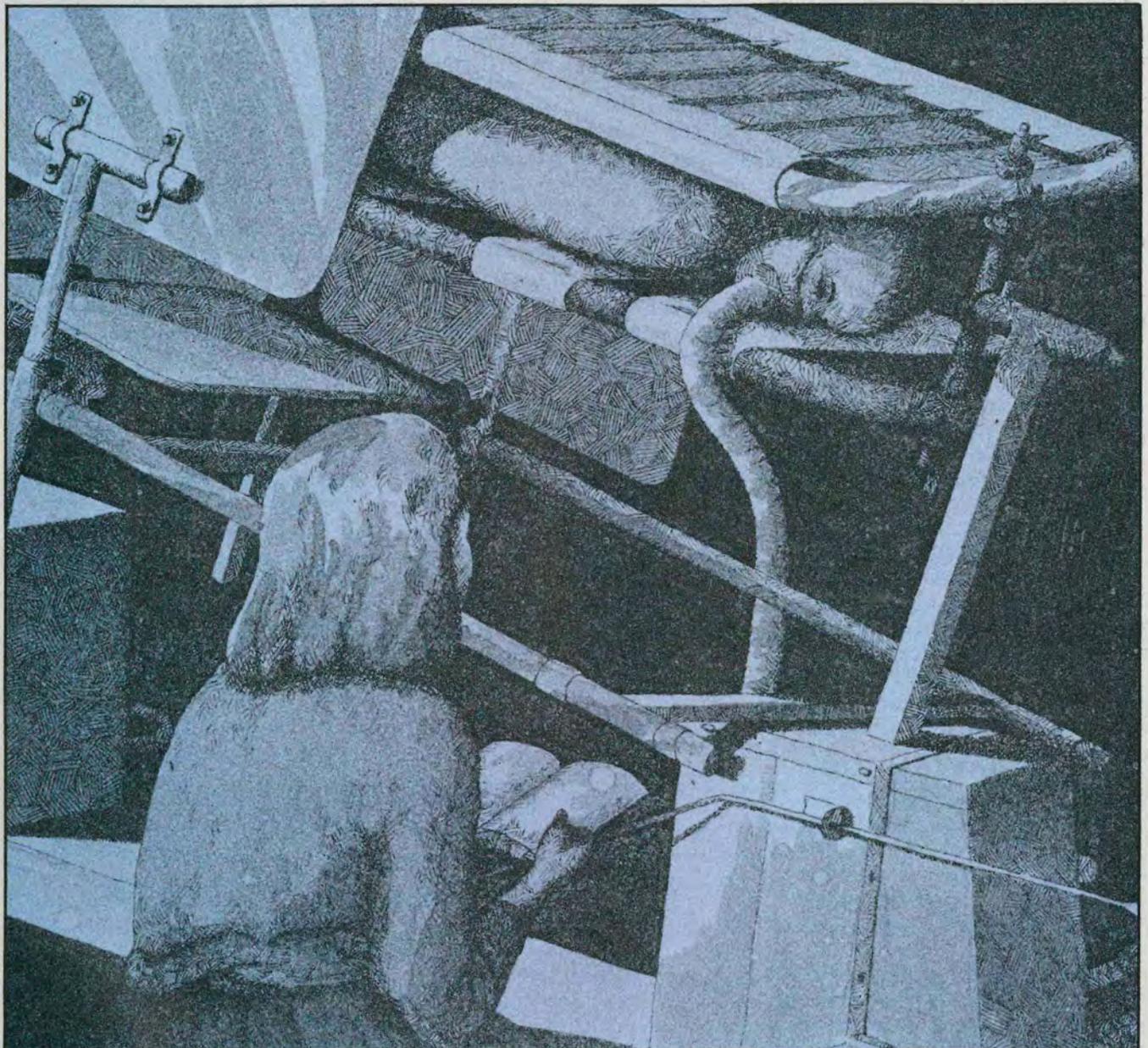
REMEMBER:

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, IS A
NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND
FASTING.

“DO YOU KNOW

Only the Lord stood between this dying man's bed
and an eternity in hell.

by Cynthia Whitehouse



JESUS, MISTER?"

By nature I am a compassionate and caring person. Most people probably think I have an easy time relating to just about anyone, especially the underdogs in life.

But I know otherwise. Two years ago the Father helped me overcome a gripping fear by asking me to share Jesus with a dying man. In the process, He made an eternal deposit in my life.

It began one hot summer day in the SICU (surgical intensive care unit) of the hospital where I worked as a medical technologist. I was making rounds with my supervisor, the blood bank director. All of a sudden, a patient in extremely critical condition—much worse than most people we saw there—caught my eye. Through the glass separating us I could see that he was an older man and he was close to death: He had both legs in casts; he was dependent on a respirator for every breath; he was strapped into a Stryker frame, an atrocious-looking bed used for spinal cord injuries; his chart said “no code,” meaning his condition was so bad that the doctors would not try to revive him if he died. To top it off there was no name on the card in the door, indicating that he was an unknown vagrant brought in by the police.

My compassion meter registered “maximum.” I walked away with my supervisor, but I couldn’t get him out of my mind. I came back the next day, and the day

after that, just standing outside his door, resisting the pull to go in. *It’s just your emotions*, I reasoned. *Besides, what would your boss think?*

The Unavoidable Urge

But I couldn’t avoid the conviction that I should go in and talk to him. Finally the day came when I mustered the courage to go inside. The nurses had told me he was an alcoholic who had taken a walk on the highway at four o’clock one morning. A car hit him, paralyzing him from the neck down. Now he was in a coma. It seemed futile. Even if he could hear me, what could I say to someone in such a hopeless situation?

Yet when I walked into that room something amazing happened. The Holy Spirit fell in such an intense way that I thought my heart would explode. The Stryker frame was turned completely upside down so that the man’s feet were poised far above his head. As I slowly inched to the side of the bed and leaned my face near his, the reality of the gospel pierced me. It was so clear that only Jesus stood between that bed and an eternity in hell for this dying man. Words can’t express what God revealed to me. I was so full of the Holy Spirit that I had to speak out loud: “Do you know Jesus, Mister?”

To my astonishment, he opened his eyes and looked at me. Slowly he shook his head, and from the

position he was in, it seemed as if he was saying no.

I panicked! I had no idea what to say next. All I could do was stumble out of the room, mumbling something about returning to see him later.

Tell Him I Love Him

The rest of the day was nothing short of torment. I knew I had to go back to his room to find out if he really had meant no, but I was sick with fear. Never in my life had I led someone to the Lord. I asked God what to do next and waited for a word from Him . . . Finally it came.

“Don’t go up there in a white coat,” the Lord said. “You aren’t going for medical reasons, so don’t pretend you are.”

“Not wear my white lab coat! How can You do this to me, Lord? Without the coat I’ll be asked what I’m doing in SICU—and I don’t even know why I’m going back!”

But I knew the Lord had more to say, so I continued listening for His direction. “Tell him I love him,” the Lord told me.

“But how can I say that to him, Lord? Look at the condition he’s in. If You love him, how could You let this happen?”

At five that evening, dressed in street clothes, I headed with my heart racing for the SICU. I deliberately took nine flights of stairs instead of the elevator. The stairwell became my prayer clos-

et as I battled the questions flooding my mind: *This is ridiculous! What will everyone think? What if there are people in his room? What are you going to say?* Yet I knew that I would not be able to eat or sleep until I found the answer to one question: Did he really mean no?

The room was deserted—except for the old man and the Holy Spirit. Both, I knew, were waiting for me. The man was again strapped into the Stryker frame upside down, so to talk with him I had to sit on the floor, crouched under the bed with my face close to his. It was an awkward position, but it was the only way to look at him face-to-face.

"I'm the woman who was up earlier," I haltingly began. "I asked you a question and I have to ask again, because it's so important. Do you know Jesus? I *have* to know."

He looked me right in the eye and shook his head no.

I took a deep breath, knowing my work was cut out for me. "God loves you," I slowly told him, adding that it might sound crazy considering his situation, but I knew it was true. I began to share the Lord with him. I said that I didn't know what kind of life he'd led but that to God it didn't matter, because Jesus is the only way to come to Him.

As I said these words, something splashed the short distance from his face to the floor, and I realized it was his tears. My eyes also welled up. When I could speak again, I told him that I would be back the next day.

Another Opportunity

That night as I prayed, I sensed the Lord saying to me that I had to give the old man an opportunity to respond. I had been so nervous and busy talking that I hadn't thought to let him answer.

The next day after work I as-

cended the stairs again. I still had the same questions and fears, but I was confident of one thing: I would meet the Lord in that room.

He was in the same position again, so I once more crouched on the floor close to his face. I asked if he wanted me to visit. It had to be obvious why I had returned. He nodded yes, so I repeated my question: "Do you know Jesus?"

"God loves you," I told him, adding that it might sound crazy considering his situation.

He nodded his head in response, but this time he was saying yes! I knew that the Lord had met him as I'd shared out of my heart the day before.

I asked if he'd like me to read Scripture to him. He nodded yes again. So I walked out to the nurses' station to find a Bible. I was totally without fear, because God had written something powerful in my heart: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16 NAS).

I was touching eternity and I wanted to share it with anyone who would listen. I wanted to shout the goodness and infiniteness of my God! The gospel of the Lord Jesus filled me and I felt the reality of its power. My spirit kept repeating: *The Word is true. The Word is true. The*

Word is true!

After much searching involving everyone in the SICU, we finally found a Bible. I read it to him that day, and returned every day that week to read and visit with him.

Peace With His Maker

Then one day I arrived and the room was empty. Even before I found a nurse who could explain what had happened, I knew he had died. I was told that he had asked to have Psalm 27 read to him and afterward he said he was ready to go, having made peace with his Maker.

He is now in glory, and I am changed. God required something of me that I could never have done on my own. He gave me the power to accomplish it, asking only that I be available and obedient. The fear I had to combat was so small in comparison to the blessings I've received.

Something has happened to my faith. I now stand on the foundation of the truth of the gospel. Knowing its truth, I am now confident that the rest of the Word is true too. I feel a confidence not only to believe God but also to witness to others. I know that no matter what circumstances I find myself in, the Father will fulfil His Word, regardless of what I think or how I feel. Because that's the way He is. □



Cynthia Whitehouse is a New Wine reader who lives in Burke, Virginia, with her husband, John.

The Universal Donor

Jesus' blood matches every type, avails for every need, and is free to all who will receive it into their heart by faith.

by Robert E. Coleman

A large sign on a street corner caught my attention. On it was a picture of an injured man receiving a blood transfusion. The caption was "Giving Blood Saves Lives."

Indeed, giving blood does save lives. It is the very means by which life is sustained. As the heart pumps this vital fluid through the body's network of arteries, capillaries, and veins, each cell is continuously supplied with food and oxygen, and waste products are eliminated. No part of the flesh can live without being nourished and cleansed by this throbbing stream of life.

Recognizing this human phenomenon, it is not strange that in the Bible blood should be associated with spiritual life. Because "the life of the flesh is in the blood," it became very naturally the means by which atonement could be demonstrated (see Leviticus 17:11). Every Old Testament blood sacrifice spoke of Him who one day would give His life for the world, the incarnate Son of God.

Blood is the symbol of our Lord's outpoured life, the offering of Himself unto death on our behalf. Only as we take this fact into our heart can we truly know salvation.

The Ideal Donor

A little boy was told by his doctor that he could save his sister's life by giving her some blood. The six-year-old girl was near death—a victim of a disease

from which the boy had made a marvelous recovery two years earlier. Her only chance for restoration was a blood transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the illness. Because the two children had the same rare blood type, the boy was the ideal donor.

"Johnny, would you like to give your blood for Mary?" the doctor asked.

The boy hesitated. His lower lip started to tremble. Then he smiled, and said, "Sure, Doc, I'll give my blood for my sister."

Soon the two children were wheeled into the operating room—Mary, pale and thin; Johnny, robust and the picture of health. Neither spoke. But when their eyes met, Johnny grinned.

As his blood siphoned into Mary's veins, one could almost see new life come into her tired body. The ordeal was almost over when Johnny's brave little voice broke the silence. "Say, Doc, when do I die?"

It was only then that the doctor realized what Johnny's moment of hesitation and the trembling of his lip meant. He actually thought that in giving his blood to his sister he was giving up his life! And in that brief moment he had made his great decision!

Blood Bank of Calvary

We hear a lot today about blood banks. They are depositories where blood taken from healthy donors is stored for future use. When an emergency

arises in which a transfusion is needed, a call to the blood bank usually will bring forth the desired supply of saving fluid. This is a marvel of modern science.

But how much more wonderful is the blood bank of Calvary. There in unlimited supply is the incorruptible blood of the Son of God. Its life-giving power is as it was when given at the cross. It matches every type, avails for every need, and is free to all who will receive it into their heart by faith.

If for any reason your life has not known this divine transfusion, receive it now. Make your great decision. Offer yourself to Him, even as He has given Himself to you. And in this holy outpouring of life, your heart will feel the throb of the heart of God. □

This devotion is adapted from the author's popular Bible study The New Covenant, published this year in a new and revised edition by Navpress.

Dr. Robert E. Coleman is a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, where he is also director of the School of World Mission and Evangelism. A well-known author and speaker, he has written more than a dozen books, including The Master Plan of Evangelism, now in its thirty-fourth printing and published in seventy languages. Dr. Coleman lives with his wife, Marietta, in Deerfield.

THE SCAPEGOAT

by Larry Christenson



We've heard much about Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb whose Blood covers the guilt of our sins, but He also took away the power of our sins.

The scapegoat dates back to the Old Testament. On the Day of Atonement two goat lambs were brought to the high priest, who cast lots upon them. The one upon which the first lot fell became the lamb of sacrifice, and it was slaughtered. Its blood was sprinkled on the altar as a covering and atonement for the sins of the people.

Then the priest laid his hands on the head of the second lamb and confessed the sins of the people. This became the scapegoat. It was driven out into the wilderness to die, symbolically bearing away from the camp the people's sins.

Isaiah 53:6 says:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Here we see Jesus prophesied in the role of the scapegoat—having the sins of the people laid upon Him.

Cleansing the Depths

Somewhere along the way, as Jesus' ministry unfolded, the full force of this Old Testament imagery must have broken in upon Him. The Bible says that He "grew in wisdom and stature" (Lk. 2:52 NIV), so it may well be that the significance of His mission dawned upon Him only in degrees. He saw people healed, delivered from demonic oppression, and raised from the dead. Yet He sensed even in the circle of His disciples that a deeper work remained to be done. After being with Him for nearly three years, James and John still bickered about who was going to get the biggest slice of glory in heaven. The teachings and the miracles simply were not making the point He intended, even to those closest to Him.

He had forgiven sins, but their annoying presence still seemed to be "hanging around the camp." People were not fully delivered from the power of their sins. One could imagine that Jesus sought the Father's mind in this thing—perhaps in one of those long nights of prayer. As He did, the rest of His mission began to come into focus. Teaching people about God and getting them to repent and dedicate themselves to a better life was not enough. A deeper work of cleansing had to take place, causing a radical change in the levels of the personality not even accessible to conscious thought or will.

To accomplish what He now saw, Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:51). He knew that He must go there and die as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He began to teach His disciples about this, but they were obdurate; He couldn't dent

their preconceived notion that He was going to become a political Messiah, kick out the Romans, and get Israel back on the ball again!

The Struggle in Gethsemane

Then came the last supper and His strange words about this being a new covenant. They took the bread and wine, but perhaps did not grasp the depth of their

Some think that Jesus got a case of cold feet, that He pled to have the suffering of the cross removed from Him.

meaning. They sang a hymn. And then they went to Gethsemane. Now it was Jesus' turn to be "amazed." As He came into the garden, He "began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death'" (Mk. 14:33-34). I believe that Jesus was "amazed" because now for the first time the full significance of the Father's plan became clear to Him. This new dimension, as it broke in upon Him, caused Him to sweat what seemed to be

drops of blood. As He faced the awfulness of it, He pled, "Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mk. 14:36).

Some think that Jesus got a case of cold feet, that He pled to have the suffering of the cross removed from Him. But that is altogether contrary to the character of Jesus. It was not the physical suffering that rose up before Him at that moment. Rather, it was the realization that God was going to literally lay the sins of the world upon Him.

The scapegoat received the sins of the people in a purely symbolic manner. But that was not the Father's plan when it came to the event toward which that ritual had looked these hundreds of years. No, when it came to the Lamb of God, this was going to be real. For the forgiveness would be no symbolic thing, but a literal and real cleansing from all stain and infection of sin by a real transfer of those sins to Jesus. It was amazing indeed that God had in His infinite wisdom and power actually devised a way to gather up all the sins of mankind—past, present, and future—and lay them on Jesus.

Understanding His Anguish

We know what it is like to be under the burden of a bad mood, a sullen resentment, an uneasy feeling of guilt over something we have done. I wonder what it must have been for the Son of God to look at the full weight of human sin coming to be laid upon Him.

This is the "cup" that He pled to have removed. It was not the physical suffering, but the moral and spiritual anguish of having to take the pollution of sin into His sinless body. More than thirty years He had lived, and never once had He disappointed His



Ken Sumrall on revival

NEXT MONTH IN NEW WINE

Repentance, then revival is the pattern found in the Scriptures for the move of God in His Church. Using the book of Revelation, Ken Sumrall looks at the Lord's messages to five of the seven churches and applies them to the Church today and its need for revival.

Disciples of Jesus do what Jesus did—including healing the sick, proclaiming the gospel, casting out demons, even raising the dead. John Wimber, pastor of Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Anaheim, California, explains the necessity of the Holy Spirit's power flowing out of every believer to meet the needs of our society.

Are you prepared to be an instrument of the Holy Spirit? In a timely, prophetic article, Charles Simpson challenges us with this question and points the way for each member to strengthen the body of Christ through the individual manifestations of the Spirit.

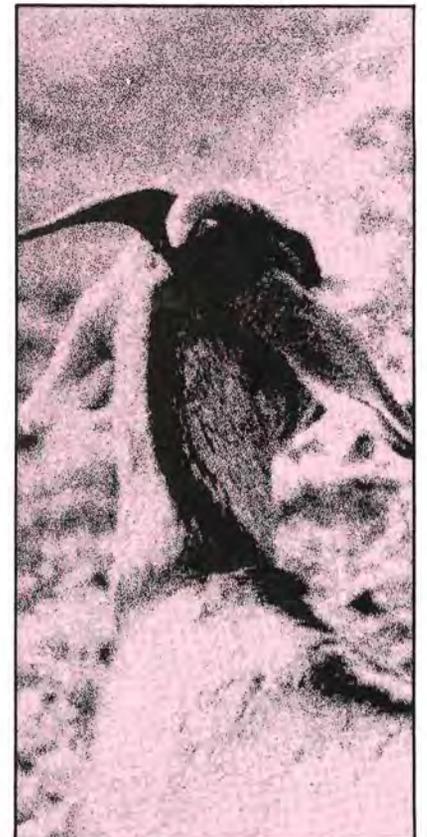
Revival or visitation—what's the difference? Bob Mumford tells what happens when God visits us with His Spirit.

All in the May **New Wine**

Father in heaven. Never once had He disobeyed—never a grumble, never a secret doubt, never a sullen resentment.

We can understand better His anguish if we imagine for a moment a sin that would cause us to recoil in horror at the thought of committing it. We all have our "pet sins," those we hug to us and find hard to let go of. But if the Spirit has done some work in us, there is an outer perimeter that has been built up, and beyond that perimeter are sins that would not attract us. In fact, they would repel us. Think of just one such sin—something that would make one recoil to even think of committing. Perhaps it's a person you love, and you are to go now and club him brutally . . .

This is what Jesus had to face. He who had never disappointed His Father had to take into Him-





self such foulness and corruption that His Father had to turn away His face from Him. It was then He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46). This was what made the cup so bitter: disappointing the Father, taking the corruption of sin right into His own body. It was almost more than He could bear.

Every Sin Laid on Jesus

I don't know how He did it, but that He did it the Bible plainly says. Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, writes about the "collective unconscious" of the race, a kind of psychic underground river in which the whole race participates. Whether that is true or not, I do not know. But it may give us a helpful image for conceiving of the experience that Jesus went through there in Gethsemane.

In some way Jesus entered into the total experience of mankind. He let down the barrier of

His conscience and His will, which had always kept sin at bay. Voluntarily, He submerged Himself in the sin of mankind.

He walked back through the sin-spattered corridors of history and took on every sin, every dark deed, every blasphemy, every foul betrayal that man has ever perpetrated. He walked into the dank dungeons of the damned and entered fully into the sin of everyone whose sin had severed him from God. He turned and walked into the closed avenues of the future. Wherever men would stop to curse God, to slander a friend, to give way to greed and avarice, He too stopped. He touched every sin, and in touching it drained its poison into His own body. Little wonder that He fell to the ground under the crushing weight of that burden. In that hour He lived millions of lifetimes, walked through all the history of the human race, taking into Himself every last solitary sin.

It has been said that we attract what we have in us. If we have hostility, we attract hostility; if we have love, we attract love. When the soldiers came to get Jesus, He was full of all the accumulated hate, hostility, and meanness that had ever or would ever infest the human species. The hostility of the soldiers and the priests came toward Him like iron filings to a magnet.

Yet He opened not His mouth. Not a drop of that sin was to escape from His body through an intemperate word, a hostile thought. For something was happening in His body. In some mysterious way that sin was now being worked upon by the body of Jesus, even more specifically by His blood. We know how the blood purifies our physical bodies. An organism invades, and the blood throws up a defense system, overcomes the organism, and builds up an immunity to it. I do not know to

what extent this finds a parallel in the spiritual and moral sphere, but I do know that it is especially the blood of Jesus that has a remarkable effect in cleansing from sin.

When He breathed out His last, that battle had been won. "It is finished," He said (Jn. 19:30). Then the soldier pierced His side, and the blood came out. It was indeed precious blood, victorious blood. It had won a total victory over sin. It had won a permanent immunity against all sin for all time.

When we receive holy communion, we are getting, as it were, a transfusion of that victorious blood, that blood that has an immunity to the power of sin. It totally cleanses us of the death-dealing infection of sin.

What a battle He fought for us there in Gethsemane! What a victory He won on Golgotha! □



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Jesus never gives us "hard sayings" without providing

Grace for the Impossible

by Robert Grant



Jesus understood crowds. In fact, what He knew about the crowds that thronged Him kept Him from being overjoyed at the popularity of His ministry. Most who followed Him did so for the wrong reasons. Although they were amazed and astonished, genuine

faith was scarce among them. But Jesus had a unique method of crowd control, which the Scriptures call "hard sayings." The crowd of five thousand, for example, had finished feasting on miracle loaves and fishes and was ready to make Him king, but He stopped it with these words:

"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (Jn. 6:53 NIV).

As the offended multitude began to drift away, He turned to the twelve, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" (v. 67 NIV).

Peter, always the willing

spokesman, responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (v. 68 NIV).

Following Jesus with a deep personal devotion will repeatedly bring us face-to-face with His hard sayings. Some we will not understand, some will not seem fair, and some will strike us as downright unreasonable. His concern is that we separate ourselves from the crowd that follows Him for the wrong reasons and accept the personal challenge He gives us. He desires that we trust His divine purpose and rely on His strength and power to accomplish His will.

Some Hard Truths

It is often much easier to say we'll do what Jesus asks than it is to actually obey Him, because many of His demands deny our natural inclinations. He says in Matthew chapter 5, for example:

"If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (vv. 39-41 NIV).

Inside us something religious says "amen!" to those verses, but the moment someone actually strikes us on the cheek, or we are actually faced with going the extra mile, our firmly held "amen" evaporates and we begin to react. We say, "That's not fair!" We say, "That's unreasonable!" We say, "I don't deserve that!"

One common response to His dealings with us is to blame our circumstances. "If it were not for my bad back, low income, and rotten childhood, Lord, I wouldn't be the way I am."

But our response to the Lord's word should have nothing to do with circumstances. We must

simply believe that Jesus has brought us to the place we find ourselves in, and trust Him to lead us through it.

Two Choices

When the Lord calls us out from the crowd and puts His personal demands on us, we have two options. The first one is "reluctant obedience." Reluctant obedience is forcing ourselves to obey the Lord's demand without a conviction that it really represents what is best for us. Outwardly we may seem to grin and bear it, but deep in our hearts we murmur that it's not fair. We can

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become so expert at playing this game that we almost convince ourselves it's the only option we have. We can go for days or even years functioning in reluctant obedience. But when we do, a tragic thing happens: Bitterness begins to creep in and our spiritual growth slowly grinds to a halt.

Obviously, we have a second option. God knows what is buried in our hearts, so we might as well face what is there ourselves. In Jeremiah chapter 15, the prophet complains to the Lord about his circumstances, about his personal discomfort, and about the poor response of the people he sought to lead. But the Lord does not address any of Jeremiah's concerns; rather, He deals with the condition of his heart. The Lord says:

"If you return [give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair], then I will give you again a settled place of quiet and safety, and you shall be My minister; and if you separate the precious from the vile [cleansing your own heart from unworthy suspicions concerning God's faithfulness], you shall be as My mouth-piece" (v. 19 AMP).

Jeremiah's real problem was not circumstances or other people, but his own suspicions concerning God's faithfulness. Consequently, the solution to his woes was not to be found in adjusting the situation or the other people, but in cleansing his own heart. God did not want reluctant obedience; rather, He sought confident, heartfelt trust. If Jeremiah would readily embrace His point of view and His instruction, then God would take care of Jeremiah's circumstances and the other people.

What was true for Jeremiah is also true for us. If God doesn't deal with the condition of our heart, we will go on reluctantly and stubbornly trying to obey Him, all the while complaining about our situation. But sooner or later God will call us to change our perspective and turn confidently His way. Even if His will seems contrary to our individual rights and personal comfort, He still wants us to trust Him—not

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just obey Him, but trust Him.

A Personal Example

When my wife, Sue, was expecting our second child, we were living by faith in a small cabin in the woods of Virginia. We had a ministry to high school and college students, and we would often crowd all of them into that tiny cabin and have wonderful meetings. We kept a little offering plate by the door. The amount of money we received would rise and fall, but somehow there was always enough to live on.

As the time drew near for the baby to arrive, we made arrangements with the hospital for the delivery. But because we didn't have insurance, we were told we would have to pay in full before the delivery. On Sue's next trip to the doctor, she asked him to explain to the hospital the nature of our ministry and that we didn't have the money right then but believed we would have it soon.

The doctor lit into her and chewed her up one side and down the other! He called her a "moochinary" and claimed we were mooching off our neighbors.

As soon as I walked into the house that night, Sue burst into tears. When I heard her story, I tried to sound spiritual by saying that "all things work together for them that love the Lord," but inside I was boiling. If it's true that hating my brother makes me guilty of murder, I could have been arrested on the spot. I wanted to say some ugly things to that doctor. In fact, what I really wanted to do was get on the telephone and ram my fist right through the wire into his nose.

Finally I blew up at the Lord. "God," I yelled, "if You can't take any better care of us than this, I'm through!"

Then I waited for a lightning bolt or an earthquake. I won-

dered if that angry outburst meant the end of my ministry, and I went to bed not at all sure what the next day would bring. But the next morning, the peace of God was all over the house. I felt so close to Him, yet I couldn't understand why. I had mouthed off. I had been ugly and nasty with Him. Yet now I had an almost uncontrollable urge to sing!

Finally the Lord explained. "Last night you came to Me as a son to his father, and you told Me how you really felt." Lights started going on in my head, and I realized that as long as I was giving pat religious answers and quoting nice scriptures to Him, I wasn't being real. But when I let out what was buried deep inside, I put myself in a place where He could do something about it.

A Divine Exchange

Basic honesty with God is a beginning point for spiritual growth and maturity. When we become really honest with God, then we can begin receiving the resurrection life that Paul talks about.

The following passage in 1 Corinthians illustrates the point I am trying to make. These verses have become "life verses" for me, because of the many times I've applied their truth in my life.

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in

Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord” (vv. 26-31 NIV).

I know the qualities that I lack to fulfil His demands are in His power to give me. God deliberately chooses weak people in which He can put His strength. He chooses simple people to share in His wisdom. He chooses the insignificant to demonstrate His greatness. He sovereignly chooses in this way so that no human flesh should boast of its accomplishments before Him. He exchanges my weaknesses for His strengths and enables me to be victorious in every situation. Through my reaction to Sue’s experience with the doctor, God showed me I was playing a religious game instead of responding honestly.

This challenge to respond honestly will come to every Christian. It may happen in church. The person next to us starts coughing or clearing his throat, and we can’t get past our irritation to enter into the joy of the meeting. We clench our Bible and say with gritted teeth, “Praise the Lord.”

Instead of responding that way, why not be honest? “Lord, I have a problem with this person. He is driving me crazy! Lord, I believe You want me here. But I must admit that right now I don’t have what I need in the way of love and patience. I need You to replace what I have—impatience and a critical attitude—with Your love and Your patience.”

Games People Play

I remember one night I was bone tired and weary of my ministry. I didn’t want to see anyone, Christian or not. In fact, the last thing I wanted to see was another car with a dove license

plate pulling up to my house. Yet I had an appointment with a man who said he just had to see me. To be honest, not only did I not want to see anyone, I especially did not want to see him.

Then the Lord reminded me that I had a choice. I could be very religious and very charismatic and say, “Praise God! It’s so good to see you.” But I knew that was not the response the Lord wanted.

So I talked to Him about it. “Lord, I’ll be very honest. I don’t want to see this man. I have neither the patience, the compassion, nor the mercy to minister to him. So, Lord, I ask You now in my weakness to give me Your strength to accomplish all that You desire in this situation.”

As I prayed, the man pulled into the driveway, got out of his car, and started toward my front door. I still didn’t feel any different, so I asked the Lord again, “Lord, replace my weakness with Your strength.”

Even as I put my hand on the doorknob, I was suddenly aware of grace that wasn’t there moments earlier. I felt a flow of compassion and mercy—as powerful and as supernatural as any miracle of healing. I knew God had given me His life in the place of my weakness.

Out From the Crowd

The more we go on with God, the more we are going to be singled out from the crowd. We will repeatedly be faced with the fact that situations are often less than ideal and that people are not perfect and often do things that hurt.

How we respond to those times is crucial. Once apart from the crowd, we must honestly confess our need for His grace and His provision. God does not want us just to “grin and bear it.” He doesn’t want us to quote pat scriptures or mouth religious nice-

ties. He wants to know where we stand with Him. He wants us to turn to Him, to cry out in honesty, to tell Him how we really feel, so that we can let His life flow through us.

The Christian life does not come to us naturally. It never will! But God has promised sufficient grace to meet every test and trial. If we can embrace His hard sayings, if we will be honest before Him, if we will change our perspective and accept His will as our own, then that promised grace will be ours. □

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Robert Grant is senior pastor of Saddleback Covenant Church, Laguna Hills, California, and has pastoral responsibilities for churches throughout the United States and Canada. He graduated from Southern California College in Costa Mesa, and studied at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Robert and his wife, Sue, live with their family in Mission Viejo, California.

How much better off we'd be if we could say

I May Have Been Wrong About That

BY DON BASHAM

Some weeks ago I watched a television program in which a prominent philosopher was interviewed by a highly literate journalist. At one point the philosopher took several minutes to explain why he had come to hold a particular conviction. As I listened to the brilliant articulation of his position, I wondered how anyone could disagree with him.

But then the journalist gave a contrasting point of view based on a different set of philosophical ideas. I sat forward in my chair, waiting for the defense I felt would surely follow—that stern authoritative response that learned men are prone to make when challenged.

But it didn't come. The philosopher listened thoughtfully to the journalist's arguments. "Yes, I see the point you are making," he said. "I never considered that before. Of course, I have always believed. . . ." and he restated his own thesis in a few sentences. Then, with a smile, he added, "*But I may have been wrong about that.*"

I don't remember the issue in question, but I will never forget the gracious concession of that philosopher. "I may have been wrong about that." What rare words!

How long has it been since you heard a politician make such an admission? Or a preacher? Or an employer? Or a parent? Or—for that matter—yourself? Yet how much better life would be if we



were secure enough in God to make such an admission when the situation called for it.

Spoken at the right time and place, that simple phrase might have changed the course of history. Suppose when Adam was confronted by God for eating the forbidden fruit, instead of blaming Eve, he had said, "I may have been wrong about that."

Or suppose when the Jews heard the truth from Jesus, instead of plotting to kill Him, they had confessed their hypocrisy and said, "We may have been wrong about that."

Of course, convictions are important, and we all share some basic beliefs which provide the motivation for faithful Christian living. But we also cling to certain mistaken, self-serving views that not only blind us to truth and wisdom God has given others, but often goad us into impos-

ing our own will in a manner that makes others suffer. We need to remember that in every disagreement and in every broken relationship there is fault on both sides. Who's most at fault doesn't matter. What counts is the willingness to humble ourselves and say, "I may have been wrong about that."

Before the Civil War, General Robert E. Lee commanded the West Point Military Academy. A story is told about two of his senior staff officers who had a violent disagreement. Lee summoned the men to his office. The orders he gave to end the argument contained the wisdom of Solomon: "The one who is least at fault will be the first to apologize."

If we could only realize that such a gracious admission does not diminish us in the sight of others; rather it raises their opinion of us. It is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of wisdom. It does not reflect so much past prejudices as present openness. "I may have been wrong about that" can be a healing, reconciling, bridge-building statement which clears the way for all sorts of wonderful, redemptive events to take place.

Who knows? Perhaps some of you reading this may be ready to make just such an admission, to forsake some old prejudice still masquerading as strong conviction. There was a time when, as a zealous and impatient young minister, I was certain other people couldn't change and that I shouldn't change. In time I came to see I was mistaken, both about them and me. Moreover, I suspect I still hold certain convictions about which I must one day say, "I may have been wrong about that." At least, that's the way I see it. □

Don Basham is chief editorial consultant for New Wine.

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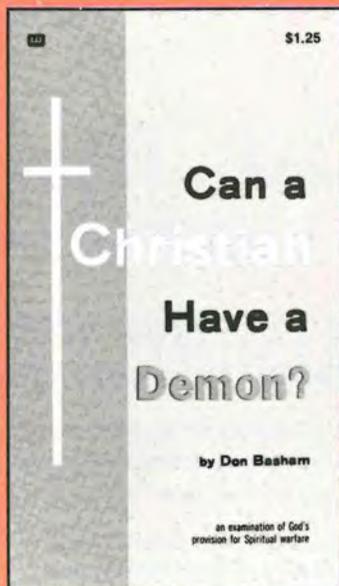
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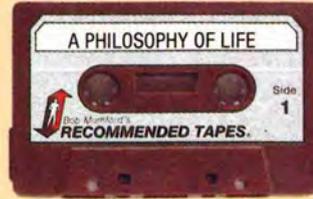
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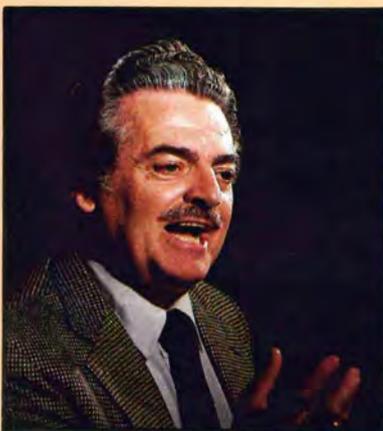


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