# October/November 2013 - Vol. 70

## Relationships in the Kingdom of God

> “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister” (Matthew 12:50)

- **Who Is My Brother & Sister: Relationships Transformed in Christ**, by Don Schwager
- **Christian Brotherhood: A Reality Created by God**, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- **“You Are Our Brothers”**, by Augustine of Hippo
- **The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood**, by Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI

## Called Together

- **Gather My People: Restoring Extended Families & Communities**, by Bob Tedesco

## Marriage in Christ

- **On Falling In Love**, by Carlos Mantica, and **Love Decoded**, by Bobby Maddex
- **Christ-Centered Family Life**, & **Raising Our Children for the Lord**, by Bob Tedesco

## Youth on Fire

- **The Transforming Work of the Holy Spirit in My Life**, by Bea Morales
- **Youth On Fire - A New Pentecost Among Our Young People!** by George Farhat

## Families in Christ

- **Child-Centered Parenting and Family Life**, by Paul Dinolfo
- **Fully Engaged Young Adults**, by Bob Tedesco

## Redeemed Singles

- **Single Life and Jesus' Teaching on Singleness**, by Dr. Barry Danylak
- **The Gift of Sisterhood**, by Janice Firn

## Single for the Lord

- **I Am My Beloved's and He Is Mine**: Update from Bethany Association of Women
- **Challenges and rewards of intentionally remaining single**, by Dave Quintana

## In His Presence

- **Home: Our Abiding Place**, by Jeanne Kun, & **Discipleship and Love**, by Joanie Nath
- **Being Still in the Storm**, by Tom Caballes, & **Touched by Grace**, by Jamie Treadwell

Living Bulwark is committed to fostering renewal of the whole Christian people: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. We especially want to give witness to the charismatic, ecumenical, evangelistic, and community dimensions of that renewal. Living Bulwark seeks to equip Christians to grow in holiness, to apply Christian teaching to their lives, and to respond with faith and generosity to the working of the Holy Spirit in our day.
Who Is My Brother and Sister?

God wants all of our relationships to be transformed in his Son Jesus Christ

a reflection on Matthew 12:46-50 by Don Schwager

Who do you love and cherish the most? God did not intend for us to be alone, but to be with others. He gives us many opportunities for developing relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. In Matthew's Gospel account we hear the remarkable answer Jesus gave to the question, “Who is my brother, sister, and mother?”

While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?” And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brethren! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.” (Matthew 12:46-50)

Why did Jesus seem to ignore his own mother and relatives when they pressed to see him? His love and respect for his mother and for his relatives was unquestionable. Jesus never lost an opportunity to teach his disciples a spiritual truth about the kingdom of God. On this occasion when many had gathered to hear Jesus, he pointed to another higher reality of relationships, namely our relationship with God and with the people he redeemed and brought together into a covenant relationship of mutual love, care, and service.

The essence of Christianity

What is the essence of being a Christian? It is certainly more than doctrine, precepts, and commandments. It is first and foremost a relationship – a relationship of trust, affection, commitment, loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, thoughtfulness, compassion, mercy, helpfulness, encouragement, support, strength, protection, and so many other qualities that bind people together in mutual love and unity. God offers us the greatest of
relationships – union of heart, mind, and spirit with himself, the very author of life and source of love.

God has loved us first. Our love for him is a response of gratefulness for his mercy and kindness towards us. God made us in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26,27). That is why he wants us to love others wholly for their good just as he has loved us. God wants the love we show to one another to flow from the love he has put into our hearts through the gift of his Holy Spirit who dwells within us (Romans 5:5).

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:7-12,16)

The Scriptures tell us that God's love perfects us (1 John 4:16). His love makes us whole and complete – not lacking in what is essential for a good relationship with God and with one another. God's love has power to change and transform us to be like himself.

What is the nature of God's love for us? His love is unfailing, unconditional, and unstoppable. Nothing can deter him from ever abandoning us, ignoring us, or treating us unkindly. He will love us in every circumstance and situation we find ourselves in. That is why Paul the Apostle assures us that “in everything God works for good with those who love him” (Romans 8:28). It is God's nature to love us and to draw us into an unbreakable bond of unity with himself. He created us in love for love.

**Friendship with God and one another**

Jesus is God's love incarnate – God's love made visible in human flesh (1 John 4:9-10). That is why Jesus offered up his life on the cross for our sake, so that we could be forgiven and restored to friendship and adoption as sons and daughters of God. Paul the Apostle tells us that the eternal Father “destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:5-6).

In the parable of the prodigal son Jesus describes the incredible yearning God has to reunite his ruptured family and to restore those who have lost their way to the Father's home (Luke 15:11-32). Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd who seeks out the lost and “other sheep who are not of his fold” (John 10:16) to bring them to his community of disciples who recognize the Master's voice and obey the his word. Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, invites us to make our home with himself and the Father. “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23).

That is why Jesus told his disciples that they would have many new friends and family relationships in his kingdom. Whoever does the will of God is a friend of God and a member of his household the family of God – his adopted sons and daughters who have been ransomed by the precious blood of Christ.

**Relationships transformed in Christ**

The Lord Jesus changes the order of relationships and shows that true kinship is not just a matter of flesh and blood. Our adoption as sons and daughters of God transforms all of our relationships and requires a new order
of loyalty to God first and to his kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17-19). God wants all of the relationships we are in – family, friends, co-workers – to be rooted in his love, truth, and righteousness.

How can we relate well to others and love them as Jesus has taught? The Lord Jesus gives us his Holy Spirit so we can grow in his love and wisdom and overcome our unruly desires and prejudices. His love both purifies us and frees us to love others as he loves them – with mercy, kindness, goodness, and patience. We can love others, even those who cause us grief and harm, because “God's love has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5).

Do you want to grow in love and friendship? Allow God's Holy Spirit to transform your heart, mind, and will to enable you to love freely and generously as he loves.

“Heavenly Father, you bless us with many relationships and you invite us into the community of your sons and daughters who have been redeemed by your Son Jesus Christ. Help me to love my neighbor with kindness, goodness, and mercy, just as you have loved me. In all of my relationships, and in all that I say and do, may I always seek to bring you honor and glory.”

---

[Don Schwager is a member of The Servants of the Word and author of the Daily Scripture Reading and Meditation website.]

See related articles:

- Christian Brotherhood: A Reality Created by God, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- “You Are Our Brothers”, by Augustine of Hippo
- Love of the Brethren, by Steve Clark
- The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood, by Joseph Ratzinger/Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI

[Photo credit: lds.org | (c) copyright 2013 The Sword of the Spirit publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com]
Christian Brotherhood - A Reality Created by God

“Christ opened up the way to God and our brother”

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)

We are brethren only in and through Christ
Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. What does that mean? It means first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. Second, it means that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time and united for eternity...

The Christian lives wholly by the truth of God's Word in Jesus Christ. Because he daily hungers and thirsts for righteousness, he daily desires the redeeming Word. In himself he is destitute and dead. Help must come from the outside, and it has come and comes daily and anew in the Word of Jesus Christ, bringing redemption, righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

God's living Word in the witness of our brother
But God has put this Word in to the mouth of others in order that it may be communicated to us. When one person is struck by the Word, he speaks it to others. God has willed that we should seek and find his living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of a man. Therefore, the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged for by
himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth.

He needs his brother as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation. He needs his brother solely because of Jesus Christ. And that also clarifies the goal of all Christian community: they meet one another as bringingers of the message of salvation. As such, God permits them to meet together and gives them community. Their fellowship is founded solely upon Jesus Christ and this 'alien righteousness'. All we can say, therefore, is: the community of Christians springs solely from the biblical and reformation message of the justification of man through grace alone – this alone is the basis of the longing of Christians for one another.

**Without Christ there is discord**
Second, a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. Among people there is strife. 'He is our peace,' says Paul of Jesus. Without Christ there is discord between God and man and between man and man. Christ became the mediator and made peace with God and among men.

Without Christ we would not know God, we could not call upon him, nor come to him. But without Christ we also could not know our brother, nor could we come to him. The way is blocked by our ego. Christ opened the way to God and to our brother. Now Christians can live with one another in peace – they can become one. But they can continue to do so only by the way of Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ are we one, only through Jesus Christ are we bound together. To eternity he remains the one mediator.

**We are members of the Body of Christ**
Third, when God's Son took on flesh, he truly and bodily took on, out of pure grace, our being, our nature, ourselves. This was the eternal counsel of the Triune God. Now we are in him. Where he is, there we are too, in the incarnation, on the cross and in his resurrection. We belong to him because we are in him. That is why the Scriptures call us the Body of Christ.

But if before we could know and wish it, we have been chosen and accepted with the whole Church in Christ, then we also belong to him in eternity with one another. We who live here in fellowship with him will one day be with him in eternal fellowship.

He who looks upon his brother should know that he will be eternally united with him in Christ. Christian community means community in and through Jesus Christ.

**Excel in brotherly love**
God himself has undertaken to teach brotherly love – all that men can do to add is to remember this divine instruction and the admonition to excel in it more and more. When God was merciful, when he revealed Jesus Christ to us as our Brother, when he won our hearts by his love, this was the beginning or our instruction in divine love.

When God was merciful to us, we learned to be merciful with our brethren. When we received forgiveness instead of judgment, we too were made ready to forgive our brethren. What God did to us, we then owed to others. The more we received, the more we were able to give – and the more meager our brotherly love, the less we were living by God's mercy and love. Thus God taught us to meet one another as God met us in Christ.

**My brother has been redeemed by Christ**
The fact that we are brethren only through Jesus Christ is of immeasurable significance. Not only the other person who is earnest and devout, who comes to me seeking brotherhood, must I deal with in fellowship. My
brother is rather that other person who has been redeemed by Christ, delivered from sin and called to faith and eternal life.

Our community with one another consists solely of what Christ has done to both of us. I have community with others and I shall continue to have community only through Jesus Christ. The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us.

Christian community is not an ideal which we must realize – it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.


Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor and a founding member of the Confessing Church. He was the first of the German theologians to speak out clearly against the persecution of the Jews and the evils of the Nazi ideology. In spring of 1935 Deitrich Bonhoeffer was called by the Confessing Church in Germany to take charge of an “illegal,” underground seminary at Finkenwalde, Germany (now Poland). He served as pastor, administrator, and teacher there until the seminary was closed down by Hitler's Gestapo in September, 1937.

In the seminary at Finkenwalde Bonhoeffer taught the importance of shared life together as disciples of Christ. He was convinced that the renewal of the church would depend upon recovering the biblical understanding of the communal practices of Christian obedience and shared life. This is where true formation of discipleship could best flourish and mature. Bonhoeffer’s teaching led to the formation of a community house for the seminarians to help them enter into and learn the practical disciplines of the Christian faith in community.

In 1937 Bonhoeffer completed two books, Life Together and The Cost of Discipleship. They were first published in German in 1939. Both books encompass Bonhoeffer’s theological understanding of what it means to live as a Christian community in the body of Christ. He was arrested by the Gestapo in April 1943. On April 8, 1945 he was hanged by the Gestapo as a traitor in the Flossenburg concentration camp. As he left his cell on his way to execution he said to his companion, "This is the end – but for me, the beginning of life."

See related articles:

- Who Is My Brother and Sister: Relationships Transformed in Christ, by Don Schwager
- Christian Brotherhood: A Reality Created by God, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- "You Are Our Brothers", by Augustine of Hippo
- Love of the Brethren, by Steve Clark
- The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood, by Joseph Ratzinger/Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI

---

http://www.swordofthespirit.net/bulwark/october2013p2.htm (3 of 4) [09/10/2013 21:07:06]
“You Are Our Brothers”

by Augustine of Hippo (185-254 AD)

We entreat you, brethren [brothers and sisters], as earnestly as we are able, to have charity, not only for one another, but also for those who are outside the Church. Of these some are still pagans, who have not yet made an act of faith in Christ. Others are separated, insofar as they are joined with us in professing faith in Christ, our head, but are yet divided from the unity of his body. My friends, we must grieve over these as over our brothers. Whether they like it or not, they are our brothers; and they will only cease to be so when they no longer say our Father.

The prophet refers to some men saying: When they say to you: You are not our brothers, you are to tell them: You are our brothers. Consider whom he intended by these words. Were they the pagans? Hardly; for nowhere either in Scripture or in our traditional manner of speaking do we find them called our brothers. Nor could it refer to the Jews, who did not believe in Christ. Read Saint Paul and you will see that when he speaks of "brothers," without any qualification, he refers always to Christians. For example, he says: Why do you judge your brother or why do you despise your brother? And again: You perform iniquity and commit fraud, and this against your brothers.

Those then who tell us: You are not our brothers, are saying that we are pagans. That is why they want to baptize us again, claiming that we do not have what they can give. Hence their error of denying that we are their brothers. Why then did the prophet tell us: Say to them: You
are our brothers? It is because we acknowledge in them that which we do not repeat. By not recognizing our baptism, they deny that we are their brothers; on the other hand, when we do not repeat their baptism but acknowledge it to be our own, we are saying to them: You are our brothers.

If they say, "Why do you seek us? What do you want of us?" we should reply: You are our brothers. They may say, "Leave us alone. We have nothing to do with you." But we have everything to do with you, for we are one in our belief in Christ; and so we should be in one body, under one head.

And so, dear brothers, we entreat you on their behalf, in the name of the very source of our love, by whose milk we are nourished, and whose bread is our strength, in the name of Christ our Lord and his gentle love. For it is time now for us to show them great love and abundant compassion by praying to God for them.

[Excerpt from *A Discourse on the Psalms* by Saint Augustine, bishop (Ps. 32, 29; CCL 38, 272-273).]

See related articles:

- **Who Is My Brother and Sister: Relationships Transformed in Christ**, by Don Schwager
- **Christian Brotherhood: A Reality Created by God**, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- **“You Are Our Brothers”**, by Augustine of Hippo
- **Love of the Brethren**, by Steve Clark

Aurelius Augustine was born in 345 in the town of Tagaste, in Roman North Africa, in what is today Algeria. His mother was Monica, a very devout Christian who had a significant influence on her son’s life. His father, named Patricius, was a pagan of significant status in society. Patricius became a Christian shortly before his death.

Augustine was educated at Carthage where he enjoyed academic success. He also enjoyed the party life, and at the age of 17 fell in love with a woman whom he never named. They lived together unmarried for 13 years and had a son whom Augustine named Adeodatus, meaning “gift from God.” His son died in his youth.

At the age of 19, after reading Cicero’s *Hortensius*, Augustine fell in love with philosophy. He later wrote, “It gave me different values and priorities. Suddenly every vain hope became empty to me, and I longed for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour in my heart.” While he pursued Platonic philosophy and the theology of the Manichaens, a Christian heretical sect, he became restless for truth and virtue. Shortly before his 30th birthday, Augustine encountered Ambrose, the saintly bishop of Milan. Augustine was moved by Ambrose’s example and his inspired teaching and preaching of the gospel. At the age of 32 Augustine found
peace with God and was baptized by Ambrose during the Easter liturgy in 387. Augustine returned to North Africa and formed a monastic community with a group of friends. He was ordained a priest in 391 and became a noted preacher. In 396 he reluctantly became a bishop and remained the bishop of Hippo until his death in 430. He left his monastic community, but continued to lead a monastic life with the parish priests of Hippo in his episcopal residence. Augustine died on August 28, 430, during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals.

Augustine was a prolific writer and original thinker. His numerous writings, including theological treatises, sermons, scripture commentaries, and philosophical dialogues, number into the hundreds. His autobiography, the *Confessions*, was considered the first Western autobiography. It was highly read among his contemporaries and has continued as a classic throughout the ages.

Augustine is one of the most important figures in the development of Western Christianity. He is esteemed as a great Latin church father and a Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church. Many Protestants consider him to be one of the theological fathers of Reformation teaching. Among Orthodox he is called St. Augustine the Blessed.
The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood

by Joseph Ratzinger / Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI

The Basis of Christian Brotherhood: Faith

Christian brotherhood, unlike the purely secular brotherhood of Marxism, is, above all, brotherhood based on the common paternity of God. Unlike the impersonal Stoic idea of God the father and the vague paternal idea of the Enlightenment, the fatherhood of God is a fatherhood mediated by the Son and including brotherly union in the Son.

If, therefore, Christian brotherhood is to be vitally realized, both a vital knowledge of the fatherhood of God and a vital joining with Jesus Christ in a unity of grace are necessary.

The fatherhood of God gives Christian brotherhood its firm foundation. It is important here to understand fully the new knowledge that the Christian Faith has given us of God’s paternity. Mythical religion, Plato and the Stoics, and eighteenth-century deism all speak of God as a father. And yet it is something quite different when the Christian says “Our Father”.

Early mythical thought conceived of the sky as the world-creating force which, together with Mother Earth, produced all the life of the world. In this naturalistic sense, then, the sky can be called the “father” of men.1 Greek philosophy spiritualized this idea without completely removing its basic assumption. In the eternal, transcendent idea of the good, Plato sees the father and the lord, but its quality as “person” remains in doubt, and there is no question of a personal relationship with the creatures of the world.2 With the Stoics the return to naturalism is quite clear. Their doctrine of the fatherhood of God depends on a reinterpretation in terms of natural philosophy of the old myth.
of hierosgamos (sacred marriage) of Zeus and Hera. Thus it remains ultimately a proposition of natural philosophy when man appears in Epictetus as idioshuistoutheou (God’s own son). It certainly does not mean that he is seen in relation to a personal, caring and loving, angry and forgiving, paternal God. He is merely the culminating point of the cosmos, the one most filled by its sublime powers.

The uncosmic, strictly personalist idea of Father, which gives to the paternity of God the seriousness of a true claim on us and to the fraternity of his children life and significance, is revealed only in the words of the Bible and is thus apparent only to the eyes of faith. Insight into the brotherhood of men is given ultimately only to him who has seen, in faith, the full paternity of God.

At the same time the concreteness of God, his personal relation to man, also undergoes an increasing spiritualization in the language of Scripture—an increasing spiritualization which does not, however, lead to increasing rarification (as is always the danger) but, on the contrary, serves to intensify the concreteness and the living reality of his fatherhood.

This God never becomes a God of the philosophers; he remains the living God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; more, he becomes the God of Jesus Christ and thus the God who has taken on our flesh and blood and our whole human nature. In Jesus Christ, God has not only spoken to men but has also finally and radically made it possible for them to speak to him; for in him God became man and, as man, finally stepped out of his totally different being and entered into the dialogic situation of all men. Jesus the man stands as such within the community of discourse which unites all men as beings of the same order. The man Jesus can be addressed by every man, but in him it is God who is addressed. Thus the question of how changeable man can address a totally different, unchangeable God is resolved. In Christ, God has taken a piece of this world’s time and of changeable creatureliness, drawn it to himself, and finally thrown open the door between himself and his creatures.

In Christ, God has become God more concretely, more personally, and more “addressably”, “a partner of men”. We are better placed to understand the importance of this for the Christian conception of fatherhood and brotherhood if we consider more closely the biblical growth of the idea. We have already seen that the Old Testament distinguishes two kinds of divine paternity and, correspondingly, two kinds of human childhood: the sonship of all peoples because of creation; the sonship of Israel because of its election. The Old Testament expresses Israel’s priority by (among other things) calling Israel the “firstborn son of God” (Ex 4:22).

The kings of Israel

At the time of the kings an important development takes place in Israel’s understanding of itself. The king now became virtually the personification of all Israel; he represented, as it were, its “total person”. (Since the research work by Pedersen, this expression of Max Scheler’s can be used to describe Israelite thinking on this question.) Thus the name “the son of God” is transferred to the king (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:27). He is the son of God in the sense described, inasmuch as he represents Israel, which has a special elective sonship in relation to God. When the idea of a king passed into the eschatological hope of salvation and the idea of the Messiah was formulated concretely, the title of sonship went with it and became an honorific designation for the king of the last times, the Messiah, as the fulfilled image of the true Israel. Exegesis of the last few decades has confirmed the view that nearly all the synoptic texts which call Jesus huios ton theou (Son of God) are not to be understood in the sense of a metaphysical statement about the eternal inner-trinitarian divine sonship of Jesus, but reproduce the messianic title of honor, designating him as the epitome of the true Israel. This accords with the fact that Jesus saw himself expressly as the founder of a new Israel already founded in his person—a conception that John expresses by having Jesus describe himself in two places in suggestive imagery as the new Jacob-Israel (Jn 1:51 [cf. Gen 28:12] and 4:6, 11-12)
The Bible calls itself "the Word of God". But it points beyond itself to the "Word of God", Jesus Christ. Every word in this book is part of His portrait. The words man can utter are not alive, but the Word God utters eternally is not only alive but divine. He calls Himself "the Son of God". Meeting Him is the point of the whole Bible (see Jn 5:3 9) and the whole point of our lives.

If we compare these exegetical findings with our dogmatic acknowledgment of the divine sonship of Jesus, we can say that Christ is the fulfillment of what Israel only foreshadowed. He is truly the “Son”. Thus he is ultimately the true and real Israel because he possesses the highest distinction of Israel, the sonship of God, in an infinitely more real way than was the case with the old People of God. At the same time, the fact that he has himself become a man, “Israel”, shows that he does not regard his divine sonship as something reserved only for himself: the meaning of the Incarnation is rather to make what is his available to all. Man can be “in Christ”, enter into him, and become one with him; and whoever is in Jesus Christ shares his sonship and is able to say with him, “Abba”, “my father”.6

The new Israel, which is composed of all the faithful, is no longer a son merely because of the choosing and summoning call of God, the ultimate concrete form of which is the Torah; she is a “son in the son” (Eckhart); she is a son through being planted in the innate Son of the Father (Jn 1:18), with whom we are one single body, one single “seed of Abraham”. “You are all one in Christ Jesus”, Paul emphasizes in Galatians 3:28, after (in 3:16) he had emphasized that the promise given to Abraham did not refer to many, but only to one man, Christ Jesus, with whom, however, we are united in the unity of a single man. Thus the ideas of fatherhood-sonship-brotherhood acquire a completely new ring, the ring of reality. Behind the word “father” there stands the fact of our true childhood in Christ Jesus (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15f.).

What is new about the New Testament statements concerning the Father is not a new psychological atmosphere, nor a new subjective intensity, nor a new idea, but the new fact created by Christ. The mood of trusting love and pure devotion may be found in late Jewish prayers or in the texts of the Hermes mystery cult.7 But in these it is ultimately only a question of atmosphere. What is expressed by them is valuable and profound and can be largely taken over by the Christian. But it acquires in Christianity a new meaning by being founded firmly on fact—the fact of our real embodiment in Christ, which includes our becoming truly sons. What is true of the ideas of “fatherhood” and “sonship” is no less true of “brotherhood”. This is the fundamental dogmatic basis for the brotherliness of Christians among one another; for this brotherliness is founded on our being incorporated in Christ Jesus, in the uniqueness of a new man.

Like the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of Christians in the Lord is raised—through the Christ-event—above the realm of ideas to the dignity of true actuality. We also find here the concrete realization and the constant source of Christian brotherliness. It rests on the fact of our being embodied in Christ. The act that does this for us is baptism (which is renewed in penance). The celebration of the Eucharist is the constant reestablishment of our bodily unity with the Lord and with one another. But with this idea we are already on the way toward realizing Christian brotherhood concretely, and that we shall pursue later on. Summing up what we have said so far, we can assert that Christian brotherhood differs from all other brotherhoods that transcend the sphere of blood brotherhood precisely in its character as real and actual. This is grasped in faith and acquired through the sacraments.

From these dogmatic conclusions we can deduce the Christian attitudes which are able to provide the basis for an ethos of true brotherhood. In general terms, these consist, as we have seen, in the conscious spiritual acceptance of the fatherhood of God and union with the life of Christ. We shall now endeavor to explore these two relationships a little further.

**Social dimension of faith**

Christian brotherhood is ultimately founded on the faith that gives us our assurance of our real sonship in relation to
the heavenly Father and of our brotherhood among one another. But here it is necessary to emphasize the social dimension of faith more than is generally done. To take only one example: when theologians today interpret the opening words of the Our Father, they usually restrict themselves to an analysis of the word “father”, and this is in tune with our contemporary religious awareness. But a theologian such as Cyprian, on the other hand, chose to give special attention to the word “our”. In fact this word does have great importance, for only one man has the right to say “my Father” to God, and that is Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son. All other men must say “our Father”, for the Father is God for us only so long as we are part of the community of his children. For “me” he becomes a Father only through my being in the “we” of his children.

The Christian prayer to the Father “is not the call of a soul that knows nothing outside God and itself”, but is bound to the community of brothers. Together with these brothers we make up the one Christ, in whom and through whom alone we are able to say “Father”, because only through Christ and in Christ are we his “children”. Thus, strictly speaking, we should not say that Christ taught men to call God “Father”, but rather that it was he who taught them to say “Our Father”—and the “Our” is no less important than the “Father”, for it locates faith and prayer, assigning them their christological component. When we see this, Harnack’s view that the “Son” does not form part of the gospel proclaimed by Christ is shown to be obviously false. Its place is firmly fixed in the word “our” and, in a logically developing kerygma, could not fail to emerge as the social dimension of faith. It is important that this social dimension should once more be brought to the consciousness of the faithful, that Christian belief in God the Father should be shown necessarily to involve the affirmation of our brothers, the brotherhood of all Christians.

Living faith in the spirit of the Our Father will necessarily lead to a new relationship to God and to our fellow man, whom we recognize as our brother. Toward God it includes the attitudes of trust and of love. God has accepted us as his children in Christ Jesus and has thus become our Father; he is the absolutely faithful and dependable God who has remained true to his covenant in spite of the sin of men—indeed, has been moved by this sin and faithlessness to an even greater outpouring of grace and forgiveness. He is the exact opposite of the Homeric “father of the gods and of men”. That god was a domineering and unpredictable despot—not despite his fatherhood, but precisely because of it: there is a despotic quality in the Greek idea of fatherhood. And yet this despotic father was not himself the highest power, for above, or beside him, stood moira (fate) and themis (the law of the cosmos), against which even he could do nothing. Against this background the biblical idea of fatherhood acquires its true greatness. For this God is the ultimate power, power itself, Pantocrator, and, at the same time, the most reliable, unfailing fidelity. Both these qualities are able to move man to an ultimate, unshakable trust that is love and worship in one.

A second attitude which faith produces in us is in relation to our fellow men. One might call it, with Dietrich von Hildebrand, “the true loss of oneself”. To become a Christian means to become incorporated in the Son, in Christ, so that we become “sons in the Son”...

The ethic of Christ is essentially an ethic of the body of Christ. Inevitably, therefore, it means losing one’s own ego and becoming one in brotherhood with all those who are in Christ. As an ethic of true self-loss, it necessarily includes the brotherhood of all Christians.

Notes

1 See G. Schrenk’s article on pater (father) in Theologisches Worterbuchzum Neuen Testament, ed. V. G. Kittel, V, 951f.
2 See the texts quoted in ibid., 954.
3 Diss., I, 19, 9; Schrenk, 955, 28.

According to Quell, 984f. *Abba* is, in fact, an expression that a child would use, almost like “daddy”. In any case it expresses the reality of the new child-father relationship.

De dom. or., 8, CSEL, III, 1 (Hartel), 271f.; see Ratzinger, *Volk und HausGottes*, 99.

Schrenk, 957ff.


Schrenk, 952f. 12 Ibid., 952f. See also Schmid, *Matthaus*, 126.


—

*See related articles:*

- *Christian Brotherhood: A Reality Created by God*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *“You Are Our Brothers”,* by Augustine of Hippo
- *Love of the Brethren*, by Steve Clark

—

Joseph Ratzinger (Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI), for many years a renowned theologian, scripture scholar, and university professor, before becoming an archbishop, cardinal, and now emeritus pope of the Roman Catholic Church, was born in Bavaria, Germany in 1927. He was ordained priest in 1951. He became Archbishop of Munich and Freising in 1977.

When he was elected pope on April 19, 2005, he took the name Benedict XVI, in honor of St. Benedict of Nursia, the founder of Western monasticism. He said that “with his life and work St Benedict exercised a fundamental influence on the development of European civilization and culture” and helped Europe to emerge from the "dark night of history" that followed the fall of the Roman Empire.

—

Copyright © 2013 *Living Bulwark*

Publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom

Email: *living.bulwark@yahoo.com*
Love of the Brethren

*Exploring a neglected motive for cooperation among Christians of different traditions*

*by Steve Clark*

Christians of different traditions face many common foes around the world. In many nations we must deal with governments that persecute believers for not accommodating themselves to the official ideology or religion. Here in the United States we can find many common problems to work on together in the political arena. Shared challenges such as these are spurs to interdenominational cooperation.

Along with these common concerns, other developments have been moving Christians of different traditions toward greater cooperation. One is a growing recognition of the action of the Holy Spirit among Christians not of one’s own church. Another is the increasing recognition of members of other Christian communions as “brethren” – brothers and sisters in Christ.

But while Christians of a variety of traditions have begun to speak freely of one another as brothers and sisters, the terminology does not have much impact on actual relationships. It is worth looking more carefully at what it means to be “brethren” in the biblical sense, because the term turns out to be much more than a mere platitude.

An often neglected biblical source for understanding the relationship of Christians as “brethren” is 1 John. As is well known, the first letter of John is concerned with distinguishing between “those who have gone out from us” – a group that many would identify as a gnostic or proto-gnostic sect – and true Christians. John identifies several marks of true Christians: belief in what we would now call the doctrine of the incarnation, a moral Christian life, the experience of the Spirit. A further mark essential to being a Christian, he writes, is love of the brethren (1 John 3:14-23; 4:11-2, 19-21; 5:1).

By “the brethren” or “brothers and sisters” John means fellow Christians. In this, his usage is like that of the rest of...
New Testament, where, except when the term is used to mean natural brothers and sisters or fellow elders, it refers to those bound to one another in covenant – either the old covenant or the new.

The New Testament, scholars tell us, never speaks of the brotherhood of the human race. It does express an idea of the solidarity of the human race, for instance, in the solidarity of all human beings in Adam. But in the New Testament the term “brethren” means “fellow Christians”; and love of the brethren,” as the phrase in 1 John is often rendered, means “love of our fellow Christians.”

First John 3:14-18 summarizes its teaching on love of the brethren in this way:

“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death. . . . By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his ear against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth.”

In attempting to locate the marks by which to distinguish true Christians from false ones, John is interested in criteria that relate directly to the core of Christianity – our relationship to Christ himself and to his work of redemption. John chooses love of fellow Christians since to love fellow Christians because they are Christians is to recognize the importance of belonging to Christ. As the gospel sayings put it, the relationship we have with Christ is more important than our relationship with our mother and natural brothers and sisters and it establishes a new set of primary relationships among those who follow him (Matthew 10:37; 12:48-50; Mark 10:29-30). Love of the brethren is thus an external, behavioral indication of a genuinely Christian spiritual state.

The first letter of John teaches that laying down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Christ involves at least the sharing of goods when they are in need. We have, in short, concrete duties toward them, duties which touch our pocketbooks. Further study of the scriptural teaching on love of the brethren would indicate that we have additional obligations towards them, such as defending them when enemies attack them. Fulfilling these obligations is essential to being a Christian.

**Revolution of recognition**

Such a statement leads naturally to the question, “Who, then, is my brother or sister in Christ?”

At present, no single answer can be offered that would satisfy every Christian tradition and church. However, it is important to observe that in the present century there has been a massive change in the way Christian people think about this question. Today Christians of very diverse theological convictions and church loyalties are willing to recognize one another as Christians.

Many of us might want to add some qualification to the terms “brother and sister,” such as “separated brother and sister.” Most of us would not recognize all the churches that other Christians belong to as fully acceptable as churches – or perhaps even as churches at all. Some, for example, while recognizing Catholic brothers and sisters in Christ, are of the opinion that the Roman Catholic Church is an apostate church; and the Roman Catholic Church has not officially come to the point of recognizing Protestant bodies as anything more than “ecclesial communities.”

Nevertheless, a revolution of tremendous significance has occurred. A large number of Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox now recognize one another as Christians – Christians who have embraced some serious theological errors and belong to faulty churches, no doubt, but Christians nonetheless. We would not necessarily extend that
recognition to all the members of each other’s churches, nor would we agree on where to draw the line; but we do take the perspective that a large number of members of all the other churches are, in fact, Christians.

We are, then, in the position of having to acknowledge the gospel duty to help and support not only the members of our own church but also whomever we can currently recognize to be true Christians. For many of us, that is surely a substantial number of Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox.

Second Chronicles 28 provides a scriptural illustration of the obligations covenant brothers and sisters have toward one another even when there is division between them. This makes it especially relevant for us to ponder today.

The passage records a war between Ahaz of Judah and Pekah of Israel. Israel resoundingly defeats Judah and leads the captured southerners into slavery. As the northerners are bringing the captives back, the prophet Obed goes out to meet them with this message:

“Behold, because the Lord, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have slain them in a rage which has reached up to heaven. And now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. Have you not sins of your own against the Lord your God? Now hear me, and send back the captives from your brethren whom you have taken, for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you” (2 Chronicles 28:9-11).

Israel and Judah were in a state of schism and had no united government. Neither was in a fully acceptable spiritual position from the other’s point of view — or from God’s. Divided as they were God did not rebuke them for fighting one another. He seemed to regard a certain amount of fighting between them as acceptable, and even as a punishment of Judah’s sins.

But God was angry that the Israelites slaughtered their defeated brothers and led them back captive to enslave them. As the next verses make clear, they also neglected to provide for their needs — food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Even in a situation in which brothers and sisters were in open conflict, the Lord was angered by his people not treating brethren as brethren.

**Kinds of mutual help**

What sorts of brotherly love might be practical and appropriate among Christians today? One area would be cooperation in missionary and evangelistic work. I have been impressed with much of the missionary study and writing emerging from evangelical institutions such as the Fuller School of World Mission and the U.S. Center for World Mission. It is notable how often their writings draw lessons from Catholic missionary workers — but how rarely Catholics are even aware of these Protestant institutions. In my own community, the Sword of the Spirit, which is composed of Christians with different church loyalties, we have discovered that we can be more effective in evangelism if we work together.

Christians can also help one another learn how to be more effective in spiritual renewal. For instance, the Catholic charismatic renewal is a movement in the Roman Catholic Church that has clearly gained some of its effectiveness from lessons it learned from Pentecostals and other evangelicals. Indeed, participants in the Catholic charismatic renewal were initially criticized for bringing Protestant revivalism into the Catholic Church. (The attacks normally centered more on questions of culture and technique than on doctrinal matters.) However, when one traces the history of revivalism to its roots in the 17th and 18th centuries, one finds that the Protestant renewal movements learned for earlier Catholic revivalists, especially the Franciscan friars.
Another area for making our brotherly love practical is the sharing of pastoral wisdom. We confront the same challenges, for example, regarding family life and child rearing, because we live in the same secular society. Normally, the same basic approaches work or do not work when employed by Protestants, Catholics, or Orthodox.

Cooperative ecumenism

Ecumenism has too often meant something which happens only between the officials of church bodies and which is carried out only by officially appointed theologians dialoguing with one another. There is, however, another kind of ecumenism, sometimes known as cooperative ecumenism, that proceeds on a different basis.

Cooperative ecumenism proceeds on the pre-supposition that Christians of various traditions do not have full agreement or unity, and we do not expect it for some time to come. In the meantime, however, we acknowledge the requirement that we should love one another as brothers and sisters, looking forward to the time when the Lord will make greater unity possible. Our rule is that we will try to do whatever builds up. Sometimes the rule indicates not cooperating in certain ways, though we might personally be inclined to do so, because of the need to take into account others in our churches who do not see things our way and to avoid worsening relations between the churches. Nonetheless, the spirit behind cooperative ecumenism urges us to lay down our lives for all those whom we recognize as true brothers and sisters in Christ, and with them to advance the cause of Christ.

Dialogue ecumenism and cooperative ecumenism proceed on different bases. Dialogue ecumenism proceeds with the conviction that we need to discuss our differences and try to seek agreement. Cooperative ecumenism proceeds with the resolution that in the meantime we will cooperate where we can in matters of common concern, even though we have disagreements.

Cooperative ecumenism does not mean we do not talk about our differences. Often one of the most helpful things we can do is to educate one another in our differences so that we do not presuppose something about each other that we should not. It certainly does not mean that we regard the differences as unimportant. But the purpose of coming together in cooperative ecumenism is not to work out the differences but to love one another as brothers and sisters and work together as best we can.

How to go about it

Effective cooperative ecumenism proceeds on certain principles:

1. We need to accept the fact that there are issues that divide the churches and to abide by the limits that our churches have set. Most of us cannot solve fundamental interchurch problems and should probably not try to. Nor should we act as though they did not exist. We therefore have to accept that each of us will believe the doctrines of his or her respective church and be faithful to its essential practices and current discipline.

2. In our sharing together we will emphasize the central core of Christian teaching and practice which we share in common. We will do this partly because these truths in themselves call for such emphasis, and also because we can thereby serve the convergence of the entire Christian people.

3. In discussing our differences, we should:
   - aim at having the peace in our relationships which will enable us to discuss differences in a loving manner
   - avoid discussing those things we cannot yet discuss peacefully, gradually widening the circle of the things we can discuss as we experience the peace and trust to do so
   - not be embarrassed by our own beliefs, nor be apologetic about them
Living Bulwark

- regard the things other Christians hold that we disagree with as mistakes a good Christian could make rather than as wrongdoing or a denial of Christianity
- not discuss our beliefs in a polemical way, but state them in the way that would be most acceptable to others – ask whether the discussion is building up love and unity in the body of Christ or tearing it down.

4. We should learn about points of doctrinal and theological dispute so that:

- we can avoid expressing ourselves in ways unacceptable to others because of doctrinal commitments where we are in circumstances such as leading in common prayer, proposing a common course of action, or stating an opinion that we think the group as a whole should hold
- we can educate one another in our differences when that is helpful.

5. When we can, we will talk together, help one another, and serve one another, so that we prevent our theological and cultural differences from poisoning our brotherly love, and so that our personal unity can provide the basis for a more complete unity among the whole Christian people.

**Christ above all**

We must also seek to prevent our cultural differences from poisoning our brotherly love.

The cultural obstacle to our cooperation is a human one. A helpful treatment of this problem was provided by Christopher Dawson, the British historian, in a prophetic book he wrote during World War II called *The Judgment of the Nations*. The book was written to state the program of a movement that developed during the war called the Sword of the Spirit.

One of the concerns of the Sword of the Spirit was to bring together Catholics and Protestants in Britain in a common response to the crisis of the hour, which the leaders saw as a crisis for Christian society. Ecumenical cooperation of that sort was not common then. Advocating what he called a “return to Christian unity,” Dawson gave a helpful analysis of some of the main roots of disunity:

> “The fundamental problem of Christian disunity is the problem of schism. In practice this problem is so closely associated with that of heresy, that is, differences of religious belief, that they are apt to be confused with one another. But it is nevertheless important to distinguish them carefully and to consider the nature of schism in itself, for I believe that it is in the question of schism rather than that of heresy that the key to the problem of the disunity of Christendom is to be found. For heresy as a rule is not the cause of schism but an excuse for it, or rather a rationalization of it. Behind every heresy lies some kind of social conflict, and it is only by the resolution of this conflict that unity can be restored.”

Dawson based his view on an analysis of the history of divisions among Christians.

> “But, whatever view we may take of the causes of any particular schism and the social significance of particular religious movements, there can, I think, be no question that in the history of Christendom from the patristic period down to modern times, heresy and schism have derived their main impulse from sociological causes, so that a statesman who found a way to satisfy the national aspirations of the Czechs in the fifteenth century or those of the Egyptians in the fifth would have done more to reduce the centrifugal force of the Hussite or the Monophysite movements than a theologian who made the most brilliant and convincing defense of communion in one kind or of the doctrine of the two natures.
of Christ. Whereas it is very doubtful if the converse is true, for even, if the Egyptians had accepted
the doctrine of Chalcedon, they would have found some other ground of division so long as the
sociological motive for division remained unaltered.”

Dawson draws this conclusion:

“It is, above all, necessary to free the religious issue of all the extraneous motives that take their rise in
unconscious social conflicts, for if we can do this, we shall deprive the spirit of schism of its dynamic
force. If we can understand the reason for our instinctive antipathy to other religious bodies, we shall
find that the purely religious and theological obstacles to reunion become less formidable and more
easy to remove. But so long as the unconscious element of social conflict remains unresolved, religion
is at the mercy of the blind forces of hatred and suspicion.”

Dawson attributes somewhat more weight to the sociological factors than I would, but, nonetheless, he puts his
finger on a key factor in Christian disunity. When two groups of people, be they nations or smaller groups, come
into conflict and desire to separate from one another, they become open to theological disagreements. They desire to believe differently.

Hence, when we are dealing with ecumenical problems, we are dealing with intercommunity and intercultural
suspicion and hostility as well as theological issues. And insofar as there is a spiritual problem at the base of the
human relations problem, it can well be described as schism. The cause of schism is putting something human above
Christ as the point of unity and division in our personal relations, so that we join with and separate from others over
something other than faithfulness to Christ.

The solution to this source of Christian disunity is our common commitment to Christ. The solution lies in putting
above everything else our commitment to Christ and his cause in the world. It lies, practically speaking, in
ecumenical cooperation – in working together to strengthen one another’s faith, defend Christianity, and bring the
world to Christ.

The solution to schism lies, in short, in the opposite approach to the kind of ecumenism which many of us have
learned to dislike. That ecumenism tries to unite Christians in an accommodation to the world and secular goals; it
puts aside an explicit focus on Christ in order to shelve the theological differences that come from different
 teachings about Christ and his work. True ecumenism, however, is a matter of restoring Christ to the center, as Lord,
both in our theological dialogues and discussion of reunion, and in our working together where and as we can.

Witnesses together

The world is putting a question to Christians regarding the seriousness of our faith in Christ. In many countries today
faithfulness to Christ involves loss of wealth, position, and life. Historians tell us that our age has more martyrs than
any other. And for the most part Christians are given a choice of compromising—avoiding personal loss or death
without giving up everything involved in Christianity. They are told, for instance, that if they are simply willing to
work for the good of the collective, the nation, and put aside their other worldly preoccupations and divisive
concerns, they do not have to experience any penalties. In these circumstances, Orthodox, Protestants, and Catholics
frequently find themselves undergoing persecution at the hands of the same persecutors.

Facing death brings one a peculiar clarity about what is of supreme importance in life. Cannot all of us who pray for
the grace to be able to die for our Lord Jesus Christ, if that were to come our way, recognize one another as brothers
and sisters in him? Can we not work together for him until such time as the world may put the final question to us
too, and we are called to witness to him with our lives?
Steve Clark is former president of the Sword of the Spirit. This article was originally published in New Covenant Magazine.
Restoration of Christian Personal Relationships

*God’s purpose in Jesus was to create a new humanity in which the image of God is restored and through which God is served*

by Steve Clark

*God's purpose is to form a new community - the human race*

God created the human race to be united in such a way that it could act as a single person. This person, this human, was to be his son, formed in his image and likeness, created to serve as his representative over his visible creation. Men and women alike were to be fully a part of the human race and of the divine sonship. Both were to share the image and likeness of God and both were to share in ruling over creation corporately on God’s behalf. They were created male and female so that the human race, the human community, could increase and fill the earth.

When God sent his Son Jesus to repair the damage from the fall, his intent was to restore the human race to its original purpose by forming a new human race, a new creation, that could live as God’s son, the body of Christ on earth. God’s purpose in Jesus was to create a new humanity in which the image of God is restored and through which God is served. This new humanity consists of men and women who are united in Jesus. God’s purpose is to form a new community—the human race.
The new community has its own way of life which originates in the nature and character of God himself. In particular this way of life involves a special quality of relationship. The New Testament teaching on personal relations does not have an incidental place in the Scripture. It is the very center of God’s purpose in giving the new covenant, in writing his law on human hearts. “Make love your aim” (1 Corinthians 14:1). If the Christian people today are to live as the new community, the new human race, they must begin with the restoration of Christian relationships. Christians must learn how to have loving, committed personal relationships as brothers and sisters in the Lord and how to pattern these relationships so that all the needs for personal support, child rearing, and care of the older members of the body are met effectively.

**A network of relationships**

The restoration of Christian relationships implies as well a restoration of relational groupings like those found in traditional societies. The social fabric of traditional society consisted almost exclusively of a pattern of interconnected relational groupings: the conjugal family, the extended kin network, the village, the neighborhood, the guild, and other groupings formed on the basis of profession and class. These groupings combined a consideration for personal life with a concern for productive labor and task accomplishment. The special needs of the young, the poor, the infirm, and the elderly were ordinarily cared for within such groupings rather than in large institutions. The early church and, in fact, the Christian people throughout much of its history followed a similar pattern. Evangelism, religious instruction, and charitable service were all integrally tied to the household, the basic communal grouping.

Relationships in modern technological society follow a very different principle. The relational groupings found in traditional society have been greatly weakened and often destroyed. In their place has arisen a pattern of relationships which involves on the one hand functional, limited, contractual, “impersonal” relationships, and on the other informal, non-purposeful, unstable, emotionally based “personal” relationships. The advancing functionalization of social relationships and social groupings leaves many human needs unsatisfied. The old, the young, the sick—all who are not fully competent or capable by the standards of technological society—are left to the care of functionally organized institutions which are largely unable to meet their needs effectively. The functional and emotionally based relationships that characterize a technological society also fail to meet the need for stable community and committed love felt by even the strongest members of society.

The functionalization of society has deeply affected many of the Christian churches. Many modern churches have lost their communal life and have become instead religious organizations. The relationships among members within a particular church often lack commitment and stability. This is not to say that the social life of the Christian people in the twenty-first century should ideally be identical to that of Christians in past centuries. But a functional approach to social life should not govern the overall life of the body of Christ.

**Beyond the legal minimum**

The New Testament teaching on men’s and women’s roles and authority and subordination presupposes a certain set of relationships between men and women both in the family and the community. It is not enough to merely try to establish the husband as head of the family or to insist that children obey their parents. The entire Christian family relationship must be re-established. There needs to be a restoration of relationships of brotherhood and sisterhood, of a network of families committed together to support and care for one another, of a whole life style based on relational groupings and able to meet the various human needs of individuals within the body.

Christians cannot obey the few clear scriptural directives about order in personal relationships while living in every other respect according to the functional relationships of the modern world and still expect to experience the scriptural directives as an unqualified blessing. In fact, bare submission to legal commands may not even be genuine obedience if it does not also understand and respond to the intention of the command—in this case, to establish order.
in a particular set of loving committed relationships.

The main focus of the social teaching of the New Testament is on love, not on authority and subordination. Teaching on authority clearly exists. The New Testament Christian community is a community drawn up “in subordination,” and the Christian church followed the same pattern in the first centuries of its existence. Nonetheless the main focus of the New Testament and early church teaching on relationships is not on subordination but on love—on the service of one another modeled on the example of Christ as he laid down his life on the cross. The focus is on creating a body of people who care for and serve one another, who put away resentment and hostility and self-seeking, who are firmly committed to one another. It is this body of people who can effectively appropriate the Christian teaching on order and obedience.

**Social roles and functional roles**

Social roles are the fundamental elements of the structure of relational groupings. They are the main patterns of stable behavior in these groupings. Though many people in modern society raise various objections to social roles, it is nonetheless true that effective social roles are responsible for much of the strength, depth, and durability of genuine personal relationships.

The term “social role” has several different meanings. Here it refers only to those stable roles which structure personal relationships in relational groupings. They are considerably different from functional roles. A functional role defines a set of activities or tasks that an individual regularly performs within a functional grouping. A functional role can be formulated in terms of a job description, as in the position of assembly line foreman.

But the main purpose of a social role is not to structure a set of activities, but to provide a stable order for relationships involving a broad-ranging personal commitment. For example, the role of father in a family is not defined adequately by the specific tasks he performs—working forty hours per week, paying for needed commodities, driving the family car, coaching a little league baseball team. The tasks that a father performs are expressions of his role as a man in relationship to a wife and a group of children; the tasks do not define the father’s role. The tasks may vary, but the role remains the same.

Almost all functional roles are achieved roles, that is, positions that an individual can assume because he has displayed some ability or accomplished some goal. For example, the position of corporation executive is normally an achieved role because the executive obtains the position by demonstrating his or her competence. On the other hand, most important social roles are ascribed roles, positions that are given and not earned. For example, family roles are normally ascribed; a son is a son regardless of what he has done to obtain the position. Roles associated with age and sex are also ascribed rather than achieved.

The human realities involved in family, reproduction, child rearing, and personal (rather than technical) formation cannot be structured successfully according to achieved functional roles. Age and sex are central concerns in these human realities; any social structure that provides for these realities adequately must rely at least partially on ascribed social roles. A failure to develop effective ascribed social roles causes the breakdown of genuine community and weakens family life.

**What makes social roles effective?**

To be effective, social roles must have several characteristics. First, they must be stable. Social roles provide the kind of enduring consistency of expectation and relationship that gives an underlying peace and strength to people’s lives. Constant role change reduces the solidity and vitality of communal life. Secondly, social roles must be clear. They must be defined clearly enough so that each individual can understand them and know in various situations what is expected of him or her. An ambiguous social role can be more difficult than no social role at all.
Thirdly, effective social roles must be uniform through a particular culture or communal grouping. To be strong, social roles need the support of a whole cultural grouping. Social roles also supply the larger grouping with a basis on which it can relate together without learning a new way of life. Just as clear parts that all can learn allow the spontaneous performance of a communal dance or song, so a uniform set of social roles provides a group with a way to come together for communal events without the need for lengthy practice sessions.

Fourthly, effective social roles must be flexible. They should be able to accommodate the normal range of human relationships and thus should have a built-in ability to make exceptions or adapt as needed.

**Living tradition**

Social roles are primarily ideals for personal relationships; they are not merely collections of laws, rules, or instructions. Some imperatives are connected with social roles. Children must obey their parents. Parents must care for and teach their children. But the role of father or mother cannot be reduced to a set of rules or instructions. In fact, social roles are taught more by example than by rules. Knowing five good fathers and watching them relate to their families is more helpful than reading five good books on the principles of fathering. A social role is a way of being in a relationship, a way of being for other people. A social role is more of an ideal of how to relate to others than a set of rules or a set of specifications.

Social roles are ideals, but they are also usually embodied in teaching which the communal grouping regards as authoritative. For Christians, authoritative teaching on social structure is to be found in the Bible, the writings which represent the highest revelation of God’s plan for human life. To downplay these teachings or to dismiss this source of authority not only causes spiritual damage to God’s people, it also severely limits their ability to live out a successful Christian social structure.

These characteristics of effective social roles illustrate the fact that social roles depend upon a living social tradition. A community passes on its way of life, and it is only when a way of life is passed on as “our way of life” that it has the authority to provide the basis for a successful communal life. Of course, a community can start a tradition and it can change its tradition. But a community does not have a way of life until its basic patterns are accepted as “our way” or “the way the Lord gave us” and are passed on with this type of authority. Social roles do not yet exist if one must go to class to learn about them. They should be experienced by people and transmitted by living together. Only then do social roles have the stability, clarity, uniformity and flexibility needed to give peace and solidity to social relationships.

[Steve Clark is past President of The Sword of the Spirit. This article is adapted and abridged from his book *Man and Woman in Christ*, copyright © 1980 by Stephen B. Clark and published by Tabor House Books.]
Gather My People – Restoring Extended Families and Communities

by Bob Tedesco

In this essay on Christian community, Bob Tedesco, a former president of the North American region of the Sword of the Spirit, addresses the topic of building Christian communities that last and the importance of restoring intergenerational family life and clans that are mutually supportive of sustaining a Christian way of life together.

In a yearly review of our community life, our coordinators recognized that certain elements of our community life had weakened or slipped a bit. We discussed the situation in ways that identified a weakening of our overall vision, and for certain elements of our way of life, a loss of vision.

In recent decades and certainly through the twentieth century, society has changed significantly in structure. When the world changes, people change, and the Christian church is changed as well. In the past thirty to forty years, we have seen the Lord responding to those changes and restoring something ancient.

If we look at Old Testament societies, we can see individuals, couples, families, clans (two or more generations - clans not used here in the negative sense), tribes, and a people. Within the “people” we can see other groupings: priestly, governing, military, workers, etc. Modern societal structure (especially Western societies) seems to look more like: individuals, couples, families, weak extended families, and nations. Life is lived and decisions are made in a way that repeatedly destroys connectedness until we are isolated units. In our Sword of the Spirit communities we see individuals, couples, families, clans, the local community, a region and an international community of communities (a people).

**Two founding directions**
In the summer of 1973, our local community was given two founding words: “Gather my people together;” and “Build to last” (prophetic direction for the People of God in Pittsburgh). We have responded to the first word (gather) with numerous expressions of evangelistic outreach: Life in the Spirit courses, retreats, conferences, concerts, prayer meetings, men’s breakfasts, etc. We have also repeatedly emphasized evangelism on a personal level. “Gathering” has always been a significant part of our life together.

We have also taken “building” seriously from the beginning, and our national and international ties have had a lot to do with our understanding of how things go together in a way that will last: locally, trans-locally and internationally.

Gathering and building are expressed very well in Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission. We noticed that it says, “Go and make disciples...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

So, for us it meant, first of all, discipleship; a discipleship where we are formed in Christian character. Second, it meant being put together (built) in a way that can endure in a culture that is hostile to Christianity and even more hostile to Christian culture.

Our coordinators take a concern for: 1) our ongoing relationship with Jesus; 2) our underlying attitudes, postures and influences; and 3) our long-term evangelism and growth. In Acts 2:41, we see the Bible takes a concern for growth when it says “that day 3,000 were added to their number.”

Community growth for us comes from adult evangelism and transgenerational evangelism (the term we use to describe our children growing into adult members of the community).

A community of disciples on mission
We are a community of individuals, couples, clans and movements on mission. We have a lot of teaching material on discipleship, on community, on marriage and family life. We have very little teaching on movements and no teaching on life in a clan. We have recently developed a series on senior life, which can improve the role of seniors in community and extended families. But, we have very little written about extended family life in a Christian community.

Terminology
By “family” here, we mean the nuclear model with one generation of adults. “Clan” is used for extended family with two or three generations of adults living community life. By “movements” we mean groupings of adults with a common activity and outreach that support the overall mission of the community. Individuals and families are limited by life spans, but they lay a foundation for clans, movements, communities and the Sword of the Spirit that transcends lifetimes. Pastoral leaders and youth workers working with second and third generations have a special responsibility to be aware of and support those second and third generation members. They are key links in a network of relationships that span multiple generations.

On mission
It is not my intention here to talk at length about our mission but it should be said that our mission is:

- To evangelize, and to lead people into real decisions to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, and to be baptized in the Holy Spirit
- To lead the individuals who have made those decisions into discipleship relationships of formation in Christian character and Christian community
- To rediscover and establish the Christian culture in scriptural wisdom
To establish movements and outreaches that serve the Lord’s purposes.

**A bigger vision**

Our vision is often *much* too small. The Lord’s plan for individuals, couples and families far surpasses our limited view and ideas. The American nuclear family model is *not* the Lord’s plan. The “nuclearization” of the family is creating walled-off social units that cannot be easily accessed by other extended family members and friends. What used to be a very permeable border is becoming increasingly opaque to outside light and influence. Some of that “thickening of the membrane” is due to fear, and part of it is due to the real need to survive in a toxic culture.

We also quickly absorb other modern attitudes and approaches. “I’m eighteen and I can do what I want!” Can you pay your own bills? I knew a man who used to say, “I can’t wait until my kids graduate from high school so I can send them off to college!” I had serious news for him that some of the most difficult and needy years for some children are the years between eighteen and twenty-five!

Sometimes we say, “I want the best of everything for my children.” Won’t they end up being spoiled “brats” if they too easily get the best of everything? Christian parents might say, “If he would only answer an altar call...” but, would he not also need discipleship, supportive relationships, and Christian character formation? “They need to maximize their gifts and potential” is also a common posture.

The Lord is saying, “Come and go with me. It will cost you, but it will be better!” The Lord has a *big* strategy for families, clans, and movements; but modern influences and limitations are blocking the next levels from developing. These influences and limitations are worst at the personal and family levels.

**A big strategy for clans and movements**

First, we need to say again that the Lord’s plan for family is bigger than the nuclear model. Keeping that in mind, we can begin to explore what he has in mind for clans and multi-generational family life. In some of our communities we have begun to see the unfolding of these expressions as multi-generational families emerge in communities that are 30-40 years in existence. Knowing that multi-generational families are a part of his plan can sharpen the focus of my service, and my decisions can be made in light of his strategy. That is, we can live life *intentionally* and coherently to support the new life that is emerging. This is not rocket science. It is the Lord restoring and rebuilding what has been damaged or destroyed by ungodly modern living. Living for self is self-destructive at every level of life and every level of basic human groupings.

On a worldwide basis, we see a steady stream of church movements that have served to bring individuals to encounter the living Christ so that lives, families, and vocations can be restored to him. All of this spiritual activity and energy is ultimately intended for the rebuilding of *his* family.

Again, knowing more of his plan sharpens the focus of my service: I know how to pastor or to steward that which I have been placed over. I even know more about how to write my will!

However, a greater body of teaching is still needed since the Lord is restoring expressions of the Body that we had not anticipated. For example, men and women living “single for the Lord” in an ecumenical setting and yet attached or related to a wider body of families and singles. Additionally, the fostering and protecting of clans is an area in need of teaching and development. Clusters or intentional neighborhood living has been explored with some success, but it has not yet seen the development and understanding of its dynamic to get the most out of it. But, think about that: intentional Christian neighborhoods! These would be neighborhoods where our young people could at least have some chance of developing life-long Christian relationships.
The Lord is restoring something in covenant Christian community: a stable network of brothers and sisters with whom we can grow old, while serving him over the span of generations; a place where our children can grow up with friends, marry and raise their children in the company of lifelong friendships.

**Coherence – a gift of community**

So, the various aspects of our life together – relationships, covenant, discipleship, mission, worship – are all meant to go together, to add up to something, to build something for God that lasts. His plan is *coherent* – it makes sense. It is understandable (though not fully revealed). It is seamless. It is discernable and intelligent. It is comprehensive, and it is long-term. We think in terms of one or two generations. He sees many. This plan involves individuals, families, clans, movements, and tribes or communities. Our lives and the lives of these groupings are meant to add up to something, to be built into something. In building terms we are not just raw materials, we are stones built into a dwelling place. In farming terms we are not just seeds of wheat scattered in a random field, but the field is prepared, turned over with the rows such that the plants support each other when the wind blows, and at the harvest, the fruit is easily gathered. *We are not a single stalk of wheat in a windstorm, but a field of wheat in mutual support.*

Life was more naturally coherent in earlier times. Farms served villages, and the marketplace provided a continual intersection for people who would know each other for lifetimes. Congregations and denominations never had to take a concern for the disintegration of what seemed to be the natural structure of humanity. Today’s lifestyle seems more like a patchwork of temporary relationships: in many cases functional relationships (e.g. career) which vaporize with the next downsizing, or graduation, or the next “opportunity.” The Lord is restoring something in covenant Christian community: a stable network of brothers and sisters with whom we can grow old, while serving him over the span of generations; a place where our children can grow up with friends, marry and raise their children in the company of lifelong friendships. We need to see the vision, embrace it and teach it to our children.

**Coherent or “buffet”**

We are modern, informed consumers. We shop for the best: the best values, investments, groups, and activities. Often, however, we do that without a coherent strategy, or without a long-term sense of how our choices fit together. If we took a patchwork approach to planning for retirement, we would find ourselves relying on Social Security. Yet, we can invest a lot of time and money in Christianity without taking concern for how it might all fit together in the Lord’s plan. Parents taking a real concern for their children often “shop” for the best schools, the best youth groups, etc. This “patchwork” Christianity does not build the Body of Christ, but repeatedly weakens it. In worst cases, the children are even leading the family in several directions that end up having a disconnecting, incoherent effect on the family. Mission trips, youth groups, retreats, gatherings, campus groups, small groups and relationships should all connect, they should build into something.

**Summary**

I would advise young families to plan to be a clan: to take a coherent approach to life and choices, and to raise the children so that they understand and can embrace the call. Additionally, we need to orient the family and clan beyond itself so that it embraces and is built into the wider community and even to the community of communities (the Sword of the Spirit).

More developed families will find it harder, since the children will not have seen this from an early age, but we can still aid the process by making good decisions. For example, if we decide to send them to the “best” college
hundreds of miles away, we make a decision that “disconnects” them from family and friends and usually results in them settling in some other area of the planet.

Mature families and singles can also live so as to support this work of God in service and in pastoral work. [Two passages from the Book of Revelation depict God’s people gathered together into a holy city – the new Jerusalem.]

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.” And he who sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

– Revelation 21:1-5

In the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; on the three east gates, on the three north gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles…

– Revelation 21:10-14

The Lord is building something; it has a design; it has foundations, walls and gates, and a detailed plan.

“Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

– Acts 2:40b-47

They lived differently: not just a little differently but radically different lives. They spent a lot of time together and shared things. Their life together was a part of the Lord’s plan to save them from a “crooked generation” (vs. 40).

For all of us, our lives are called to have purpose, to make sense, to add up to something; we need to stay together and make decisions and investments of time and money that support our call.

[This article is excerpted from Essays on Christian Community, (c) copyright 2010 Bob Tedesco. Used with permission. The book can be purchased at Tabor House.]

See related articles:
Living Bulwark

-**Fully Engaged Young Adults**, by Bob Tedesco
-**Christ-Centered Marriage and Family Life**, by Bob Tedesco
-**Raising Our Children for the Lord**, by Bob Tedesco
-**Gather My People: Restoring Extended Families and Communities**, by Bob Tedesco
-**A Transgenerational Call: Building Christian communities for generations to come**, by Bob Tedesco
-**On Being Transgenerational**, by Jerry Munk
-**Preparing Children for a Spirit-filled Life**, by Jerry Munk
-**Boys Adrift: A Book Review**, by Jerry Munk
-**Child-Centered Parenting and Family Life**, by Paul Dinolfo
-**That Your Prayers Be Not Hindered: Consideration in Marriage**, by Jerry Munk
-**Make Your Spouse Beautiful: from a commentary on Ephesians 5:21-33**, by John Chrysostom

---

**Essays on Christian Community:**

*Do covenant communities have something to contribute to our models of church?*


---

Bob Tedesco is past President of the North American Region of the Sword of the Spirit, a founder of the People of God community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, and has been one of its key leaders for the past 39 years.

(c) copyright 2013 Living Bulwark
publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com
On Falling in Love and Other Such Ailments

_A wise and practical presentation on the five types of love and our need for a balanced approach to developing relationships_

_by Carlos Mantica_

The following essay is adapted from the book, _From Birdhood to Egghead: Hatch or Rot as a Christian_, by Carlos Mantica. In the forward to the book Fr. Victoriano Arizti, from Victoria, Spain writes: "You are going to experience, dear reader, how these talks and teachings, which ...are Nicaraguan experiences, conceptualized by Chale Mantica in light of God's Word – do give a concrete response to the issues and questions that often come up in your communities or in the apostolic field the Lord has called you to. These talks now come to your hands, with the same love and the same apostolic enthusiasm with which their author developed them, and I hope they will be helpful for your own enrichment and to give practical orientation to those who share with you the yearning for a more genuine Christianity, one that will be an effective answer to the problems confronted by today's society."

**Role of emotions**

Modern society has elevated our emotions and feelings to the rank of sole arbiters of our behavior. What we feel has become the major criterion to determine whether something is good or bad, proper or improper. If it feels good, do it!

Unfortunately, our emotions are unstable. Today we feel one way, and the next day we feel a different way. In
addition, we are not always responsible for what we feel, and if something as unstable and as difficult to control
determines the totality of our actions, our lives will be just as unstable and will be beyond our control.

In this chapter we will refer to one of those emotions that are unstable and beyond our control. We will talk about
Eros, the love of those who are in love. We will talk about what this love is like and what we can expect from it, its
role in our lives and the problems it poses, its virtues and defects, and how it can be our ally or our enemy, the most
beautiful thing in the world or the most painful.

And our first message is this: Married life cannot be based solely on Eros, but in the immense majority of cases it
unfortunately is, and this has serious consequences.

**Marriage and Eros**

I don't know if all of you are aware that our age is the first in the whole history of the world in which falling in love
is the only or main consideration for marriage. This is the first time in history when Eros has become an absolute, to
such an extent that every other criterion is left out, or is at least subordinated to the couple's being in love. In many
civilizations, for centuries and millennia, marriages used to be arranged by the parents, without the boy and the girl
even knowing each other. Even a few decades ago, when I and my friends were studying abroad, it was striking to us
that a European or American girl who started a friendship with one of us would withdraw in fear if she felt she was
beginning to fall in love before she had finished her studies or before being ready for marriage. When ready she
would marry whomever she wished, the one she was in love with, but in the meantime would do what she could not
to fall in love too early or with the wrong person.

Back then, in other words, falling in love was one of the factors that would determine her marriage, but not the only
one, nor necessarily the most important of all.

**Whimsical first-sight love**

Things have now changed, and everything is now done the other way around in the world – a young man or woman
will rarely decide in advance **when** they are going to get married. They never think beforehand what kind of person
must be the person with whom they can stay together for the rest of their lives, or in what circumstances they will
live. The reason they never go out to look for that person, is because they don't even know what he or she will be
like. The starting point of their relation is accidental, whimsical first-sight love. Destiny has united them!

When they fall in love, they will always see in the other the person they had dreamed of, even if he or she is a wild,
unbearable being, and by that time they care very little whether they will have to live in Zimbabwe or whether they
will see each other only once every six months because he is traveling salesman for the North Pole.

Normal life is usually interrupted by this love (school, travel, relationships), and it is often cancelled forever. In one
word, once you are in love it is often too late to decide **when** you are going to get married and who the right person
is.

**Like catching a cold**

One of the most stupid features of falling in love is the way you get into it. Falling in love is like catching a cold. It
is not entirely within your control. It's something natural, and there's absolutely nothing wrong about it, but it is
better to bear in mind that, like a cold, you can only get it when there is some degree of closeness or intimacy.

This is very important to bear in mind. Because what this means is that quite often we fall in love with someone, not
because he or she is the right person, but simply because he or she happened to be closest. A man and a woman, if
Living Bulwark

placed in conditions of closeness and intimacy for a reasonable time, will end up developing a mutual attraction which we can usually term falling in love. That's why the boss falls in love with his secretary, and female students with their male teachers, older women with their doctors, psychiatrists, confessors or confidants. Personal areas of attraction are not so important.

A girl who deals with various boys with a certain degree of intimacy will discover this by herself, and will gradually develop some kind of immunity. Little by little, it will increasingly be the case that she does not fall in love with every one of the boys she relates closely with. But at the beginning she will fall in love with all of those she relates closely with, to a greater or lesser degree. This depends not so much on who that person is, but on how close the relationship is.

As it is the case that in the world we have to deal with many people in a more or less intense way, it becomes very important to develop a certain immunity, as well as to be able to maintain a friendship without drifting into this kind of more intimate relationship whose effects we already know.

One day they will get just too close to each other and catch the cold. And if this happens when they are already married to someone else, tragedy will come. All young people should be aware that, statistically speaking, they can be sure they will fall in love with a different person at least once again after marriage.

It is serious enough that falling in love is nowadays the only or main factor that determines whom or when we will marry. But much more serious still is the problem of those who would make being in love the main support of their marriage lives, and the axis that sustains all their husband-wife relationships.

Only too often we meet ladies who resent the fact that their husbands are not in love with them the way they used to be in their early years. Their main point of reference is usually the days of their honeymoon, their first few months of marriage, and all their efforts are focused on reviving those moments and emotions which, for reasons we will consider below, disappeared from their life and there seems to be very little they can do to prevent it.

They then feel frustrated, bitter, disappointed and resentful, not understanding what has happened, and not realizing that those feelings of bitterness and frustration, and the attitudes that often derive from them, do nothing but contribute towards destroying or suffocating the very feeling they are striving to preserve.

Five types of love

Our lives can and must be lives full of love in all its possible expressions. We are not supposed to settle for an empty life. But it is necessary for us to understand what each of the five types of love can offer us, and what each of those five types of love can do for one another in order to achieve a fulfilled life.

The second point in this talk is precisely that we need five loves: affection, friendship, being in love, sexual passion, and agape. None of them by itself is able to satisfy the totality of our affective needs.

Characteristics of Eros

In order to understand the two essential points of the message, I would like to begin by pointing out the characteristics of Eros. These characteristics can make it either an ally or an enemy of our happiness.

Eros is exclusive. The first problematic characteristic of Eros is that being in love is exclusive. It excludes everyone else, and it demands exclusiveness from the beloved person. Affection, friendship and agape, instead, are not exclusive. I can feel affection for a very large number of people. Christian love, or agape, is not exclusive either. The
Lord commands us to love even our enemies. Friendship is not exclusive; we often hear our friends repeat the phrase, "My friends' friends are my friends." Friendship opens us to others. I would like to have many friends, and I do not feel in any way disturbed by the fact that my friends have as many other friends as they like. But I have never heard anyone say, "My friends are my girlfriend's boyfriends."

The Lord, no doubt, planned being in love to make us exclusive, so that there could be faithfulness between the spouses. He also intended man and woman to have a tendency to be isolated as a couple and to focus on each other, so that they would get to know each other deeply as a preparation for marriage. A problem emerges, however, when our being in love with someone not only precludes us from being in love with someone else, but also excludes everyone else from our lives – from our affection, our friendship or our agape love.

God made Eros exclusive so that we would fall in love with only one person, or at least for us to be in love with only one person at a time, but not for us to be isolated. The fact that I love my wife involves my not loving anyone else in the same way, but it cannot involve my not loving anyone else in any way whatsoever. When love makes us exclusive to such an extreme degree that it absorbs everything, then our partner's affective life depends absolutely on us. As we shall see, this is almost impossible, since man and woman need a very large range of forms of affection, and a large number of marriage problems in today's world emerge precisely because people expect from their partner something that the partner by himself or by herself is not able to give. We shall come back to this later.

A second characteristic of Eros, which makes Eros terribly dangerous, is summed up in that oft-repeated phrase that love is blind. **Eros is blind.** As in the preceding case, this characteristic also seems to be part of God's plan. Love's blindness is an advantage inside marriage. An older lady whom I have great affection for says that the Lord is so wise that, as we grow further into old age, the Lord gradually blinds us so that we cannot see our spouse's wrinkles, fatness or baldness. The Lord intended it to be thus, so that love would not be over when beauty, which is short-lived, is gone.

But this blindness can be terrible before marriage. Eros will be a support and will strengthen every marriage, but it is a serious danger for choosing one's husband or wife, because if she's ugly we will see her beautiful, and if she's stupid she will seem a genius. The woman we fall in love with has no defects, nobody can be compared to her.

Eros is, then, our best friend as a support to keep and enjoy the relationship with the person we have already chosen as our spouse, but it can be our worst enemy for choosing a lifelong spouse.

Yet there are many other ways in which love is blind. It is also blind in the sense that it does not necessarily seek our own good, nor does it necessarily strive for our own happiness. Even if the phrase sounds amazing, when we put Eros to the test this proves to be true. Like C.S. Lewis points out: "Everyone knows how useless it is to try to separate two people who are in love by demonstrating to them that their marriage will be a failure. It is useless, not only because they will not believe us, but because even if they believed they would not let themselves be persuaded; because, once Eros has marked us, we would rather share misfortune with the beloved one than be happy otherwise. Even if the two of them can foresee that ten years from now they will be happier if they don't get married than if they do, yet they would not separate. All these calculations have no importance whatsoever for Eros. Eros will never hesitate to say, "This is better than separation. I'd rather suffer next to her, than be happy without her. Let our hearts break, as long as they break together." If we are not able to say this, it is almost certain that we are not deeply in love.

**Love is not just blind - it's stupid,** and it can also be unjust and cruel. The feelings of love that produce happiness in some people are the same that lead others to cruel unions, to impossible marriages, to pacts of suicide or murder. Everyday, in the name of love, the cruellest injustices are committed; the greatest suffering is caused; the most
tremendous disgraces are provoked.

This is because love does not just blind us concerning people, but also concerning principles, values and morality. Being in love serves as a justification for everything. It seems to legitimize all kinds of actions which people wouldn't have dared to take otherwise. And I am not referring only or mainly to actions that go against chastity. Being in love justifies absolutely everything. When we are in love we have our own laws, or own religion, our own god. Being in love legitimizes actions of injustice and even actions against true love. A man or a woman will say, "It is for love's sake that I have abandoned my parents; it is for love's sake that I have neglected my children; it is for love's sake that I have cheated my wife; it is for love's sake that I have offended a friend; it is for love's sake that I have betrayed a brother." True love does not do this kind of things.

**Being in love legitimizes everything**

Let me repeat – being in love legitimizes everything. "I did it because I was in love." This confession is almost a way of bragging, and can even involve a form of defying. Those who have done wrong feel they are martyrs, that they have been victims to something that is far above themselves; they are not guilty, but victims. They do not need to repent – just to feel sorry, at most. This is false. We are not always responsible for what we feel, but we are always responsible for what we do.

As we can see, being in love poses very difficult challenges to an individual. They are situations that require a lot of discernment and maturity. But we have not yet said the most important thing.

**Eros is a liar, an impostor.** It is a liar because it completely distorts reality, because it makes us see things the way they are not, because it makes us consider beautiful, things that are not beautiful, consider good things that may not be just or right and because it promises things that it is unable to fulfill.

It is an impostor, above all, because it can serve as a disguise to a lot of emotions. A girlfriend or wife that tells you, "I can't live without you, I need you, you are all to me," may be telling you the truth, but she does not necessarily love you. She needs you and can't live without you, because maybe you are the only person who has shown interest and affection for her. She needs you because you have perhaps succeeded in healing a complex of inferiority or a feeling of insecurity in her. She needs you because you have felt compassion for her. She needs you to satisfy her own vanity, or she needs you because you have taken her out of loneliness. She needs you because you make her happy.

On the side of women, I have often seen that love is a disguise for mere maternal instinct. This is the case of a girl who falls in love with the weakest guy, because she finds in him a way to channel all her instincts of protection and tenderness.

Maybe this adult married man had never set his eyes on that woman, until she paid attention to him and he detected admiration in her eyes. He who thought he was not able to attract a woman anymore suddenly feels in rapture, not by that person, but by the way she looked at him. He thinks he is in love with her, but what he has really fallen in love with is the admiration she has for him. Let me repeat – Eros is an impostor, because it can be the disguise for a lot of different emotions.

**Three ways of falling in love**

What I am going to say now is very important. We can fall in love with a need, a symbol, or a person; and it is necessary to know the difference.
**Living Bulwark**

**Falling in love with a need:** a pair of eyes is the most dangerous thing in the world, and it's not necessary that they be pretty, because what really attracts us is not the eyes but the way they look at us. It is our need for admiration, our need for tenderness, our need for understanding, our need for security about our ability to be attractive. When a boy or a girl are not especially attractive, or when age makes us wrinkled, bald or fat, feeling admired or loved by someone else is almost irresistible. Eros has the power to become a need in itself. The boy who once has fallen in love is so much in love with what he feels, that he no longer can live without that feeling, and thus seeks to provoke it. This is what we call being in love with love.

**We can also fall in love with a symbol.** This is the blue prince of schoolgirls' dreams – he exists only in their imagination, and very seldom in real life. They have idealized a person to whom they attribute all virtues, all qualities, all the characteristics they would like to find in a man. This can result in tragedy because, most usually, the less we know a person the more we love him or her. But when we get to know him it can be too late. Being in love now disappears, because we have discovered the flesh-and-blood person, full of defects, that was hidden behind the dreamt-of blue prince. Worse still, this same girl, once married, falls in love with the things she finds in others and which her husband lacks.

Finally, **we can fall in love with a person** – a real person, just as he or she actually is, and not with a need or an ideal. We fall in love with that person with his or her defects, with his virtues, and, of course, if we ever fall in love in earnest and intend to establish a relationship for the rest of our lives, we must make sure that what we have fallen in love with is the person himself or herself.

That is why I will devote a few moments to explain how we can distinguish between these three ways of falling in love.

Most usually, when we have fallen in love with a need inside us, our love emerges as a response to the other person's love or initiatives. It does not come from ourselves. The other person elicits it with his or her actions, admiration, esteem or understanding. "If she had never looked at me that way, or if she had not told me what she told me, I would have never fallen in love with her."

One way to know whether we are in love with a symbol or a person is that, when we are in love with a symbol, the person seems to grow when we are not with her, and becomes more insignificant when we are with her, because we then see her just as she is. In her presence we discover that she is spoiled, whimsical, lazy, sloppy. When we are in love with the person herself, instead, the person seems to grow when in our presence. We increasingly discover in her new qualities and virtues, or else we detect and accept her defects and continue to love her just as she is.

Of course, it is the person we should always fall in love with. The other two, fortunately, are relatively easy to fight. When we fall in love with a need, this can usually be healed by way of the truth. If we are honest to ourselves, we realize that we have fallen in love with our pride, or vanity. This person was just a consolation in our loneliness, our self-pity, our need to feel loved. We may not be able to renounce this love because our need is just so great, but we should at least be honest enough to admit that it is not the person we love but what she or he represents.

And when we have fallen in love with a symbol, this is usually solved only through disappointment. Reality itself takes care to destroy the symbol, and we only need be careful that this does not happen just too late.

But I have not yet pointed out the most dangerous feature of Eros, which makes it a real danger. This is something we should all be fully aware of.
It is that Eros comes to our lives without invitation. When it comes, it sweeps away everything, and then it usually leaves when it wills and there's nothing we can do to stop it.

Eros needs no invitation. It can enter our hearts without previous notice, without our consent. We usually discover that we are falling in love when we discover that we have already fallen in love, at least to a certain extent. When this happens, we can either:

1. Feed this love with our day-dreaming, with our conversation, with caresses, with words, etc., or
2. Fight it by moving away from this person, placing other values above this feeling, protecting our lives with deep convictions and firm decisions.

But I think we could say that falling in love does not depend completely on us. It is not a free act of our will in the sense that we could say, "I'm going to fall in love with this person," or, "I'm going to move out of being in love with her." If it were so, the world would be a paradise – we would be able to coldly choose the ideal person for us, and then, through an act of our will, we would fall in love with that person and stay in love for the rest of our lives.

Under our control and at our service

Unfortunately this is not so. Yet this does not mean we are at the mercy of Eros. Ultimately, being in love is an emotion and, like all other emotions, it should be under our control and at our service. It should not govern our actions or make decisions for us in an exclusive way. We cannot have our lives fully under the reins of our emotions, and Eros is merely one of them. We may not be always responsible for what we feel, but we are always responsible for what we do, for the decisions we make, for the mistakes we make, for the steps we take.

We said earlier that, when Eros comes in, it sweeps away everything. It sweeps away our peace, our common sense, our recreational activities, our values, our areas of interest... and sometimes even our money. It absorbs everything, it wants everything for itself. It is possibly the strongest emotion a human being can experience. It can make us able to carry out the most incredible acts of heroism, it can give us the greatest joys, the most infinite bliss. Or else it can make us able to commit the worst acts of injustice, it can provoke in us despair, suffering, deceit, betrayal, suicide. It is simply a two-edged sword that can act for us or against us. That is why we need to be prepared when it comes, we need to know it as it really is, we need to have a sober assessment of it, we need to know how to guard ourselves against it, we need to be ready to receive it, and to have the necessary maturity to face it.

Because the most terrible aspect of all this is that Eros, whose voice seems to speak to us from heaven, which seems so great, so solid, is not even permanent. On the contrary, it is the most fatal of our loves and at once the most fleeting. It is here today, and its presence covers everything, and tomorrow it is gone and has left no track. And this is the most puzzling part of it – on the one hand we have an absolute inner certainty that such a great thing will never disappear, and on the other it happens to be the thing that vanishes most easily.

Love makes promises nobody has requested from it. When we fall in love, our first spontaneous words are, "I'll love you forever, I'll always be faithful to you." These are usually the first words of a person who is in love – and he or she is being sincere, not hypocritical. No matter how experienced this person is, he or she will never be cured of this illusion. All of us have known people who fall in love again every year or every few months. Each time, they are sincerely persuaded that the thing will be serious this time, that they have found true love and that they will be faithful for the rest of their lives. Thus, no one is able to convince us of the opposite, not even ourselves, even though we see it happen once and again.

What Eros actually is

That is why it is important for us to know Eros as it actually is. I say that Eros is like rain. It's a gift of God. It's
good, beautiful, necessary... but, like rain, it is not reliable. It comes whenever it likes. It can cause floods that sweep away everything and destroy everything. And it can leave us when we need it most.

Eros is exclusive and possessive. Eros is blind. Eros is a liar, an imposter, who demands everything and guarantees nothing. In brief, Eros is not to be trusted. That is why we can't have our lives governed only by that emotion. It cannot be our only or main criterion in making decisions, or what will actually determine our actions. It can show up without invitation. We must be prepared to receive it and to close the door on it if we are not ready; we must protect our lives and our hearts with deep convictions, firm decisions, solid and sound relationships. We cannot take it lightly or play with it, because it is usually Eros that plays with us. This does not mean we should be afraid of it—we should just respect it, with the respect one has for things unforeseeable and unknown.

I think that, up to this point, we can understand well the first part of our message, namely, that our marriage life cannot rely only and exclusively on Eros, because we cannot count on it, because it's here today and can fade away tomorrow, because it can be the disguise for many other emotions, and because it does not necessarily seek always our true happiness.

**To love and to be loved**

It is now necessary for us to grasp the second part of the message in this chapter, which I sketched earlier, but which I can express better this way: that no kind of human love is enough in itself to fill our capability for love, or our need to be loved. That for our happiness, for our true fulfillment, we need the presence of all kinds of love, and we can hardly find all of them in one person.

What do I mean? That neither affection alone nor friendship alone, nor Christian love alone nor Eros alone nor Venus alone are able to fill up our need to be loved or our ability to love. That the Lord planted inside us a deep need for all of them, which none of them can fill up by itself. We need them all, and usually one of these loves serves as a support and an encouragement for the others.

For example, sexual attraction towards another person, soon loses its appeal if not accompanied by Eros, if we are not in love with that person. Especially in women, the sexual act loses a great part of its attraction and beauty when the woman is not in love with her partner, or when she has ceased to be.

But, at the same time, when we are in love, this love in itself calls forth the sexual relationship. Thus, Eros supports and encourages Venus.

**Friendship and affection**

But that's not the end of the chain. We also discover that Eros, a love that is so evasive, so fleeting sometimes, as we said earlier, that breaks in today into our lives uninvited and then, after occupying the forefront of our existence, fades away without previous notice, this Eros can be, however, strengthened and revived if a beautiful friendship exists and has developed between the spouses. Friendship plays a very important role in keeping love alive and growing between husband and wife. Friendship supports and encourages Eros, but friendship is in turn expressed and increased with manifestations of affection, with verbal caresses, with courtesy, with gentleness. Affection supports and encourages friendship.

And when all these emotions and feelings fail, when a moment comes in which we feel nothing but a vacuum and total dryness toward the other person, then the most perfect love of all, the most generous and at once the least demanding, Christian love, brotherly love, needs to be present right there to preserve the relationship, to take the responsibility of the commitment that Eros and Venus entered but which they were not able to fulfill by themselves.
An example of these commitments can be the promises of faithfulness made by Eros, or the commitment to care for the well-being of the children generated by Venus. Agape sustains and perfects the relationship born of friendship, and can also provide the gentleness and the caresses promised by affection. This is our main thesis – that we need all of them, and that all of them come together to support one another and to give us full happiness and complete fulfillment as human beings.

**We need many different relationships**

But we added something else – that we could hardly find these five types of love in one person alone. I do not mean with this that our girlfriend or wife is not capable to offer us affection, friendship, being in love, sexual satisfaction, and the support given by being brother and sister in the Lord. What I mean is that we need many different relationships of affection, and different forms and expressions of affection. Normally, for example, we would not be content with having just one friend. The fact that husband and wife are also very good friends does not normally preclude that they continue to need the friendship of other people, friendship among men, friendship among women. That's why I said earlier that, when a husband or a wife try to make the whole of the other person's affective life to be centered upon themselves, they come across big trouble. A woman needs friendship with women, and a man needs friendship with men.

What I am going to say now may seem somewhat scandalous to some of you, but all I'm doing is pointing out an evident reality, and it is important for all of you to understand me well. *Eros is not satisfied with just one person.* It is true we fall in love with just one person at a time, but the experience of almost everyone, men and women, is that we fall in love several times in our lives.

The same can be said of Venus. Especially a man may, at a given time, feel sexually attracted to a different person, and this does not mean he loves his girlfriend or wife any less. It is simply that his sexuality has been aroused by some visual stimulus or physical contact.

All of this is true, whether we like it or not. But this does not mean we are approving or justifying someone who betrays his wife or his girlfriend, just because he fell in love with someone else or felt sexually attracted to her. We are pointing out this reality, because modern society unfortunately does justify it. We are just cautioning against the danger. It is modern society that has turned emotions into an absolute criterion for behavior. We are saying all the opposite – that we are always responsible for what we do, even if we are not responsible for all we feel. Just feeling something is not reason enough to act in one way or another. We are not at the mercy of our emotions or our instincts.

**Loving each other with Christ's love**

But it is in order to act correctly and to protect ourselves from these two unreliable loves, Eros and Venus, that we need to rely on the help of the other three loves. If a husband and a wife love each other with Christ's love, and are good friends, and have filled their marriage with expressions of mutual affection, then, when conflicting emotions or instincts come up, this affection, this friendship, this agape, will come in to protect their actions and maintain their marriage relationship.

When I say that we can hardly find the fullness of love in just one person, what I'm trying to point out is that we need many persons in order to be fully happy and in order to be completely fulfilled as human beings.

I would like to point out a further danger I had mentioned a few moments ago. Modern society is witnessing a series of events that are unprecedented in history, in terms of relationships.
I said earlier that, for the first time in history, falling in love has become the only and main criterion to start a courtship relationship or to enter marriage.

The disappearing extended family relationships

Well, there is another phenomenon, possibly also unprecedented in history, and it is as follows: in the past, a man and a woman would fill their affective needs in a very diverse manner. Most of us grew up in a kind of family that is increasingly disappearing, a family where, in addition to mom, dad and the brothers and sisters, there also lived an aunt, or a grandfather or grandmother. Our recreational outings, our vacations at the beach, were done together with many other brothers and sisters, and crowds of cousins and friends. Domestic helpers lived in the same house with the family, and from them a child would receive various expressions of affection. Even if we cannot talk about actual Christian love or friendship, the youth and even the adults had sincere affection for many of these employees.

As youngsters, we used to play as a group and had an awareness of the neighborhood, the community, the parish. The neighbourhood would give us a certain sense of identity and feelings of loyalty. In the workplace, relationships tended to be much more personal, not just functional. We knew people by their names, and nicknames were often used among us. Usually a woman would find company and receive formation not just from her mother, but from her sisters, her cousins, her aunts, her grandparents, etc. In modern society, in technological society, in urban life, most of these relationships have now disappeared. The family is now reduced to the father, the mother, and an increasingly smaller number of children who live in houses or apartments where you can often live for years without getting to know the neighbors next door. Domestic service is fading out. Children no longer play in groups on the streets. Neighborhoods in the sense the word used to have, have disappeared. There is no sense of identity and loyalty in the neighborhood. Work relationships have become purely functional. An expression of affection is interpreted as favoritism, paternalism, or even worse. A nickname indicates disrespect.

I'm not saying right now whether these things are good or bad. They're just facts. A consequence of this has been that modern individuals expect to find the totality of these expressions of affection, friendship and love in just one other person. They need them, but they do not receive them from the society around them, and so they seek them and hope to find them in a single person, a man in just one woman and a woman in just one man, and the child in the father and the mother or in his brother or sister. I'm not likely to be wrong if I say that this may be one of the main reasons for the increase in the divorce rate – because a man's or a woman's expectations of one another have grown far beyond the other person's actual possibilities.

The importance of Christian community

A woman cannot fill the totality of her husband's needs for affection. A father cannot fill the totality of his child's expectations of affection. The boy wants his father to replace the group of friends, and to do with him what the child used to do with the neighborhood group. Just the same, a husband cannot be a mother, a sister, a woman cousin and a woman friend for his wife. In contrast to this whole reality, I would like to present the importance of Christian community, the importance of community life whose initial cell is the family, but which goes beyond it and offers each person much more than the limited modern family can offer.

What I mean is that, when we live in community, we receive affection from others; we receive friendship from them; we can rely on the support, loyalty and commitment of the Christian love of those who are our brothers and sisters in the Lord, who are sincerely committed to one another and even willing to give up everything for us. This satisfies to a great extent our loneliness, our need for affection, our need for company and support.

A husband and a wife discover that their love and commitment become easier, because many of their affective demands are being filled by other people. The wife is no longer supposed to meet by herself the totality of her husband's need for affection, his need for company, his need for fellowship, his need for friendship, his need for
enjoyment, his need for recognition, his need for admiration, his need for respect. I'm sure that a widow will also find in the love of her brothers and sisters a great part of the affection she needs. An elderly woman, or a widow, or a divorced woman, can hardly bear by themselves the burden that loneliness involves in modern society. They will usually marry again or drift into promiscuity, because society as such almost never has anything to offer them, and they are supposed to find it all in a man, in whom they will focus in order to find the totality of the five loves.

Community is not enough to fully satisfy what maybe only a man or woman can give. But it will open to them a way to joy, to friendship, to security, to support, to company, to personal fulfillment, to feeling useful, to feeling supported, in fact to feeling indispensable. Because, in a community of brothers and sisters, every one of us is indispensable, in the sense that no one can replace us. If a single one of us disappears, the community will no longer be the same. Each and everyone of us, young people, adults and the elderly, single, married, widows and widowers, we all carry in our hearts and in our bodies the need for these five loves. None of them is sufficient in itself. They all complement each other, and they help and support each other, and there is no one person who, throughout his or her life, is able to provide this to us by himself or herself. We need to experience this and to live it everyday. And, as we strive to build a new society, a new culture, it is only right for us to realize that modern society increasingly denies us this possibility. It is only right for us to realize that community life is, even at the human level, an increasingly felt need – our need for love, our need to exercise our ability to love each other.

[This article is excerpted from the book, *From Birdhood to Egghead: Hatch or Rot as a Christian*, by Carlos Mantica Abaunza, (c) 2001. Used with permission.]
Love and Tolerance Decoded

How their original meaning has been altered by relativistic thinking

by Bobby Maddex

**LOVE**

*n.* tender, passionate affection for another person  
*v.* to have love or affection for

**History:** “Love” is one of the oldest words in the English language, dating back to the eighth century. Its meaning was derived from the ancient Greek philosophers, who went to great pains to examine each of the term’s dimensions. Interestingly, not a single one of the Greek types of love correlates with the commonly held modern view that emphasizes love as a feeling. For example, the Greek word eros, which is now associated with sensual desire and longing, was actually thought to involve an active contemplation of the beauty within a person, as well as an appreciation of beauty itself. The other types of Greek love—agape, philia, and storge—have even less of a “feeling” component, instead emphasizing reciprocal actions of caring, protection, and enjoyment. In the Middle Ages, the concept of “romantic” love took root, and while courtly poetry often expressed love as an irresistible urge that defied everything from the boundaries of social class to the bonds of marriage, it also saw true love as a lofty and transcendent thing. With the rise of Darwinism and Freudian psychoanalysis in the 19th and 20th centuries, however, the understanding of love was debased in two ways: the former saw it as merely a function of biological survival, and the latter dismissed it as an illusion of the mind.
**Etymology:** The word “love” comes from the Old Frisian term *luve*, which meant “affection and friendliness toward another person.” As time went on, its definition became increasingly ambiguous, as it was used to refer to an ever-widening range of phenomena. Beginning in 1225, for instance, “love” came to likewise mean “a beloved person.” The phrase “in love” dates back to 1580 and marks the first time that the word described an emotion rather than an action. In 1919, the term “love life,” meaning “one’s collective amorous activities,” was coined, and in 1950, the phrase “make love,” which had previously meant “to pay amorous attention to,” changed into a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Thus, by the middle of the twentieth century, “love” had devolved from a precise and virtuous act of devotion into a nebulous concept that could be applied to any number of behaviors, sentiments, and things. Occasionally, a philosopher, such as Thomas Jay Oord, has tried to salvage its original definition—Oord says that to love is to “act intentionally, in sympathetic response to others, to promote overall well-being”—but it is too late to call back the word from its indiscriminate application throughout English-speaking society.

**Effect:** Today we profess love for everything, whether it be our pets, our favorite foods, or our cars, and we do so at the slightest provocation. This haphazard ascription of love to any sort of warm feeling, however trivial, has, in many cases, made love itself disposable. We are as quick to stop loving as we are to love; and science is ready to back us up in this regard, teaching us not only that love is no longer an action, but that it is completely out of our control—a neurological drive that cannot be resisted and that alters its focus on a biological whim. Alas, many of us these days are either in love or out of love but never actively loving—never contemplating or caring or committing—and the cumulative result is a culture largely captive to its transitory passions.

---

**TOLERANCE**

**n.** A fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one’s own.

**History:** The first use of the word “tolerance” dates back to 1412, and it originally meant “endurance” or “fortitude.” Thus, to “tolerate” something (the verb form became an acceptable variation in 1531) was originally to survive or remain unaffected by an unpleasant or unwanted phenomenon. By 1539, however, “tolerance” was likewise associated with permissiveness, particularly on the part of government officials or others in authority, and by 1868, the word came to mean “an allowance of variation.” Note that in all three cases “tolerance” did not suggest an acceptance of that which was being tolerated. On the contrary, if one was “permissive” or “allowing,” it was always in spite of how one actually felt (usually negatively) about what was being permitted or allowed. This held true all the way through the end of the 19th century, when “tolerance” was first used to describe an acquired physical resistance to poisons, viruses, or other potentially harmful toxins. Indeed, it wasn’t until the late 1950s that users of the term started to insist that it also implied the supporting of ideas, values, and practices that differed from one’s own.

**Etymology:** “Tolerance” is derived from the Latin tolerantia, which means “putting up with something that is undesirable.” Consequently, inherent in its origins is the notion that the tolerant individual believes that his beliefs, practices, and behaviors are superior to those that he tolerates—that he has graciously refrained from deporting, imprisoning, executing, or otherwise humiliating those whose beliefs, practices, and behaviors are inferior to his own. It’s not surprising, then, that with the emergence of moral relativism in the early 20th century—and, later, the American political radicalism of the 1960s—came an intolerance of tolerance as it was originally defined. In other words, the idea that some people were merely tolerating the beliefs and actions of others was unacceptable in light of the “fact” that all beliefs and actions were equally legitimate. To remedy this situation, tolerance itself was reconceived as a rejection of moral absolutes in favor of an ethical framework that respected all viewpoints, no matter how ludicrous. Of course, the one viewpoint excluded from this scheme was that which opposed its central
**Effect:** While it is definitely true that the U.S. was in part established as a haven of tolerance, it is also true that the type of tolerance that it has historically implemented is the “endurance” variety. That is, America has always tended to put up with a broad assortment of religions, lifestyles, and perspectives, allowing for their expression without threat of punishment, but it has also typically protected those who object to such diversity, and it certainly hasn’t insisted that all opinions are equally valid. Unfortunately, this situation has changed. By conflating the concept of equal rights—a foundational American premise that, admittedly, has not always been put into practice—with a relativistic stance toward truth, culturally liberal activists have managed to make sheer disapproval, whether public or private, anathema, if not criminal. These days, it is no longer acceptable to just live and let live; one must also internally suppress any form of moral opprobrium toward so-called alternative ways of life or else stand accused of bigotry and hatred.

[Bobby Maddex is senior editor of Salvo Magazine. The article on Love is from Salvo Magazine, Issue 9, Summer 2009. The article on Tolerance is from Salvo Magazine, Issue 10, Autumn 2009. Used with permission.]
Christ-Centered Marriage and Family Life

Our individual lives, marriages, and family life need to be brought under the Lordship of Christ

By Bob Tedesco

This article is addressed to Christian parents and pastoral leaders to help them understand the challenge of living Christ-centered marriage and family life in the midst of a secular culture – a culture which often works against the Christian ideal.

Missing the Mark

The Greek word *hamartia*, which is frequently used in Scripture and is translated “sin,” is a derivative of the word *hamartano* which means “to miss the mark.” In our efforts to live the Christian life we can get caught in certain cultural traps that cause us to lose focus and “miss the mark.”

The throne diagram, used in the Life in the Spirit Seminars, illustrates the centrality of Christ in the life of the Christian. The diagram is a cross placed on the throne of a person’s heart. The throne is surrounded by the types of
things which can occupy one’s life, such as education, family, career, pleasure, any number of which could easily usurp the place of Christ on the throne. This diagram is a way of examining and situating our life’s priorities.

From many years of pastoral work with individuals, couples, and families in Christian community, I have learned by close observation that it is possible for two Christ-centered people to enter into marriage that itself is not Christ-centered at its core. The same is true for families. It is possible for Christ-centered parents to lead a family lifestyle or culture that does not have Christ at the center. The reasons for this are many and varied. People might not know how to have a Christ-centered marriage or family. It may be a shortcoming in the Christian community, or local church, or the individual’s personal lack of understanding. Even with the availability of good pastoral and teaching resources, it is possible not to have a Christ-centered marriage or family. In the tide of increasing secular cultural influences, our priorities can easily become blurred.

A Parenting Study

A recent sociological study of parenting among Christians in the United States, conducted by the Barna Group, was released in 2005. Here is a summary of some of their key points:

1. Christian parents are more likely to put an emphasis on seeing that their children get a good education than on seeing them enter adulthood as followers of Christ
2. Christians in the U.S. don't parent much differently than the population at large
3. Believers do not (significantly) train their children to think or act differently enough for faith to make a difference: gambling, excessive drinking, cohabitation, adultery, divorce, and other unbiblical behaviors are (statistically) just as likely.

Cultural Influences

Christian parents often find themselves dealing with certain surface expressions only to realize they have missed the effects of deeper cultural trends and concerns. Modesty is one example. If parents wait until their daughter begins to exhibit morality problems without addressing from a young age the child’s need for training in modesty in speech, entertainment, and music, they will be attempting to deal with only one aspect of a wider spectrum that has largely been ignored, missing the fact that something has been put in place before the problem manifested itself.

Most of us have, in fact, been formed by our secular culture to give “conditioned responses.” Sometimes we don’t recognize the underlying value sets, including pressure from society and relatives, and the internal orientations that condition us for a certain response. We can be really culturally driven, culturally responsive. We can be deceived, claiming to be and actually desiring to be Christ-centered, but find ourselves on a path that goes far from the heart of God.

There are many things that get put in place in us by the culture around us, for example, fear-based living. There is the fear of rejection, fear of disease, fear of kidnapping or terrorism, to name a few. Another is the need for approval which is connected to the fear of rejection. We want approval from friends and relatives, preferring not to be seen as abnormal. But if we live a Christ-centered Christian life we just won’t look normal.

Some of us are driven by a competitive spirit: a drive to win. Or we can be influenced by the entitlement mentality, believing we “deserve” certain things as individuals and families. On a personal level we can be oriented by greed, orderliness, perfectionism, pleasure, fear, guilt, accomplishment, security, success, education, and so on.

How we think about and view our spouse is another way we’re influenced by the culture. Some culturally accepted models are to see your spouse as your best friend, confessor, fellow adventurer, partner, lover. Some of these are more or less true, but if any one view gets exaggerated it distorts the marriage relationship.
Families, too, are under a cultural influence. One common model is to see the family as an island unto itself, a nuclear family, turned in on itself behind a protective wall, establishing its own ways and traditions. But each individual family is painfully lacking in the resources necessary to have a good family life.

There are all sorts of “centers” to today’s families. You can have the missionary family, the social action family, the business-oriented family. Families can be sports-based, focused on academic excellence, achievement oriented, career-based, child centric. When individuals or families become committed to these kinds of “centers,” other things will naturally be pushed aside, further and further toward the fringes, away from the center. It may be one or the other spouse. It may be that the church or Christian community takes on less importance. When those things get far enough away from the center, not much effort is required to cut them off.

There are plenty of effects from all of these cultural orientations for individuals, for marriages, and for families. One obvious one is the increasing divorce rate. Today’s approach to family life is creating a lot of ambivalence towards marriage among single men. It’s creating self-centered adults. Not knowing how to get their families on track, many married men fall into workaholism, finding some approval and a measure of success from their work that they are unable to derive from their families. We have many rudderless people drifting without direction.

The “Culture of Self”

Many of us are familiar with the comparison, “the culture of death and the culture of life.” I suggest that the culture of death and the culture of life are really subordinate to and subsets of the “culture of self.” We need to see that we’re living in a culture of self whose orientation embraces the culture of death. The kingdom of God, the culture of Christ, embraces life.

There are other subsets, or “isms”. Relativism, narcissism, and hedonism in certain ways, all describe this “culture of self” because they all put “me” at the center of the universe. We can work on fighting all the “isms” but if we don’t deal with the stuff inside of us that puts us first, the “culture of self,” all of our fighting is a waste of time. Our real war is in dealing with “me” at the center rather than Christ. “I”, “me”, and “mine” are not the approach of the Kingdom of God. Christ and his kingdom have got to be at the center. If I keep pulling myself into the center, it pushes him out!

Christ-centered Living

A personal conversion to Christ, spiritual growth and formation, being baptized in the Holy Spirit, and ongoing decisions are needed for Christ-centered living, not just for individuals but for groupings as well. Marriages need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Our marriages and families need to be converted to Christ. And once we make that decision, we need to find out how to do that. It requires education and knowledge in order to avoid the secular cultural drift. I am suggesting that not only individuals, but marriages, family and communities should have an “examination of conscience”; taking a hard look at our behavior, our practices, our priorities, our decision-making as a group, as a marriage, as a family, and as a community.

The congregation that started the WWJD (What would Jesus do?) movement has been a bit misrepresented. The actual approach was more like “We will do what Jesus would do”. WWDWJWD. That’s the approach we need to take. “I will do” and “we will” what Jesus would do. The Lord wants Christ-centered individuals, Christ-centered families, Christ-centered communities. And that’s going to require taking some steps.
What Can We Do?

1. Read Scripture a lot, even if you think you have it memorized. It challenges the world’s input constantly. Get the children to read and memorize it. Get them to be able to answer questions from a Scriptural perspective. In Scripture we should look for antidotes to the world, the flesh and the devil, but especially the flesh. The world and Satan have less influence over a person whose flesh is broken. Reading of Scripture is a genuine defense against the flesh.

2. Insist on “everything that is lovely and good” (Philippians 4:8). Think on these things.

3. Do a heart check. If your heart is polluted or poisoned, you will have trouble seeing and hearing things that the Lord wants you to see or hear. If your heart is not postured correctly, you won’t be able to respond. If your marriage or family needs to be consecrated or dedicated to the Lord, get a pastor or a pastoral leader to lead a prayer for the family. Communities could even have retreats dedicated to such re-centering.

4. Always suspect the “self” when you are making decisions or desiring something. It’s worth suspecting, asking ourselves, “Is this really from the Lord and his will for me or is it fueled by something down inside of me that is apart from what God wills?”

5. Pray for protection - from ourselves being blind or selfish, for our spouses from themselves, for our children, for our community, that as a people we would not be selfish in our orientation.

6. Rekindle fear of the Lord. If you distort or exclude any aspect of God’s nature, you get a distorted view of who God is. An over-emphasis on God’s mercy while under-emphasizing his justice will lead to an unbalanced perspective. Sin has consequences. We need to learn that and to teach it to our children.

Summary

“If you live what I have taught you, you are my disciple and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31). Let’s not forget the beginning of the sentence. Jesus is saying, “Live in my Word, live what I have taught you, then the truth will set you free.” It is a promise of freedom and it’s worth celebrating. If we live according to the Lord's plan, and raise our children according to his plan, we will see the fruit of the Christian life and the power of the Holy Spirit revealed!
Living Bulwark

- That Your Prayers Be Not Hindered: Consideration in Marriage, by Jerry Munk
- Make Your Spouse Beautiful: from a commentary on Ephesians 5:21-33, by John Chrysostom
- On Being Transgenerational, by Jerry Munk
- Preparing Children for a Spirit-filled Life, by Jerry Munk
- Boys Adrift: A Book Review, by Jerry Munk
- Child-Centered Parenting and Family Life, by Paul Dinolfo
- Fully Engaged Young Adults, by Bob Tedesco
- Christ-Centered Marriage and Family Life, by Bob Tedesco
- Raising Our Children for the Lord, by Bob Tedesco
- Gather My People: Restoring Extended Families and Communities, by Bob Tedesco

Bob Tedesco is past President of the North American Region of the Sword of the Spirit, a founder of the People of God community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, and has been one of its key leaders for the past 39 years.

(c) copyright 2013  The Sword of the Spirit
publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com
The Lord’s Prayer is one of the most important points of unity in Christianity. Virtually every Christian has it memorized and can recite it from a very young age. Aside from a few exceptions there is nearly universal agreement on the wording.

Across the spectrum of Christianity and over hundreds of years, there have been some teachers who have taught that the Lord’s Prayer is a collection of topics or areas to address in prayer, and not just a rote prayer to be quickly or mindlessly recited. One argument for their approach is to ask, “When the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray, do we really think that his response was to direct them to recite a twenty second prayer?”

**Hallowed be thy name**
One free-church model addresses the “Hallowed be thy name” topic as a time to recite and consider some of the names and roles of the Lord, as given in scripture. The group listed eight of them. The Lord is righteous, holy, present, our peace, our healing, our provision, a banner in our midst, and our shepherd.

**Righteous and holy**
Recently, while praying this model, I was struck by the distinction between righteous and holy. To be righteous, among other things, is to do the right things. We think of righteous individuals as people of character: honest, trustworthy, truthful, reliable, upright, loyal.
To be holy, on the other hand, is to be set apart for God. “Things” can be holy as well as individuals. Roles can be holy, as in the cases of a priest or a minister. A nation can be holy. There are many righteous people in various cultures and religious expressions. Not all righteous people are holy. Not all holy people are righteous (at least not all the time).

We are called to be righteous and holy. We are called as a people to: 1) do the right things, and 2) be set apart for God: for his purposes, his plans, his actions, his kingdom. The apostle Peter describes Christians as, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy” (1Peter 2:9-10 RSV).

A holy nation

So, we are “God’s own people.” We are not just God’s own singles, God’s own marriages, and not just only God’s own family. This has significant meaning for how we raise children within a family and how we relate to other people’s children.

Whether single or married, we are called to help other people raise their children, and that will be somewhat difficult since, at least in Western culture, we are no longer “wired” to be very concerned beyond family borders. But because we are called as a holy nation, a holy people, we should really foster that concern beyond family borders. We serve, participate in, and support events, groups, and outreaches that benefit the children of others.

Raising our own

Because we are called as a holy nation, a holy people, we are called to raise our children to be set apart for God. “From now on you must live the rest of your earthly lives controlled by God’s will and not by human desires” (1Peter 4:2 TEV). It is not a sufficient response to the Lord to raise our children to be righteous, to get a good education, have a good career, and live happily ever after. It is not even spiritually safe (for them)! Such things may have seemed safe in the 1950s, but the environment that we now live in is such a mine field that few are surviving it.

In the early part of the charismatic renewal, there was a fair amount of discussion in various church circles of what it meant to be saved, how to get saved, etc. Today it is a real concern to address the question, “How do the saved survive?” Our younger Christians are having great difficulty traversing the gauntlet that is young adult life, especially if there is a significant disconnect: a non-local college, or being in a romantic relationship with a non-Christian, or in a strong relationship with a group of non-Christian friends (real or virtual).

If our children are not set apart for God and trained to view their lives that way (that is, view them as holy), the righteousness that seemed so ingrained is unlikely to carry the day over the long haul.

Jesus’ pattern: “Thy will be done”

“Lord, teach us to pray,” was a request that sprang from the disciples observing Jesus’ pattern, admiring it, and wanting to embrace it. What was that pattern? In simplest terms, Jesus sought out the Father, praised him, listened to his instructions, and then did them. It was a daily pattern. It was a good pattern for Jesus.

What the world needs today are disciples who seek the Lord, hear and discern his direction, and then follow it.

That’s what Jesus did.
That’s how we hope to live.
And that’s the vision of life that we should be passing on to our children!

See related articles:

- **Fully Engaged Young Adults**, by Bob Tedesco
- **Christ-Centered Marriage and Family Life**, by Bob Tedesco
- **Raising Our Children for the Lord**, by Bob Tedesco
- **Gather My People: Restoring Extended Families and Communities**, by Bob Tedesco
- **A Transgenerational Call: Building Christian communities for generations to come**, by Bob Tedesco
- **On Being Transgenerational**, by Jerry Munk
- **Preparing Children for a Spirit-filled Life**, by Jerry Munk
- **Boys Adrift: A Book Review**, by Jerry Munk
- **Child-Centered Parenting and Family Life**, by Paul Dinolfo
- **That Your Prayers Be Not Hindered: Consideration in Marriage**, by Jerry Munk
- **Make Your Spouse Beautiful: from a commentary on Ephesians 5:21-33**, by John Chrysostom

Bob Tedesco is past President of the North American Region of the Sword of the Spirit, a founder of the People of God community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, and has been one of its key leaders for the past 38 years.
Youth On Fire in the Holy Spirit

Stepping Stones Retreat for Young Adults in Manila, Philippines

The Transforming Work of the Holy Spirit in My Life

by Bea Morales

[The following testimony was given by 16 year old Bea Morales at a meeting of the Ligaya ng Panginoon (Joy of the Lord) Community, the Sword of the Spirit community in Manila, Philippines. Bea is the oldest of three sisters, the children of Chito and Luz Morales, a coordinator and senior woman leader of Ligaya.]

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future. – Jeremiah 29:11

I believe that it was definitely God’s plan for me to be born into the Ligaya ng Panginoon (Joy of the Lord) community in Metro Manila, Philippines. Since my parents Chito and Luz Morales, were very active members of Ligaya, my life has revolved around community for as long as I can remember, such that I actually find it hard to imagine life without living in community. My experience of growing up in community is very similar to many other kids who have grown up in community. I always tagged along with my parents, going to Ligaya events, especially on Sundays even though I preferred to sleep in on Sunday morning or just stay at home. I didn’t “get” why community was so important to my parents. There were times when I would see them so tired that I’d question why they even went to community activities. I mean, stay at home if you’re tired, right? But nothing ever hindered them from faithful participation in Ligaya events.
I survived the experience of growing up in community with the help of other young community friends who were experiencing the same things I was going through. All of us went to Ligaya events because our parents brought us along with them. We had somehow gotten a glimpse of the way of life of Ligaya and how the older people went about living community life together. But aside from the summer youth camp which I liked, there was nothing else about community life that was very appealing to me at that time.

When I joined the community’s Young Adults (YA) program I started encountering God more and I experienced him doing something important in my life.

I learned that after attending camp each year, retreats were the next big thing which young people looked forward to in the Young Adults program. The Stepping Stones Retreat was the first community youth retreat I ever attended, and the first time I ever stood up in front of a group of people and publicly said yes to God. After that, retreats became my opportunities to once again say yes to God. That “YES” was a constant reminder for me that I was allowing God to use me as an instrument to spread his word and witness to the great love he has for all of us. God did indeed use me and I recently found myself in situations where I was really given the opportunity to serve others.
Last December the other YA participants and I went caroling to a variety of Christmas parties in several districts of the community. Our goal was to do some fundraising for an outreach project called *Crosstraining*. The goal of our project was to reach out to the children who were confined at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) in Manila. It wasn’t easy service at all. There were a lot of transportation problems we had to face because Manila is a very big city and many young adults lived far apart from one another. But I experienced the overwhelming support of many community members through their generosity, despite the fact that we may not have been the best singing group in the world. Through our caroling we raised around 48,000.00 pesos (Philippine currency) – the majority of which we spent on the medical needs in the children’s ward in PGH, and the rest was used for a mini children’s party in the ward, with a magician as the main event. In the end, it was all very fulfilling!

This year I also experienced giving my first talk in an evangelistic *Stepping Stones Retreat*, which was also a *Crosstraining* project of our YA program. It led me to remember my own *Stepping Stones Retreat* and I realized how far I’ve come since then - from a reluctant participant to the speaker in front. Last April I got to serve for the first time as a discussion group leader at the *Kairos Camp* in Mindanao. I also gave another talk to the other participants there. Preparing for the talk was difficult. There were so many nights where I just felt frustrated and afraid that I would disappoint so many people. During a night when I cried over it, Dad told me that service is never supposed to be about me. God is merely using me, and as I give my talk, it will be God speaking through me. As long as I do my best to prepare, God will work through the words I say and allow it to make a mark on the participants.

It never occurred to me in my wildest dreams that I would be standing before the community as a witness to how God has worked in me through the years and allowed me to do the things I am doing right now. Giving talks, being leaders, and serving has always been something I watched my parents do. I would just stand there wondering how they can do it and telling myself that it’s their thing, not mine.

God’s plan for me did not stop when he allowed me to be born into Ligaya Community. Right now, He is continuing to fulfill his plan in me, with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been transforming me to become the person I am today. And it is because of the Holy Spirit that I actually have the courage to stand here and testify to how God is truly amazing.

In hindsight, I realized that it was also the Holy Spirit working in me that allowed me to serve God and serve others. I was so passionate regarding the PGH outreach that it never occurred to me to give up despite the problems we were facing. I wanted the kids to experience God’s love through us, and I guess that’s what motivated us to keep going throughout the fundraising to the start of the outreach itself. The same thing goes for the talks. I’d never agree to give a talk if I didn’t love God and if I didn’t feel passionate about serving him. I agreed to give the talks because I knew that God was presenting me with an opportunity to serve Him, and after all those retreats, it was my chance to once again say YES to God and in a very concrete way this time. I guess it’s the Holy Spirit that keeps the fire burning, and keeps me passionate to serve God and have that desire to be used by Him for His greater glory.

I trust that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in and through me and I know that God’s plan for me is far bigger than I can ever imagine. He is determined to complete what he has started in me. And I will forever be thankful for the gift Christian community, and for the people God has sent to help me along the way, and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in my life.
Bea (second from right) with her parents and sisters Camille (left) and Coleen
A New Pentecost Among Our Youth

by Georges Farhat

This past August the European Region of the Sword of the Spirit organized a PTI Youth program in Germany. The program was lead by Georges Farhat along with 6 other staff workers. Some 50 youth from Sword of the Spirit communities in Europe took part in the weeklong program. There were a variety of activities for the young people, including worship, discussion groups, fun games, arts and crafts, drama and the deadly cinnamon challenge. The older youth (16-17 years old, "Minions") played a very significant role in the program. They were very positive and engaging, wholeheartedly serving their younger brothers and sisters.
Our Citizens of Heaven prayer room

During one morning session all the youth were busy preparing the prayer stations in what we called our Citizens of Heaven prayer room. We set up prayer stations in the room for a variety of special prayer intentions, such as prayer for repentance, worship, and intercession. The youth could choose which stations they wanted to join in for prayer. When evening came we decided to return to our "Citizens of Heaven" room, to continue our time of prayer for the evening. We sang some worship songs and then I shared for few minutes about our identity in Christ, and that he is alive and his Kingdom is amongst us. His Spirit wants to equip us and awaken in us a new desire to love God and to make him loved. As I was speaking I saw stars in their eyes, the Spirit was already leading us to go deeper in the river of God’s mercy and grace. Then we took time to go around the prayer stations. This time was one of repentance and coming back to the Lord, I saw many of our youth in tears presenting their lives, hopes and dreams before God.

One of the guys wrote his sin on a piece of paper and as soon as he put it in the “sin bin,” it tore by itself! In amazement and fear he wrote another sin of his and it did the same. He felt God’s powerful presence surrounding him and he heard Him say: “Don’t be afraid! I have conquered and destroyed the bondage of sin in your life…” This young man went on, encouraging all the lads to do the same, as God wanted to deal with their sins.
The Spirit took us by surprise
We kept on, having an amazing prayer time. God spoke with our young people and they made serious decisions for His kingdom. When I looked up at the clock it was 10.20 pm, and so we thought it would be a good idea to close our time by asking all those who had felt God’s presence or made a decision to come to the middle of the room so that we could pray with them. To our surprise, everyone joined in and then Joe Turner, from the Antioch community in London, played a song and by the end of this song the place where we were meeting was shaken and we were filled with the Holy Spirit! We started shouting out words of praise and exaltation to God. Some were kneeling, some crying, some lifting their hands up high, some praising in tongues, some shouting out loud words of exaltation to God, some prophesying. One our German youth told us that she didn’t know any of the English songs, but somehow she was singing along and that was amazing for her.
The place where we were meeting trembled and shook

Rather than ending our prayer time at 10.30 pm, we sensed that the Holy Spirit was leading us to continue in prayer which lased until 1:30 am. Nobody wanted to leave the room during the whole time of prayer! Around midnight I decided to find some bottled water for the youth. As I walked down the hallway I met Bruce Yocum (one of the main speakers at the Pastoral Training Institute). I told Bruce that a new Pentecost was happening with the youth in the prayer room, so he decided to join us in our prayer session.

The youth felt that Christ was very much alive and at work amongst them. They were prophesying and they saw images and visions. I recalled from the Book of Acts what the Holy Spirit did on the Feast of Pentecost amongst the early church:

“While they were praying, the place where they were meeting trembled and shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak God’s Word with fearless confidence. The whole congregation of believers was united as one—one heart, one mind! They didn’t even claim ownership of their own possessions. No one said, “That’s mine; you can’t have it.” They shared everything. The apostles gave powerful witness to the resurrection of the Master Jesus, and grace was on all of them.” Acts 4:31-33

Our response

Here are three responses we are making to what God has done with our youth.

1. First, we are filled with gratitude and we continue to give thanks to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who conquered death and sin on the Cross and gave us the fullness of life in his resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. We are doing some follow up in the communities and households with the youth who attended the PTI. We want to encourage the youth to tell their community about their own experience of the Holy Spirit's work in their lives and the decisions they have made for Christ.

3. We are very encouraged! God is powerfully at work amongst our youth. We expect the Holy Spirit to continue his work of transforming the hearts and minds of our teenagers. God wants to use them in boldly speaking to their friends and others about Christ, even in the face of a secular atheistic culture that pervades many schools and places here in Europe. The Holy Spirit is equipping our young people to be light and salt of
the earth, to witness his love and presence. We want to continue to encourage and support them in witnessing boldly to others.
Who said it would be easy raising children in the modern world? Paul Dinolfo offers some important insights, based on scriptural principles and pastoral wisdom for parents today. Paul is the senior coordinator of the Work of Christ community in Lansing, Michigan, USA. The following article is excerpted from Paul's booklet entitled, Child-Centered Parenting and Family Life. While the booklet is primarily addressed to parents in the Sword of the Spirit communities, his insights are beneficial for all Christian parents who want to raise their children to be strong faith-filled Christians. Paul writes in the introduction: "The purpose of this booklet is to cast light on some of the problems that can develop when our priorities lack the proper balance, giving particular attention to a special challenge of our modern age: child-centered parenting. We will discuss ways to address these problems, both as parents and as communities."

Conflicting attitudes towards children

There appears to be two growing, contradictory attitudes towards children in contemporary western society. On the one hand, an alarming number of parents are abandoning, neglecting, or abusing their children. On the other hand, there are also a growing number of parents who are becoming overly absorbed in the lives of their children. While these parents are certainly well intentioned, it is wise to ask: Is this approach really good for the children?

These well-meaning parents believe that they should involve their children in an ever-expanding list of organized activities and programs. In addition, these parents believe that it is very important that they are also involved, albeit as spectators, in all their children’s activities. As a result, family life increasingly revolves around and is shaped by the activities of the children. Traditional family patterns such as having dinner together, family devotions, family night, and family chores take a back seat. After all, there is only so much time. Family patterns become a low priority and, ultimately, dispensable. The family’s involvement in other stable relational groupings (e.g. extended family, neighborhood community, church community) also tends to suffer, as this flurry of activity leaves little room for much beyond work and the children’s activities.
This modern development is in contrast to all of human history prior to the last few decades in which:

- children organized all or most of their own non-school activities
- children were trained by their parents and teachers to integrate into adult environments
- family patterns were a priority
- the family was normally integrated as a family into larger stable relational groupings (e.g. extended family, tribe, church community, village or neighborhood community)

Today, many young people do not know how to relate well to adults and how to act in adult environments. Family structure, especially extended family structure, continues to weaken and decline; and natural community is almost non-existent. This is not good for adults or children, or for the family as a whole.

**A significant shift in pastoral priorities**

Finally, there has been a significant shift in parental priorities. Traditionally, Christian parents have focused primarily on the character formation of their children. They believed that good character was the key to success in life. While most parents today give lip service to the importance of character, the truth is that their actions indicate a different set of priorities. Their actions would indicate that they actually believe academics, sports, talent, popularity and proximate happiness (not character) are the keys to success in life.

The Bible paints a radically different picture: that true happiness flows from good character and serving others. “Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.” (Luke 17:33)

**Strategies for Parents**

1. Be aware of the problem. Simply knowing the problems associated with child-centered parenting should help us to avoid it in practice.
2. Be open and accountable. We in the Sword of the Spirit have a wonderful resource in our men’s and women’s groups. In these small groups we can discuss our parenting approach and get the perspective of Christian brothers and sisters who know us and our children well.
3. Attend and review community teaching on parenting and family life.
4. Keep focused on our mission as a people: a mission that includes our children.
5. Look for ways children can serve in the home and beyond. It is good for children to have regular chores. It helps them grow in responsibility and faithfulness; it gives them a sense of place and accomplishment. It is also good for them to serve outside the family home, for example visiting elderly relatives and doing chores for neighbors with special needs. Develop your children’s talents and abilities with an eye for future service in the community.
6. Look for mature parents in your community, parents who have raised children who are righteous, responsible, faithful, and motivated. Ask them what they did and discuss your approach with them.
7. Live in community neighborhood clusters. Choose schools or home-school networks that include other community families.
8. Evaluate family decisions, especially those that consume significant time, money, and resources, with all family priorities in mind.

See related articles:
- **Fully Engaged Young Adults**, by Bob Tedesco
- **Christ-Centered Marriage and Family Life**, by Bob Tedesco
- **Raising Our Children for the Lord**, by Bob Tedesco
- **Gather My People: Restoring Extended Families and Communities**, by Bob Tedesco
- **A Transgenerational Call: Building Christian communities for generations to come**, by Bob Tedesco
- **On Being Transgenerational**, by Jerry Munk
- **Preparing Children for a Spirit-filled Life**, by Jerry Munk
- **Boys Adrift: A Book Review**, by Jerry Munk
- **Child-Centered Parenting and Family Life**, by Paul Dinolfo
- **That Your Prayers Be Not Hindered: Consideration in Marriage**, by Jerry Munk
- **Make Your Spouse Beautiful: from a commentary on Ephesians 5:21-33**, by John Chrysostom

[The booklet, **Child-Centered Parenting and Family Life** can be ordered from **Tabor House Publications**.]

(c) copyright 2013 **The Sword of the Spirit**

publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

Approach
This article hopes to make a contribution to the raising up of the next generation of community members in the Sword of the Spirit. It should be helpful for parents, but it can also be useful for singles, grandparents, and “empty-nesters.” If you are a member of the Sword of the Spirit, I will assume that you are fully aware of and convinced that we are called to a trans-generational community life. Scripture often presents the Lord’s blessings as going out “to your descendents...even to a thousand generations!” Our hope is not that our overall approach will lead to having our children join us to fill the seats at a community gathering. We are hoping for fully engaged, productive, responsible and active adult members. Our Father wants us to take heaven by storm, not just slip a toe inside the door. His kingdom on earth should reflect that energetic, fully committed approach to life in the body of Christ.

Steps Ahead
I believe it was St. Benedict who pointed out that the shepherd needs to be several steps ahead of his flock if he expects them to follow. In the area of leading our children into God’s kingdom, we ourselves – parents,
grandparents, single people – must be fully engaged in living the call to Christian community life.

We need to be steps ahead in each area of our description: a community of disciples on mission. Our description is a dynamic, complimentary set. It is a coherent vision when every area is working well. Our Christian lives and families work best when all three elements are present in good measure. All three will need attention for the complete training and formation of our children. Missing parts yield a handicapped vision and sometimes those “holes” can be seriously damaging or even fatal.

My main goal here is to present some general advice for your consideration. Much of the advice is centered on having a plan. If the application of this advice results in a plan you can implement, then it could possibly change lives.

**Some qualifiers**

I want to make a few qualifications before I launch into giving some advice here. I realize that being a “planner person” isn’t natural to everyone. Some of us are not high energy people. Some of our children may not want to cooperate with our plans for them. And not all of our extended families will understand our plan or may not want to support us in it. And I know that some of us have difficulty following through on implementing a plan. Nonetheless, I urge those of us who can press ahead to do so with perseverance. Scripture calls us to run the race to the finish.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1).

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

I believe that this is one race we need to run with perseverance – to the finish.

**Heart Check**

**Inner Dispositions**

Children are notorious for being able to spot a “phony.” Since we are the ones that bring disciplines, training and order into their lives, they will be most tempted to test our credibility, our resolve and whether or not we are genuine in our leadership. Each major area of our call will be elements of training but also they will be elements of challenge.

**Community**

How are we living out our call to love and unity in community? Are we at peace with one another? Are we content and peaceful with this chosen way of life? Do our inner attitudes and postures reflect assent and approval? Do we grumble and complain in front of the children?

**Discipleship**

Do we respect our elders? Do we benefit from discipleship? Do we openly talk about it positively to our children? Can a teenage boy make sense out of his father getting helpful advice from a pastoral leader or from other brothers when he is trying to make an important decision? Have we helped that same boy to see that doing so is a strength and not a weakness?
Men and women really do benefit from living as disciples who seek wisdom, counsel, and advice.

On Mission
Do we engage the mission the Lord has given us as a community? Do we support the mission? Do we understand it? Do we openly honor those among us who are actively engaged and committed to our mission? Our children need to see and appreciate that kind of heroic service. Are we developing in them a true “eye” for heroism that is different from what often gets portrayed in the media with sports leaders or movie stars?

Plans, Teaching, Strategy: Tools of a Life Well-Lived

Committed
The carpenter is committed to working with wood (For this metaphor “wood” will mean the Sword of the Spirit and its way of life). He is not always looking for other materials to replace the wood or using cardboard where wood is needed. He is committed, pleased and satisfied to work with wood.

Trained
The carpenter is trained in working with wood. (We say we are trained from above and serve those below us). We are trained in this way of life. There are many other good things, but this “wood” is our chosen material. Wood is not perfect. Our way of life is not perfect and we do not present it as such. That would be misguided fantasy and easily debunked. Wood, by the way, has a grain to it: It is strong when loaded in one direction and weak when loaded in another. That’s what enables most of those karate experts to break a piece of wood in two...rotate it 90o on those same supports and your hand is in the emergency room! Wood is not perfect and neither are we.

Experienced
The carpenter is experienced in working with wood. As we gain experience, we more easily recognize our mistakes. We also try to learn from others, especially those who can admit their mistakes and show us how they learned to grow.

Blueprints
The carpenter has blueprints. He knows what he is building and how to build it. He knows the sequence that yields success. He is not building the attic before the foundation is in place.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it (1Corinthians 3:10).

Some general advice

Have a plan
Strategic parenting springs out of strategic living. For those who are husbands and fathers, our approach to pastoring is often preceded by our personal approach to life. Having a plan can have some beneficial results:

1. It means we know what we’re building
2. That knowing influences and tests life’s decisions
3. It can motivate
4. It can clarify
5. Knowing what we’re building helps us answer questions and challenges
6. It helps us to stay focused and to avoid competing visions
7. It can help to evaluate progress
8. It can give a real direction to family life
9. It gives a focus to our husband/wife meetings
10. Knowing what we’re building reminds us that we are raising children for God.

I’ve often thought how we might approach life if Jesus walked up to us and said, “I’ve just planted this tree. I want you to protect it from pests and parasites. I want you to care for it and help it to grow. I’ll be back.” We would say, “Well, all of the other trees are infested with carpenter ants! How could mine (His) not be?”

He has given us more than trees!

**Plan to Spend Money**

In my work as an engineer, I always knew when the boss and the company were serious about a project: it got a budget, a healthy budget.

In the North American region of the Sword of the Spirit I knew we were serious about developing our community youth work when we got a budget. Later, I had the same realization when the community building team got a budget. When I am serious about a vacation, I set aside time and money and then I plan it. I doubt that the Lord will ever wonder about whether or not I took my vacations seriously...he knows how much I spent; he knows how many pictures I took. I really don’t expect him to say, “Bob, you should have had more fun, spent more time and money.”

On the other hand, I believe that the Lord is quite serious about how we care for our community children, our family’s children, and even our grandchildren. Even if we can’t afford much of a vacation, we should expect that the Christian formation of our children and grandchildren will cost us something and we should plan for and save for, including our Summer Camps, YES retreats, UCO conferences, etc. Worthwhile results are worthy of a plan. Plans have components: oversight, accountability, schedules, etc. Budgets are one of those components.

**Apologetics**

I would recommend that we accumulate an extensive apologetic for each of the areas that we want our children to eventually understand: community, discipleship, mission, covenant, tithing, etc. Our collection of materials for an area could include scriptural, denominational, natural, and testimonial components, and we will need to adjust our tools to suit the age group of the children.

I am a person who prefers to keep all my notes in a three-ring notebook binder. I know others prefer to use manila folders. Some even use a set of 8 ½ x11 boxes built into shelves. As we collect articles, talk outlines, and testimonials, we ourselves are more prepared and instructed in key areas of our call.

**Snippets**

Generally speaking, digestible snippets are more useful for instructing children, especially younger children. Complicated constructs are not as helpful. It’s helpful to have one scripture that makes a point or one testimony that highlights an area (e.g. discipleship, covenant, tithing).

You can also use one page summary sheets that present a community element in a simple way.

**Use our courses for material**

Our community courses are intended to cover the key elements for understanding our way of life, and the previous example on covenant is but one of many areas that can be covered by a summary sheet. The entire emotions course could be summarized on one page that would help bring some understanding of our approach to our children. Pastoral care, tithing, mission, discipleship and charismatic spirituality are some others.
Draw heavily on personal examples
Try to use testimonies, experiences and stories that explain and support our way of life elements. At Lord’s Day discussions, we should draw out testimonies that exemplify pastoral care, mission, etc. As part of our plan to present our way of life to our children, we should invite brothers and sisters to Lord’s Day who have a story to tell.

In our community, we had a family that wanted to move into a cluster but was having trouble finding a buyer for their house. Four different people lent them $10,000 each that was repaid later when their house sold. When children hear that story, it helps them to see more clearly that we are unusually committed to building something together.

If your children go on a mission trip or have an experience with the Lord, encourage them to share it. Their testimony teaches others and more deeply establishes what the Lord has done for them.

Strategically use Lord’s Day for mission
On some regular basis, perhaps one time per month, we can invite non-community family and friends and draw out witnesses of the Lord’s work. This approach can include other members’ children who are older or further along in their walk with the Lord. This adds a mission component to our celebration that can be helpful in growing our children’s faith and understanding.

Build strong home/family life
Meals, holidays, vacations, traditions, and celebrations can all support building our family life when done in a good Christ-centered way. We should build our family life as inclusive, not nuclear-isolated or walled-in. It should be evangelistic, Christ-centered, Kingdom-centered, and it should have spiritual components (prayer, fasting) and not just natural components: recreation, eating, etc. It should not be self-centered or nuclear family dominated or isolated. Biblical family life seems much more shared.

When I was a boy, it was much more common to have some families sharing life and homes with other “aunts” or “uncles.” Today’s vision is much more isolated and seems to also have a “shelf-life.” College is far more than education: it’s also for getting children out of the house by the age of eighteen. This is not working so well for a lot of young adults, especially young women.

In building family life, we should use the husband/wife meeting to continually update the plan, to set short-term objectives and to evaluate progress.

One last piece of advice in building family life: We should be prepared to “firmly insist” and hold the line on time together. Meals, vacations, camping, church, conferences and community life will all be challenged by the school activities, the prevailing sports culture and other “urgent” priorities. We are building and preparing for eternity; these other pursuits and activities are often transient and eventually of low importance. We must help our children to see and sort the important from the transient and the entertaining approach of modern life.

Basic life orientations
We understand our spiritual growth and life orientation to be a deepening caring for others. We slowly grow from being self-centered as a child to being other-centered as responsible adult citizens of our country and of the eternal kingdom of God. The “What would Jesus do?” question puts a pause in place that allows us to consider others before acting. We should regularly remind our children of the maturing process that they are in. When we say, “Take your feet off Mrs. Smith’s furniture!” we are teaching that child to put Mrs. Smith ahead of themselves. “Don’t make so much noise (it’s rude)”; “Look him in the eye when you talk.” “Answer Mr. Smith’s question, Johnny.” “Don’t text while speaking to someone.” “Share your toys. It’s what God wants.” These are all instructions that say, “You are...
being prepared and trained for life as an adult child of God.” They need to know this part of the plan, its purpose and some of the steps.

**Underlying personality traits: monitor, adjust, nurture**

Having raised ten children, I have learned the obvious first hand: every child is different. Every personality has traits that are helpful and supportive of healthy adult life; some are less helpful; and it’s not always easy to tell the difference. For example, stubbornness in a child may express itself as faithfulness. We need a certain parental discernment of spirits to know which to adjust and which to nurture. A child who has temper tantrums will need to be taught emotional control and at a later age, the importance of having a high “emotional IQ” and how it can affect the ability to get and keep a job.

A critical spirit if allowed to grow can result in rebellion and mockery in its long-term expression. We foster and nurture a positive, encouraging, contented and joyful spirit. This is a difficult task since some discontent with the status quo is a motivator for growth, renewal and reform. Too much discontent becomes self-destructive and lays a foundation for fear-based living.

Additionally, we foster humility which lays a groundwork for discipleship, instruction and correction. We continually reinforce the truth that our child’s gifts and talents are for the body, for the kingdom and not just for the self. This truth provides light and wisdom for life’s key decisions: state of life, career, courtship, etc.

Finally, we should expect supernatural help and that spiritual gifts such as family discernment of spirits have a parental and family expression and are not just for wider life or prayer meeting settings.

**Main decisions that tend to be deal breakers**

The whole area of decision-making and its life-shaping results is a big area to cover but it can be isolated to those decisions that connect or disconnect our child from the body of Christ. Something seemingly benign such as figure skating or basketball can be very disconnecting if the whole family sort of dives into it and it becomes centered in the activity. When high school is over and the activity has apparently run its course, it will have been very entertaining but possibly very disconnecting for the child’s kingdom relationships. So, activities, (entertainment) are worth having a concern for the approach.

On the higher side, some main decisions that can suddenly redirect and de-rail a life are: 1) independent access to cars; 2) worldly approach to dating/courtship/choice of spouse; 3) college choices; 4) career choices; and 5) unfettered access to money (or too much spending). Decisions should be approached and respected for their potential power and tendency to connect or disconnect our child from God’s people, God’s plan.

**Actively honor committed people**

Those who faithfully serve and show up for our events and outreaches should be honored and respected in our conversations and mealtime discussions. Even the simplest service is a part of our overall mission and is a high value to the Lord. These people aren’t quarterbacks or rock stars, but they are our heroes, our models and good examples for our children, good examples of our covenant values of faithfulness, service and love. We should openly honor and respect the Servants of the Word and any other singles who use their single life to serve the kingdom of God. Their life is heroic and it is far more heroic than someone who spends his life developing his golf swing.

**Identify “engagers” and “disengagers”**

Parents should take a real concern (husband/wife meeting) for people, events, activities, practices, groups, attitudes, etc. in light of their tendency to engage or disconnect our children from the body of Christ and decisions need to be made to limit or encourage those things. For example, YES retreats engage and make connections and therefore
should be supported and encouraged. Video games tend to be pure entertainment and disengaging at just about every human level and therefore should be closely watched and limited. Other people, events and activities can seem very good but might be seen to just have a disconnecting effect when they have run their course.

Parents’ fears can have a disengaging effect on their children. We can hover over them and protect them from every person or event that could have a detrimental effect on them. No event, group or activity is perfect and without risks (e.g. mission trips), but over protection will leave them effectively disconnected when they leave the nest.

**Support connections at every level**

... holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

- Colossians 2:19

At the local level, support Summer Camp, campouts, retreats, conferences, youth groups, UCO, cluster relationships (if applicable).

At the regional level, support YES retreats, the Winter Conference, Kairos activities and outreaches, mission trips, GAP years, and the online “portal” website that is in development.

At the international level, we also have GAP years, mission trips and a network of youthful relationships that develop as paths cross at different events.

**Building community vision**

We should not present our community vision as a perfect, unrealistic fantasy. That will disappoint our children and doesn’t prepare them for the reality of life in community. We should help them to understand the main elements and history of our community and of the Sword of the Spirit.

We should help them to see that receiving help and support is not a sign of weakness for a community or for an individual. Help them to see that it is a sign of wisdom and strength.

Finally, we should help them to see that a main element of our community life is evangelism; to bring the gospel of Christ to those who can receive it.

**Pick your battles**

A popular and often recommended plan for parenting is “pick your battles”. While there is a certain wisdom in that phrase, it can be used against us when we miss that small deviations can produce an approach that can get a life far off the mark. No parent wants to be constantly correcting or challenging their child, especially a 15 or 16 year-old. Some areas may seem small to us but may become a major concern. One example is modesty of dress. Apparently small deviations can lead to outrageous outfits as the hormones kick in e.g. a bikini on a four-year-old might seem cute but becomes a source of temptation on a 16 yr. old.

Consider a military conflict: a sniper can seem like a small issue compared to major troop movements. Yet snipers can kill people! They can keep a large number of troops from advancing to an advantageous position. They can block progress. In the life of a young person growth can be stalled by apparently small lapses in moral behavior (e.g. modesty of dress, modesty of speech, choice of friends).
So where does “pick your battles” apply for a parent? The problem and the answer lies in considering the “developmental commitments” that we have enshrined in the lives of our children. If we have been getting after them about improving their social studies grade as a part of the plan to qualify for an academic scholarship, we may not want to start a discussion about a low blouse or short hem-line or an off-color remark. However, if we prioritize our developmental commitments to where faith, morals and the kingdom life are top priorities, we might let the social studies grade slide. The community retreat might become more important than the little league game. Being fully engaged in community life might be more important than the “entertainment” activities (football, soccer, gymnastics, etc.) There are many school-age activities that can contribute to our development (football, spelling bee, archery contests, etc.), yet we will essentially drop them as we pursue adult life.

As we teach our children to invest in that which will have the longest term value and impact on their lives, we prepare them to be fully engaged as adults in the Kingdom of God. “Pick your battles”, then can’t be used against us, but it can challenge us to place the Lord’s values first and then to fight for them.

**Closing Remarks**

**One thing...**
We always need to be reminded that we are building followers of Christ. Our goal as parents should not be passive believers, or “one-toe-in” Christians, or “altar-call-addicts” (if answering one altar call is good, answering ten must be better!) Our hope is for disciples, followers of Christ.

The rich young man was apparently doing very well (his parents developmental commitments had succeeded beyond their expectations: he was the Doctor McDreamy of his generation). In speaking with Jesus he heard that dreadful assessment, “You lack one thing...” One thing! That’s not bad. Look at everything that he had going for him! Today’s helicopter parents would want to swoop in and challenge the Teacher’s assessment. One thing: “Come follow me.” Money, career, plans, friends...what is the “one thing” that blocks each of our children from following the Lord?

**Different paths**
Our children are likely to take different paths and placements in the kingdom of God, and for every generation, the Lord’s plan is unique. Our role involves helping them to be open to the Lord and to see that they have every chance to succeed: relationships, events, opportunities and tools that serve them. Our work in our own community prepares a place for them.

**Help**
Get all the help you can: people, programs, events, activities...whatever it takes.

**Fully engaged**
We should do everything we can to see that our children are fully engaged in the life, the programs, the relationships and the mission at the local and regional level. Children who learn to be kingdom focused at a young age will have an easier time at being fully engaged as an adult. Self-focused youth will need some sort of conversion to be fully engaged adults.

**Convictions**
Every event and relationship strengthens the many connections that support our lives together. Every gathering, summer camp, Lord’s Day, campout, youth group meeting, YES retreat, Winter Conference, Summer Conference, mission trip, GAP year and UCO retreat helps. The new Kairos youth portal also supports the connections that
support us.

**Our part**

This presentation has been based on our part. More is needed: the grace of God, the call of God, the individual’s response and choices and the strength of the local body are all key elements in the overall plan.

Therefore, we need to pray constantly for: our children, for the children in our community, for their parents, and for all who help in the work to bring full life, full faith and full engagement of our children in the body of Christ!

Bob Tedesco is past President of the North American Region of the Sword of the Spirit, and a founder of the [People of God](http://www.swordofthespirit.net/bulwark/october2013p14.htm) community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.
Jesus’ Teaching on Singleness

by Dr. Barry Danylak

Jesus’ teaching on the subject of singleness is not extensive, but what he did say appears to be quite radical in the context of his predominantly Jewish audience. A case in point is his dialogue with the Sadducees on marriage in the resurrection (Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40). The Sadducees raise the question of the levirate marriage teaching of Deuteronomy 25 as a challenge to the possibility of a resurrection. The teaching to which they refer was given in the Old Testament context in which marriage and procreation were necessary and foundational to the reception of the covenantal blessings. Jesus is thus confronted with a direct clash between the methods and means of the old covenant and those of the new kingdom which he is announcing.

A new order of relationships

Of the three accounts, Luke provides the richest detail concerning marriage and singleness in Jesus’ response. He responds: “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to..."
that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God (Luke 20:34-36).” The statement is a critical clarification. Marriage is an institution for this age and not for the age of the resurrection. Verse 36 explains why marriage is no longer necessary in the age of resurrection, “for they cannot die anymore.” The implication is that one of the primary functions of marriage, to provide for the continued existence of the species, is no longer necessary in the age to come. Jesus’ statement appears disconcertingly shocking at this point. For beyond the procreative function of marriage, surely he was aware of the joy and fulfilment that marriage brings through intimacy and companionship, and the practical transforming value of learning to love another who is different! Yet it is apparent that in Jesus’ eschatological understanding of the new creation, intimacy and companionship are restored in such a fashion that the unique provision of these things through the marital relationship is no longer required. Even more wonderful relationships are a feature of eternity.

Because the kingdom which Jesus is announcing is not built through physical procreation, nor is mortality present within it, marriage will no longer be necessary in the consummated kingdom of God. Nor will it be needed for sake of intimacy and companionship in the advent of the perfected order of the new creation. Thus the place and necessity of marriage radically change in the movement from the people of God in the Old Testament to the coming of the kingdom of God which Jesus announces.

**Divorce and divine ideal**

Jesus’ other surprising teaching on marriage and singleness arises in the context of questions on divorce which Jesus’ disciples raise in Matthew 19:1-12. Here the Pharisees raise a question concerning the extent to which Moses allowed divorce. Rather than engage in their legal speculations, Jesus surprises them with a reiteration of the divine ideal, legitimizing divorce only on grounds of adultery. The disciples, surprised by Jesus’ radically idyllic answer, respond in turn with an equally radical proposal that “if such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry (Matt 19:10).” Given the critical function of marriage in the Jewish context, the disciples react to Jesus with a response which they presume is equally as extreme as his. But Jesus surprises them again. For rather than refuting their wildly absurd idea, he instead commends it and reiterates it: "Not

**Experience of absence**

Though singleness as a life option is affirmed in the New Testament, those who are single may experience two different but related absences.

The first is the absence of intimacy and companionship resulting from living without a marriage partner. This is experienced by all those who are single—whether never married, divorced or widowed. A second is the absence of physical offspring. This is experienced by those never married and only some divorcees and widows, but it is also a shared experience of many who are married and have either been unable to have children or have lost their children through death.

There are a number of reasons for this societal trend, including a growing acceptance of out-of-wedlock partnerships, the increasing divorce rate, and the increasing age of first marriage.

As the church is not immune to the effects of changes in society, it too can expect to see an ever increasing proportion of its congregations consisting of unmarried adults. In addition, the increasing acceptance of homosexual marriage within society now also challenges the church to greater theological reflection on the place of marriage and singleness within its community.
Living Bulwark

everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it (Matthew 19:11-12)."

Jesus’ use of the term “eunuch” (eunouchos) on one level seems surprising given the disdain for eunuchs within Jewish culture and their exclusion from the temple on account of their physical deformity. But on another level it provides in fact a vivid model for the point he makes. For in the ancient world, a court eunuch was one who set aside sexual activity (either from a congenital defect or as a result of physical castration) for the sake of devoted and loyal service to the king. Since the eunuch could not have children or a dynasty of his own, he could be more trusted in his loyalty to the monarch whom he served. Likewise, without wife or family, the eunuch also had additional time for service to his king and could serve him in a completely dedicated fashion. Perhaps Jesus had the Old Testament example of Daniel in mind. While there is not conclusive Scriptural evidence that Daniel was a eunuch, there is strong circumstantial evidence that he was (2 Kings 20:18; Daniel 1:3). In any case, Daniel provides a model example of loyal and dedicated eunuch service.

**Continued on > Next Page**

[This article is excerpted from *A Biblical Theology of Singleness*, copyright © Barry Danylak 2007, published by Grove Books Limited, Cambridge, UK. Used with permission.]

---

Dr. Barry Danylak served as a teacher and lay leader in single adult ministries for thirteen years while working as a member of the technical staff of AT&T Bell Laboratories. He recently completed his doctorate at Cambridge University, England on 1 Corinthians 7 and singleness in the first century world. He lives in Alberta, Canada.

---

**Biblical-theological reflection**

The perspective of this book is to offer biblical-theological reflection on the purpose of the calling and gift of singleness. While a number of other treatments begin theological reflection with the experience of singleness, either personally or as it is portrayed in the Bible, the intent here is to depict the significance of singleness in relationship to the developing storyline of the biblical covenants.

To appreciate this fully requires us to consider just how important marriage and physical progeny were for the Israelite community under the Sinai covenant. But it also requires us to recognize how physical progeny in the old covenant served as a model to anticipate Christ and the spiritual birthing process of the new covenant. Thus the present approach begins with an extended treatment of marriage, procreation and singleness as it functioned in the Old Testament covenants as a backdrop for the emergence of the topic in the New Testament.

Though it may be a life devoid of the joys of both spouse and physical offspring, the New Testament nevertheless affirms singleness as a calling for the church. The place and contribution of singleness arises naturally out of the biblical storyline as God’s redemptive hope unfolds to all humanity through Christ.

In Christ a new community is being built, a community of male and female, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, married and single. Singleness reflects important aspects of this community in a distinctive way.

In affirming singleness as a calling and a gift, the New Testament also offers a message of hope and inclusion for those who are single. The message in no way denigrates marriage, but rather, affirms that life together in the body...
of Christ needs and benefits from both single and married people. It is the storyline of the biblical text that explains why this is the case.
I’ve recently been thinking about what it means to be a sister, to relate to other Christian women as my sisters in Christ, and to express to them my love, esteem, and care for them as women of God. Why talk about sisterhood? I believe it’s a gift which God wants his women to cherish and foster. My experience is that many young women today have not yet discovered what a great gift sisterhood is – how truly good it can be. A variety of circumstances make it difficult for Christian women to find priority time for developing strong supportive relationships among their sisters in the Lord. Many young women have lots of virtual friends through cyber-space, email, and cell phones. But these can’t replace the personal dimension of being together to pray, love, support, encourage, and call one another on as women of God and sisters in Christ.

I believe that for women, sisterhood is crucial for living a vital and fruitful Christian life. One of the main ways women learn how to be godly women is from other godly women! I have learned so much about what it means from living in a single women’s household during my four years of involvement in University Christian Outreach, the Summer Internship Program, and Detroit Summer Outreach. My current living situation with two other Christian women is another example of the benefits of sisterhood. We pray and share our faith openly. My ability to live out my own call to love others and to grow in holiness, is greatly enhanced because of their example and support.

Often in the area of sisterhood what we put into it is frequently what we get out of it. If I come distracted and preoccupied with my own needs, concerns, and preferences, it will be very difficult to focus my attention on the needs and concerns of my sisters. It’s understandable that we may be tired from working all-day and have limited energy left for engaging in an in-depth relationship with others. But even with these limitations, I can choose to have...
an attitude that is other focused and willing to give what I have for the sake of my sisters. In reality, we receive sisterhood only by first being a sister to those around us.

Recipe for sisterhood
What inner characteristics or dispositions do we ourselves need in order to be good sisters to others? Here are a few. The first are faith and trust. These allow us to rely on God’s promises and provision for us and therefore we are unafraid. When we lack faith and trust we become self-seeking, stingy, selfish, and grasping. We fail to love. Second we need love: The type of love that gives me the ability to serve outside of myself, place God and others first and myself third. We want to have the disposition of doing all the good to others that we can. This attitude of self-less service, kindness, and doing good deeds is unusual in today’s world and has the power to transform those around us. Third we need quietness and strength, the inner attitude of calmness and peacefulness in our hearts. This disposition is born from faith and trust in God. It helps us to be open to learning, growing, and be persuaded towards holiness, service, and love. Our wish to learn and grow is driven by our desire to be acceptable to God rather than the world around us. Looking to God for acceptance frees us from competition and comparisons, thereby allowing us to more fully give of ourselves and love others.

Some examples of sisterhood
Sisterhood may come with a cost or inconvenience to one's self but the reward, the joy, that comes from giving of self far outweighs the cost. Luke chapter one, for example, recounts the story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth. Immediately after the angel Gabriel left her, Mary "got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-40)." Mary stayed with Elizabeth for "about three months (Luke 1:56)." Making a journey, living in another town, and caring for her pregnant relative while being newly pregnant herself cannot have been easy. However, the joy Elizabeth and Mary find in supporting one another and being together is clear and reciprocal. Elizabeth is built up and inspired by Mary's faith in God's ability to do what he has promised. Mary likewise is built up and inspired by witnessing God's activity in Elizabeth's life. We all need to experience this type of sisterhood in order to remember and remind each other that our hope and our faith is in the Lord, "for nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37)."

The story of Ruth and Naomi from the Old Testament Book of Ruth, is another example of two women who walked in obedience to God and supported each other in being faithful to God. In particular, Ruth supported Naomi by going to the fields and gleaning grain to provide food for Naomi. Naomi was not a young woman and could not do this for herself. Additionally, the Book of Ruth (Chapter 2, verse 11), explains how Ruth cared for her mother-in-law when
her husband had passed away. Ruth left her father and mother and her homeland for Naomi’s sake and came to live with Naomi’s people, who were Israelites, a people she did not know before. There may be times when we might find ourselves in Ruth's or Naomi’s shoes. Like Naomi we sometimes find ourselves in situations where we cannot provide or care for ourselves. In such circumstances, we need to accept the service of others, whether that be requesting others to intercede on our behalf or requesting practical, tangible services. Like Ruth we may be in a position to offer some personal service for another person in need. Hopefully our service and expression of love will be visible to others and be a witness to the joy that comes from being obedient to God.

My own appreciation for sisterhood has developed over time. My first real opportunity for experiencing sisterhood was during a summer household I had in University Christian Outreach. I didn't initially like the experience of living so closely with a group of other single women. It was difficult to be intentionally vulnerable and to build relationships with women I might not have naturally been inclined towards. I soon discovered that I had the wrong attitude. I was surprised at how being willing to be vulnerable allowed others to be vulnerable in return. Once we were able to share honestly, trust was built. It allowed us to truly know one another and be loved as sisters. There was safety and freedom in that level of knowing another and being known in return. Today, I am still friends with these women, even though many of them live far away in other cities and countries. We still keep in contact and continue to support each other in our walks with the Lord, even though we are not able to see each other very often. At the beginning, sisterhood felt less like a gift and more like work. But the decision to pursue being a sister to my sisters has proved invaluable.

**Sisterhood in practice**

As women we are naturally inclined to be very sensitive and aware to spiritual things, and we can be quickly inspired. We read atmosphere, body language, and have a sense for emotions and the unspoken. We have unique gifts that are essential for building unity in the body (conversely we can also, if we choose, pull the body apart, make divisions, and cause disunity through bad speech, gossip, back-biting, etc.). We are naturally disposed to emphasize the personal dimensions of relationships, to reach out and make personal connections, and to form loyal friendships. As women we create a supportive environment that fosters growth, safety, and cares for the well-being of others.

Such an intentional approach can feel somewhat counter-intuitive, as though somehow by being intentional we are being disingenuous. I would argue, instead, that by being intentional we are showing how important this area really is to our Christian life. Furthermore, being intentional about this area allows us to develop habits of relating. Hopefully after behaving like a sister I will also start to feel more sisterly, and these behavior patterns will become much more my automatic response.

Janice Firn lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. She is a member of [Word of Life Community](http://www.wordoflifedetroit.org) and serves on [Kairos in North America](http://www.kairos.org), the international youth program of the Sword of the Spirit. She graduated from the University of Michigan in 2004 with a Master's of Social Work and currently works in hospital as a clinical supervisor in addition to providing counseling and support for cancer patients and their families.
“I Am My Beloved’s and He Is Mine”

An Update from Members of the Bethany Association of Women Living Single for the Lord in the Sword of the Spirit

Fifteen women from the Sword of the Spirit communities throughout the world gathered at Angels’ Hills Retreat Center in Tagaytay City, Philippines, from August 14 through August 18, 2013, for the Fifth International Bethany Association Conference. We were warmly hosted by Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon (Joy of the Lord) community (Manila, Philippines) whose members served us generously in many ways during the days of the conference.

This was the first time since the establishment of the Bethany Association in 2009 that the women with lifelong commitments to live single for the Lord were gathered together for the bi-annual conference without special guests and young women in discernment. This was a welcome opportunity for the committed sisters to strengthen the relationships and bonds of friendship among us all that have been growing and deepening over the past years despite the rare occasions we are able to be together because of the thousands of miles that lie between us. There was a profound openness in our sharing about the joys and blessings we have experienced in our personal lives as well as sorrows, wounds, and challenges that we face. The four committed sisters who were not able to attend were continually in our thoughts and prayers.
Bethany Association Council member Sherry Snyder (Word of Life Community, Ann Arbor, Michigan) was impressed that “God is intent on us being united in loving one another as sisters because of the work he wants to do, inviting others throughout the Sword of the Spirit to join us in this way of life.” Belen Paredes (Ligaya) described Bethany members being woven into a beautiful tapestry of colored threads, “our lives interwoven by the Creator to be a witness and a shield for a life of total self-giving to the Lord.” Bethany Association Council President Jeanne Kun (Word of Life Community, Ann Arbor, Michigan) shared a vision of a silver chain—each one of us a link—stretching across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, from continent to continent, country to country.

Conference sessions included several inspirational meditations as springboards for times of personal and communal prayer—among them a superb and insightful reflection on contemplating the love of God by Jesuit priest Fr. Herb Schneider, one of the “founding” coordinators of Ligaya. The schedule also included teachings about our way of life as put forth in our Bethany Association Charter and discussions about how to advance the purposes, hopes, and goals of the association, as well as ample opportunities for sharing with one another about what the Lord has been doing in each of our personal lives. Our traditional celebration of the Lord’s Day culminated in an evening of Filipina dancing as the sisters donned colorful Filipina dress.
“I Am His”—Living Singleheartedly for the Lord

A highlight of this year’s conference was the lifelong commitment of Jhola Salazar, the youngest member of the Bethany Association, made during the Ligaya’s general gathering with over a thousand community members witnessing this marvelous declaration of singlehearted love for the Lord. Jhola spoke of her lifelong commitment in this way: “At the heart of my calling to live single for the Lord is God’s abundant grace to increase my love for him, my trust in his mysterious designs, and the deepening of my identity not just as his daughter, but as his Beloved—as someone he wants to be espoused to for life. Through the various events and circumstances of my life, the Lord made it clear that the vocation to live single for the Lord is not about me, it is about his love for me. God did not call me because I am the best, but because God’s grace will be enough for me.”

Jhola ended her sharing with her favorite quote from Benedict XVI, Pope Emeritus, whose words remind her of the joy of sacrificing all for the Lord: “Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? . . . No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! . . . Today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ—and you will find true life. Amen.”

During the Ligaya community gathering Mags Tierney (Charis Community, Belfast, Northern Ireland) also shared a moving testimony about how she personally responded to God’s invitation to her to live single for the Lord. “The richness, the delight, and the joy that it is for us who have been called to live single for the Lord is so overwhelming
“to me,” Mags added, “that I feel a burden to make sure that our younger members have that chance to say, ‘Lord, do you want me, too?’” Her vibrant witness and example moved all the Ligaya members—young and old alike, married couples as well as children and single adults—to want to live out a more wholehearted offering of their own state of life, and is already inspiring young women to consider this way of life.

**God’s Word to Bethany Association**

My beloved daughters, I want you to receive the power of my Holy Spirit with joy. Forget your problems, your concerns, your duties—forget about yourselves. I want to set you free with the power of my Spirit so that you can shine all around the world. I want to bring the fire of my Holy Spirit to your communities. I want you to show my love to others in a joyful way. I have set you apart for me: you are mine and I am yours.

Hold fast to me, says the Lord, and hold fast to one another. I am at work in each of you individually in intimate and profound ways, to draw you more deeply into my heart and to clothe you in the holiness befitting of being my bride. And in these days [at the conference], I have been at work knitting you together, uniting you more closely tone another so that you can draw strength, encouragement and wisdom and even sustenance from one another. But hold fast to me and hold fast to the Bethany Association so that you may be a light and a comfort, a hope and protection to one another in the days and in the years to come.

**Fruits of the Conference**

In the past conferences of the Bethany Association, the Lord laid the groundwork for the firm establishment of the association. This year with the conference theme “I am my Beloved’s, and he is mine” (Song of Songs 6:3), the Lord spoke personally to us about his deep love for each one of us as his bride. He also united us more closely to one another, knitting us together as we enjoyed rich times of sharing and fellowship. We also laid effective plans for how we can better support and communicate with one another over the distance that separates us.

While we sisters are very grateful for the support we experience in our local communities for our commitment and way of life, Bethany Association has become a real “family” and “home” for each of us. And the Lord also showed us how we are a “place of refuge,” a “resting place” for many in the Sword of the Spirit, a place for more women to come.

God is indeed calling us to love boldly and preparing us to welcome women who will join us in living single for the Lord in the future—more “links” added to the silver chain joining us together in Sword of the Sprit communities around the world.
Description of Bethany Association

We are women who have heard God call us personally to live a life set apart for him and his kingdom. We live out our response to God’s call through a commitment to intentional singleness – living “single for the Lord” – alongside married couples, families, and single people, as active members of The Sword of the Spirit, an international, ecumenical, charismatic “community of communities.”

To learn more about Bethany Association visit their website at: http://bethany.swordofthespirit.net/
When Less Is More

What are the challenges and rewards of intentionally remaining single?

by Dave Quintana

True confessions. I recently turned fifty. I can no longer pretend that I am prematurely gray. When I wake up in the morning and something hurts, it is now a good sign – I am still alive… My routine in the morning often looks a little something like this: Get up. Stretch out the joints. Head for a run. Take time to pray. Board a plane. Get into conversation with the person beside me. Tell them I travel a lot in my work with young adults and professionals. At this point, I can see them trying to place me in their register: Who is this guy? We tend to chat around the issue for a while before they take the plunge, “So, what exactly is your work? Are you a minister?” “Well”, I reply, “not exactly.” As I share about my call from God and my desire to live for Him with all of my life for the rest of my life they ask, “Are you a priest?” “Well”, I reply, “not exactly.” As I see them struggling to construct a box to fit me in, I take the opportunity to share with them something at the core of my life. I am single, on purpose. I plan to stay that way, for the Lord and for others. Forever. Our conversation often takes a deeper turn; sometimes I think I unsettle people, or sometimes I think people find me unsettling…
In an age largely focused on sex, money, and power, I would argue that biblical celibacy has profound witnessing power.

In this article I would like to present the single life as something more, not less. I would like to present the positive choice to remain single as a “state in life” and a question for serious consideration. Of course, there is much discussion about the challenges of single Christians, but my conviction is that the Lord is renewing a call to intentional singleness in our day. In an age largely focused on sex, money, and power, I would argue that biblical celibacy has profound witnessing power.

Celibacy, or intentional singleness, is a call (or vocation) which the Lord wants to renew in our day. If God’s plan for most people is marriage and family life, and if that is a good thing (remember Genesis 2:18 “it is not good for the man to be alone”), then why might God want men or women to live single? Firstly, let us note that in Matthew 19 and Luke 20, Jesus explicitly connects the single life to the Kingdom of Heaven. Celibacy will be part of the “new order of society,” the “new creation” he brings into this world. Secondly, for Jesus (and Paul), the call to remain single is fundamentally a discipleship issue. I do not see the disciple being called to leave behind “everything, but...” In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul encourages those who are single to seriously consider remaining that way, for the sake of “undivided devotion to the Lord.” This advice, though challenging, is good. When asked why I am single, I respond that it is for the Lord and for His kingdom – to be free and available for the love and service of God and others.

I want to live a life of prayer and consecration to the Lord. While a married man can live this type of life (and there are stellar examples of those who do and did), the single man has a few advantages. In the Old Testament the Levites were not given any portion of the promised land. It was the Lord himself who was to be their portion. So I believe that in a special way, those living single for the Lord can have a particular relationship with Him, and be satisfied with the Lord himself as their portion (see Psalm 16). This is the spirit of Theresa of Avila, a single consecrated woman in the 16th century who said, “Solo Dios basta (God alone is enough).”

As well as living for God, remaining single helps me to live my life for others. I have a freedom to love others, generously and without partiality. As a single man, I am free to be “a member of every family, yet belonging to none.” I don’t need to focus my affections on one woman, or one set of young people (my own children). I can love...
Living Bulwark

generously and impartially. This was first made real to me as I met men from the Servants of the Word brotherhood while I was at University. Living single for the Lord, following a rule of life and rhythm of prayer, doing campus outreach from their “urban monasteries” I found the life of these men both “the furthest thing from my mind” and “intriguingly attractive.” I tried it on, and it fit.

Once people have got over the initial shock, a question which arises with amazing frequency is, “How do I know if it’s my call?” Firstly, let me say a few things about this (or any) call. It is not easy and it takes some serious discerning over a long period of time. It is not as simple as a lightning bolt from heaven or the lack of sexual desire! A true call tends to be a combination of factors, all of which grow over time. A sense of “hearing” from God that this is a good and right way for you to respond to the Lord as His disciple. The conviction that comes from the Bible that this is a way God invites people to live for Him. The confirmation and affirmation of those who know you and your character, and the grace and blessing that come to all who live in the way that God has designed them. Of course, one of the great advantages of the single life is that one can “try it on for size.” This is a little harder to do with marriage…

Over the years I have worked with many young people to help them discern whether they might best live single or married for the Lord. Whoever the person, whatever their background, here are my key recommendations for those who want to seriously consider the single life. First, offer your life to God. Every area, your sexuality and your “state in life” included. As they say, “if he is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all.” Talk to someone (a trusted counselor or church leader) who knows you well and who could have some perspective for you on how you might best live your life for the Lord. Do some reading – there is a lot of wisdom out there that can help you consider the many different questions and issues involved. Consider having some contact with others who live this type of life. Trust the Lord. He knows what is best for you; He knows what you are created for. His plans are always for good – even if they are far, far different than what we might at first prefer.

“As in response to the exceeding greatness of the gift of God, we dedicate ourselves to loving him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and offering our lives to him as a living sacrifice and consecrating our lives to his service.”

- Excerpt from Servants of the Word Covenant

As a young man I had many dreams and aspirations for my life which I now find hard to reconcile with how I live today. I can honestly say, however, that none of my dreams featured the peace and contentment, beauty and gratitude I experience in the life of single devotion to God that He has called me to live and that I have chosen. The words of Psalm 16:5-6 have become a living reality for me, “You have assigned me my portion and my cup… The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places…” To say that it has always been easy and fun would of course be untrue, but the experience of Paul in Philippians 3:8 rings true with me, “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord…” I have learned the secret of godliness with contentment. So for me, less is more.

Some recommended reading:

- *Thoughts on a Single Life* by John Wesley
- *Virginity: A Positive Approach to Celibacy for the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven* by Raneiro Cantalamessa
Dave Quintana is an elder of The Servants of the Word, a missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord. He is also a regional coordinator for the Sword of the Spirit in Europe and the Middle East. He lives in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Email Dave with questions or if you would like to receive his daily email meditation at dquintana@servantsoftheword.org.

(c) copyright 2013 The Sword of the Spirit
publishing address: Park Royal Business Centre, 9-17 Park Royal Road, Suite 108, London NW10 7LQ, United Kingdom
email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com
Home: Our Abiding Place

by Jeanne Kun

Home is where the heart is

The simple word “home” has a strong impact on us. For most of us thoughts of home are agreeable and pleasant, evoking images of warmth, shelter, rootedness, safety, security. Home is where the heart is. It’s that place of our origin, a haven, a resting place, the spot where we know we belong, the place we call our own, a source of refreshment to us. To feel “at home” is to be at ease, on familiar ground. Home: our abiding place.

And so the idea of going home is usually a welcome one; with fondness and anticipation we make that trip. The statement, “you can’t go home again” has a sharp poignancy about it.

With a realization of these many aspects of home, it becomes significant that Jesus extends this particular invitation to us: “Abide in me!” (John 15:4), or, actually using our image, the Jerusalem Bible reads, “Make your home in me.”

The Lord is our shelter, refuge, and resting place
More than any earthly home, it is Jesus himself who is our shelter (Psalm 91:1), our rock and refuge (Psalm 62:7), our dwelling place (Psalm 90:1). He offers himself as our resting place (Matthew 11:29), our refreshment. We have a sure confidence of belonging to him, and he even allows us to claim some “ownership” of him, too: “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song of Songs 2:16). As we grow into a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus, we find ourselves more and more at ease and on familiar ground in his presence. As with our home, “where our treasure is, there too will be our hearts” (Luke 12:34). And we look forward to finally arriving at our “homeland” in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

What a rich comparison there is in seeing Jesus as our home. Even our most appealing notions or most pleasant experiences of our earthly homes pale in the light of Jesus as our true and lasting abiding place. A wealth of insight lies before us in this concept for our prayer and reflection.

“Make your home in me”
But we can find even more in this comparison as we search the Scriptures further – more to thrill us, more to excite us, more to move us to an active response to Jesus’ invitation. While inviting us to make our home in him, Jesus went on to say he wants to make his home in us: “Make your home in me, as I make mine in you” (John 15:4). In other words, Jesus requests that we make a place to receive him, to welcome him, where he can take up permanent residence with us. Earlier in his gospel, John expressed the same idea this way: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), or, more literally, “pitched his tent among us” – made his dwelling place in our midst.

How can we respond to such a request? And such an offer! What can we do to make more of a place for Jesus to enter into our lives? Perhaps the most concrete action we can take is to embrace the Word who dwells among us – to get to know the Word made flesh by getting to know the spoken and written word of God in Scripture. St. Paul gives us advice that is finely tuned to our analogy: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16). Again, the translation that the Jerusalem Bible offers strongly underlines the image: “Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you.”

Taking Scripture to heart
This image helps make real one of my favorite (and to me, most helpful) ways of approaching Scripture. I often think of Scripture and relate to it in terms of “making it my own.” To me, that means not only reading Scripture, but taking it in, loving it, embracing it, pondering it, allowing myself to be molded and taught by it, obeying it, having it as my fingertips and in the front of my mind; in short, becoming so familiar with God’s word that I can really say that I’ve made it “my own” – my way of thinking, my way of life, my guide, my nourishment.

One doesn’t build a house or home overnight. Nor has Scripture instantly become my own. It has only been with daily patience, daily discipline, daily prayer for insight into the word of God, over years and years, that this familiarity has been growing, that the word of God is truly finding a home in me. And there have been many days of being hard put to find the time to read Scripture; or while having the time, no desire has risen in me for this reading. But little by little, gradually but steadily, Scripture has pervaded my life, has taken a hold of me, and is finding that place in me that God desires and yearns for. It is being written on my heart.

Make a worthy home for the Word of God
In Old Testament times, the God of Israel gave his people a way of holding onto his word to them. The direction he gave to them so long ago has been relevant, meaningful, and effective for me as I have striven to let the word of Christ find a home in me. Urging the Israelites to prize his word, Yahweh said, “These words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on
the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

May you, too, write the word of God on the doorpost of your house. As you make your home in Christ, may you also make a worthy home for his word in your heart.

[Jeanne Kun is a noted author and a senior woman leader in the Word of Life Community, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. This article originally appeared in God’s Word Today, May 1991. Used by permission of the author.]
The Fruit of Discipleship and Love

by Joanie Nath

From time-to-time the Lord puts a certain subject relating to the Christian life on my mind, often with an accompanying desire to learn more about it. For the past several months now, the subject of discipleship has occupied my mind and made itself quite at home with my daily thought life.

Education of Jewish disciples

There is a natural curiosity that causes me to wonder what discipleship looked like in the time of Jesus. Study of Jewish history can be helpful in providing answers to many questions that arise on the topic of discipleship. I have found a couple of very good websites which explain a long-standing tradition in the education of Jewish disciples. It begins with a school of higher learning, which in Hebrew is known as Beth Midrash (House of Learning). It is the place where scholars and those in advanced studies still continue today to gather for lectures and individual instruction in the study of the Torah, Talmud, and other rabbinical writings.

In biblical times in Jerusalem this school was typically located in the temple building precinct. Only the “high honors” students were given the privilege of seeking out an esteemed rabbi under which to study, often leaving home to travel with him for an indeterminate period of time, frequently under harsh conditions. These students were called talmid(s) or talmidim in Hebrew, which is translated disciple.

There are some significant differences between a talmid and what we call a modern day student. What often motivates a student today is his or her desire to complete the course, earn a specific degree, or please a particular teacher for whom he or she has great respect. A talmid, on the other hand, is motivated by his desire to be like the teacher, that is, to become what or who the teacher is. The talmid is passionately devoted to the rabbi, forming his thoughts by the teacher’s words, learning to see things through his eyes and paying close attention to everything he says and does; he imitates the rabbi even in the very simple and insignificant tasks of living everyday life so as to become like him as much as possible. The relationship between the rabbi and the talmid, or disciple, is necessarily a very close one, intensely personal, and often more intimate than that of the disciple with his own father. The rabbi would be seen as “the teacher”, not just one among many; a teacher whose understanding of the Scriptures would be
considered paramount. For the Jewish talmid the commitment to following a particular rabbi required much sacrifice of time, other interests, even his other close relationships. It was a life-altering commitment. For him, this was no half-hearted endeavor, but rather a sobering decision to radically change the course of his life. If he was earnestly seeking to become like his rabbi, nothing less than his undivided attention and total dedication would do.

Devoted to the Rabbi

When we understand what it meant to be a Jewish talmid or disciple in the time of Christ we can draw certain parallels to what it means for us to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the present day. First, like those students in the school of rabbinical teaching, we want to be passionately devoted to Jesus, our personal rabbi and master.

Jesus’ first disciples entered into an intensive study program that would last three years. This type of training involved learning what the master was teaching them, observing his actions, listening to his words, giving themselves to understanding what they were being taught. They were becoming like their teacher. Like an apprentice who learns a trade from a master craftsman, they were learning to be like Christ. We, likewise, are also called to learn from the Lord Jesus and to imitate him. While not many of us will be called to leave our current occupations to devote three or more years to an accelerated, concentrated training program, we are, nonetheless, continually seeking to follow Christ and allow him to train us day-by-day as his disciples. The Lord gives us many opportunities to learn from him – during our daily time of prayer, scripture study, spiritual reading, and attendance at church services. Approaching our commitments to our families, churches and communities with a high degree of seriousness and serving where God has asked us to serve with the people he’s called us to be with helps to focus us as disciples.

I read a story about the owner of a company who interviewed a former student of a professor friend. When asked about the young man being interviewed the professor replied, “He may have attended my classes but he was certainly not one of my students.” In a similar way, we can choose to put in time required for attending the classes, but never become a true learner or disciple. If we’re not diligent and intentional in our approach it can become quite possible to spend years attending classes, but look back and be able to see little measurable growth.

Following Jesus with the devotion of a disciple, learning from him, imitating him, studying his words, and listening to his Spirit speak into our lives is a lifetime process – we should never think we have learned enough and can stop learning. To become comfortable with what we presently know of God and to be content with the growth we’ve already attained is to lose sight of the fact that he transcends all earthly knowledge and that he is limitless in what he would give of himself…if we would be determined to keep pursuing him.

Conformed to His Will

Jesus was consumed with doing the Father’s will. His whole focus was to fulfill the plan his Father had for him while on earth. “My food,” Jesus said, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” In the same way eating a well-prepared meal of fine food provides us with energy to live our lives well, so doing the Father’s will filled Jesus and provided nourishment to his spirit. It’s what kept him going, giving focus to his daily life. In it he found strength, joy and satisfaction. His will was conformed to the Father and so he could rightly say, “My Father and I are one.” As Jesus’ disciples we should be doing the same. We, too, should be saying, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work.” As we are conformed more to the Father’s will we are better equipped to accomplish the work he intends for each of us to do. As a result, the Kingdom of God is built and we enjoy the benefit of a deeper union with him.

The writer of Psalm 119 is not only passionately devoted to the word of God, but he desires that his will be conformed to the will of God. His love for God’s laws and his commands are at the very core of his being. In the psalm he pours out his great affection for the Lord’s words and his deep desire to obey God’s commands by using
phrases such as these:

Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart;
Oh, that my words were steadfast in obeying your decrees;
I have hidden your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you;
My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times;
I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands;
Let me understand the teaching of your precepts.

The words statutes, decrees, laws, commands and precepts all translate in a similar way. They relate to the covenant and translate: covenant directives, regulations, requirements and stipulations. This psalmist is a disciple who is wholly occupied with a desire to obey God’s will for his life by conforming it to the covenant directives as revealed by God to his people. Night and day he is seeking to know and better understand what God requires of him and how to fulfill his part of the covenant.

We too live by a covenant. Whether we consider the covenant which God made with his people on Mount Sinai in the giving of the Ten Commandments, the New Covenant teaching which Jesus gave to his disciples on how to love one and serve another, or the particular way of life we believe the Lord is showing us in our Christian communities, we need to see Jesus as “the” teacher, patterning ourselves after him, seeking to know and understand how he wants us to live out the covenant which he is calling us to embrace.

The disciples heard the Father on the mount of Transfiguration say, “This is my beloved Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” “Listen” as it is used in this context means “to learn by hearing; to gain understanding”. So here we have the Father himself telling Jesus’ disciples to be serious about discipleship. He is saying, “Learn from my Son who is your teacher. Listen carefully to his words and devote yourself to his teaching. Gain understanding so that you may know what it is I require of you.” In the King James Version the verse ends with an exclamation point adding emphasis to the Father’s directive. He wants us to stop daydreaming in class and to sit up and pay attention!

Imitating Our Teacher

I remember hearing someone say that God is a ridiculous optimist in that he allows us to continue as a race, in spite of all our failings. That caught my attention because my nature can often tend toward being a ridiculous pessimist! So, as a disciple, I decided that I needed to begin to check my negativity at the door and become who the rabbi is, a ridiculous optimist, seeing the best in people, situations and circumstances, not like a Pollyanna with my head in the clouds, but rather choosing to find the good and the best in people, rather than assuming the worst. It requires a conscious effort, a decision of the will guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit to take on characteristics of Jesus that are sometimes not natural to my makeup.

Philippians 2:13 tells us that “it is God who works in you both to will and to act according to His good purposes.” He inspires and gives grace and then we respond to him. It is a balance; a combination of our effort and God’s grace working together. Sitting in a room while the professor is teaching will not guarantee that valuable information will actually be absorbed. So too, discipleship is not a passive activity. It requires pro-active participation in the process and doesn’t happen simply by association. Discipleship is an association with a purpose, that of becoming who the teacher is. We have to respond to the nudging of the Holy Spirit. And it isn’t a one-time decision. Too many things can easily crowd our lives and push Jesus further into the background; we would be prudent to reassess and reaffirm our commitment to be disciples from time-to-time.

A group of Apollo astronauts in the US were interviewed recently on a talk show, the host assuming they spent a great deal of time on leisure activities as they travelled to the moon. She was surprised to find that the astronauts
were required to make course corrections every ten minutes from the time the spaceship launched, until they reached their destination. I think we would be wise to do something similar with our spiritual lives. Occasional course corrections can keep us from drifting far from our original goal, that of being disciples whose vision and focus should be solely on becoming who our rabbi is. And as we practice being who the teacher is, allowing the Holy Spirit to work those changes in us, we will incrementally look and become more like Jesus, our Rabbi, being transformed more and more into His image and likeness.

Love and discipleship

What is the end result of our discipleship? What is it that God is trying to accomplish in us by having us imitate him? What is all this learning leading to?

Jesus identified two distinctive characteristics by which people would recognize his disciples and by which his kingdom would grow. The first is that we have love for one another. Jesus told his disciples, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples – that you love one another.” John 13: 35.

There is something so radically different about the love we are to have for one another as disciples of Jesus that people observing us should instantly recognize it as a godly, supernatural love. It is more than what the world shows or defines as love. Love and discipleship cannot be separated from one another. Our love is the proof of our discipleship. It is one of the unmistakable marks of a disciple of Jesus Christ. He says, “…they will know that you are my disciples…” Not John the Baptist’s, not some other rabbi, not some other teacher, but His, by the love we have for one another. There are many things that should mark the life of a disciple: study, prayer and service, to name a few. But Jesus tells us that loving one another is the primary way his disciples should be recognized over all the others.

We often hear it said that living in Christian covenant community involved a radical choice and way of life. Our community gatherings, our pastoral care system, our approach to worship and music, the exercise of the charismatic gifts, the way we live our daily lives and raise our children…all of these things may make our life appear radical to other people, especially as our secular culture drifts further and further away from a Judeo-Christian ethic. Jesus never said, “By the way you run your Summer Camp program, then people will know that you are my disciples” or “By the quality of your teaching programs people will know that you are my disciples.” But, he did say that it would be the way we love one another that would grab the attention of onlookers and make our life together point to the power of the resurrected Lord Jesus who enables us to live a “radical” call and way of life that is different from the world.

I know a man named Jake. Jake is a disciple, disguised as a retail sales person at an outlet store near my home. I was there to buy a treadmill. As Jake and I walked back to the sports equipment area he seemed to be in a significant amount of pain from some sort of foot injury. Later, as I was at his checkout counter he noticed a cross necklace I often wear which lead to a conversation about spiritual things, including the condition and care of his wife who is dealing with Multiple Sclerosis. His foot injury turned out to be a tear in his Achilles heel from lifting her in and out of her wheelchair. In the course of our conversation he told me that he has many good people in his church family who come to his home daily to help his wife so that he can continue to work and provide for his family. He then said, “You’d be amazed how many people (in the world) ask me, “Why are you still with her?” I was stunned and stared at him in disbelief, not knowing what to say. He went on, “I made a promise to my wife 18 years ago, before God, not knowing what he had in store for me or her or our family. I had no crystal ball to foretell the future. I’m in this for better or for worse. I promised her that I would be here until the end. Should I walk away now because it’s hard?” I asked if I could pray with him and at the end of my prayer he came from behind the counter and gave me a hug. As he pulled away I could see tears in his eyes. I saw in this man a brother disciple who was sticking it out through the tough times, faithful to his wife, his family, and his God. He loves his wife in a way that makes other people stop
and question the nature of that sort of love. It is counter-cultural, it is supernatural; it is the radical love of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Over the years some of us, maybe many of us have asked ourselves or had other people ask us that same question with regard to our marriages, our churches, or our involvement in community. Why are you still here? Why are you still with these people? Why are you still doing this?” People can be hard to love. It can be difficult to love selflessly, unfailingly, unconditionally, like our teacher. At times we might be tempted to walk away, to turn inward, or to back away in a cocoon of self-protection. We may find it easier to just show up in class or to skip class altogether than to follow the master, to love the difficult ones all the way to the cross, which is inevitably where discipleship takes us.

Most of us have heard the word “agape”. It is the Greek translation for the word “love” that the apostle Paul uses in the very familiar “love chapter” of 1 Corinthians 13. The footnote in my Bible defines it this way: The Greek for this word indicates a selfless concern for the welfare of others that is not called forth by any quality of lovableness in the person loved, but is the product of a will to love in obedience to God’s command. It is like Christ’s love manifested on the cross.

We can look at all we do to serve the wider Body of Christ and especially the way we live our life in community as radical expressions of living the Christian life. But Paul tells us that if we do not learn to love one another in the midst of it then all of our efforts are useless, pointless and meaningless. We become a source of noise and irritation to the people around us.

How we feel about our brothers and sisters is irrelevant. Whether we think they deserve to be loved is irrelevant. Whether we even like them is irrelevant. We are called to love. We are commanded to love. It is not an option for those who would call themselves disciples of Jesus Christ. “I give you a new commandment: love one another even as I have loved you!” When we confess our sins, our failures to love should be at the top of the list because it is from that failure that all other sin originates. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole soul, your whole mind and with all your strength, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets.” Matt.22:37, 39b-40. As Christian disciples our whole life is based on living these two commandments, love of God and love of neighbor.

Disciples Produce Fruit

The second unmistakable, distinctive mark of a disciple is the producing of fruit. “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” John 15:8. One version says, “…proving yourselves to be my disciples”. In addition to the love we are to have for one another, the proof of our discipleship is in the bearing of fruit. This bearing of fruit is not limited to the fruit of a holy and virtuous life, but also of making other disciples for the Lord and His kingdom. To bear fruit is another way of saying to “reproduce”. There are many factors involved in successfully making disciples for the Lord. We can read about some of them in the parable of the sower and the seed as found in Matthew 13:1-23. But, we might also reasonably deduce that if we are not reproducing by making other disciples, then the quality of our discipleship might need to be examined.

Jesus said, “Go make disciples of all men, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.” Matt 28:19a, 20a. In other words, “Teach them everything you’ve learned from being with me these past three years.” We can’t teach someone else to become something we ourselves are not. A nurse cannot teach someone how to be a dancer if she hasn’t been trained in the art of dance. A master musician most likely would not be hired to teach biochemistry. If we are to make disciples, if we are to reproduce other disciples for the Lord, then we need to be disciples ourselves. And we make disciples by “teaching” them to obey all that Jesus has commanded us. “Teaching” as it is used here, means to “enroll them as a scholar”. Here again we are patterning ourselves after our master rabbi who has enrolled
each of us as scholars in the school of discipleship. A scholar is not necessarily someone with extraordinary intelligence although that’s the way we often interpret it. Webster’s defines a scholar as a learned person, someone who possesses knowledge by having given themselves to study, as opposed to just showing up in class. It has little to do with actual intelligence. It has more to do with posturing yourself with a desire to learn and giving yourself to that.

We read in the fifteenth chapter of John’s gospel that it is only by staying attached to the vine that the branches are able to produce fruit. Jesus told his disciples, “As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me… for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:4b, 5c. To “abide” in the Greek means to stay in a given place, relationship or state of expectancy; to continue to dwell in, endure, be present to; remain, stand, and tarry long. “Abiding” is not just doing out of a sense of duty what we’ve been taught. It’s about staying in or dwelling in a certain place, being in a certain kind of relationship with the Lord and the people He’s called us to be in covenant with. It’s an enduring kind of posture, tarrying long in the presence of God and with this people, having an expectation of Him and the relationship that doesn’t grow weary or give up when the road is hard. “Apart from me you can do nothing.” A branch out of contact with the vine or one which has been uprooted is lifeless. A disciple who has drifted or disconnected from the rabbi, one who has ceased to remain in that certain place or moved on because the waiting is long will not be able to reproduce or make other disciples. Sometimes we are tempted to “disentangle” ourselves from other parts of the vine. If we attempt to do so we risk breaking the branches; we risk our own brokenness. We need to endure in discipleship, tarrying long with the Lord in this place he has called us to. We need to “abide” in the Lord so we are able to produce fruit.

Refocusing Our Hearts

Hopefully, most of us are enthusiastic disciples who have set our hearts unswervingly to becoming who the rabbi is. Someone once said, “If you are not convinced, you will not be convincing.” Are we convinced disciples who can convince others of the truth of the gospel? If we examine ourselves we might find that maybe we have become comfortable with our lives, content with what we presently know of God and self-satisfied with the growth we’ve attained thus far. We may think we’re “good enough”. We may no longer be the zealous disciples we once were. Some of us are tired disciples; age can be a factor in how much enthusiasm we have. Maybe we’ve been following the Lord for a long time and we’d be happy if we could just coast to the finish line. Like the folks in the parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24), some of us may be distracted by our fields and oxen that have come to us in the form of our homes, jobs, activities, leisure time, and even our children or grandchildren. We were given an invitation once that maybe seems less important now than when we first received it. Other, “more important” things may have crept in and are taking precedence. Maybe some have grown complacent or even lazy and are tempted to disentangle from the vine and the other branches. Maybe you are one who has decided the cost is too high and are asking yourself, “Why am I still here?” “Why should I love these people?” “Why should I continue doing this?”

Jesus is looking for disciples who understand that the cost is high, often inconvenient, and will require taking up the cross and carrying it daily. He wants students, scholars in the school of discipleship, who not only come to class but want to learn, who want to become who the teacher is by loving as he loves and producing fruit for him, proving themselves to be his disciples. He is looking for those individuals who are committed to “becoming who the Rabbi is” and are willing to say, “My food is to do the will of the Father and to finish the work he sent me to do.”

See related articles:

- The Life of a Disciple: a commentary on the beatitudes, by Steve Clark
- A Disciple's Yoke: we need not fear the requirements of the gospel, by Bruce Yocum
- “Entering In” to Prayer, by Joanie Nath
Joanie Nath has been married for 36 years and is the mother of three grown children. She has been a member of the People of God Community in Pittsburgh for 30 years where she serves as a Senior Woman Leader and retreat speaker. She also serves in the Sword of the Spirit North American Region as a Regional Senior Woman Leader. She resides in Bridgeville, Pennsylvania, USA.
Life can be frantic cycle of demands, deadlines, activities and chores. There are e-mails, Facebook, TV shows, tasks, etc. that pulls our attention. Then we see ads on TV, billboards, newspaper and the internet that screams “Sale!” But on the other hand, people need our time too – our spouses, and members of our families that also needs care. And then there is God, whom we recognise as the Alpha and the Omega, from whom all time comes from. Yet our bodies, mind and soul needs a break – we need to rest, re-energise and restore our bearings as we live our lives. Our lives look like a storm at times – but do you know in the middle of a storm there is peace? God is calling us to be
like that – as a storm moves about in our lives, there is inner peace in God.

**So How Can We Grow in Being Still in the Midst of a Storm?**

1. Set your priorities right. Know what the matters that are important, not just what is urgent; we tend to focus on the urgent – but are they really important?
2. We need to learn to say no – no to people, no to our desires, no to things that are of lesser or no value. It is better to do some things well than attempt to do everything badly.
3. Learn to pause and be still, especially when you are confused, pressured or under stress. Learn to commune with God in the midst of the ‘storm.’ He is in control.
4. Celebrate the Lord’s Day weekly – it is a time to: stop, acknowledge that God is in control; rest, to give our tired bodies time to recuperate; celebrate, and thank God for blessings you received; and to delight in the Lord, as we look forward to the eternal life to which He has called us. Let your life be recharged at that time!
5. Seek time for personal rest and recreation. You are not a robot; you need to engage in something that you enjoy – reading a novel, playing a game of chess, gardening, fishing, etc. Balance your life, but don’t be lazy too. Seek time to have a special time of prayer in a season as well – like a personal retreat where you can check your life path and direction.
6. Have physical exercise regularly. For you mind and body to work well, you need to keep the body refreshed as well. Jog, swim, go to the gym, play ball games, etc.

**Other Scripture References**

1. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:7]
2. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control… [Galatians 5:22-23a]
3. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. [Colossians 3:15]

**For Personal Reflection and Group Sharing:**

1. Do I live my life like a machine? Do I pause regularly and seek to restore my soul, my mind, my body and my energy?
2. Can I truly say in my heart that I experience inner peace with God in spite of all things happening around me? If no, why not? What do I need to do?
Tom Caballes is the National Senior Administrator and a National Coordinator of the Lamb of God, a community of the Sword of the Spirit with 7 branches located throughout New Zealand. Tom also leads Kairos New Zealand, an outreach program for high school, university, and post-university aged people.

Tom and his wife Mhel and their two daughters live in Wellington, New Zealand.
Grace Touched My Face

oil on canvas, 100cm x 100cm, 2013

Image by artist Jamie Treadwell

Text drawn from Chris Larson’s notes of his pilgrimage on El Camino de Santiago de Compostela

I walked my Camino in gratitude, for gratitude.
A few years back I lost this sense of personal gratitude. Don’t know where. Somewhere along the way.

The Camino is an ancient route, 80% loosely packed gravel and dirt lanes. Some not so well marked. 15,000 walked this path last summer. I started alone. You walk to think. You walk to pray. You walk to see things clearly.
I’ve never done anything so beautifully simple. Exhausting myself physically creates an attitude of deep receptivity. To others. To nature. To God.

I walked as a pilgrim. It’s the tourist who demands, the pilgrim thanks. The pilgrim is grateful, engaged and present in each moment. I knew my destination and used my map, yet stayed open to inspiration and the surprise of detours.

This is how I want to live my life and lead others – as a pilgrim engaged in a purpose bigger than me.

Why are you walking the Camino?

To see more art work by Jamie Treadwell and limited-edition prints visit www.jamietreadwell.com/artist/

Jamie Treadwell is a life coach and a noted artist who works in pastels, watercolors and acrylics. He is a member of The Servants of the Word, an ecumenical lay missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord, and mission leader in the Sword of the Spirit. He is currently based in London, UK.