



Living the Truth

Whoever lives by the truth, comes into the light (John 3:21)

- [Revising the Truth: How to discern between reality and lies](#), by Charles Simpson
- [The Post-Christian Mind](#), by Harry Blamires
- [The Truth of All Things, a philosophical inquiry](#), by Josef Pieper

Abiding Truth

- [The Light of truth](#) by Theodoret, and [More true than the truth?](#) by Irenaeus of Lyons
- [Need to know?](#) by Diadochus, & [Knowledge without charity not good](#), by Maximus

Adelante 2011

- [¿Acia Que? – “Where To?”](#) reflection on Adelante Conference by Tadhg Lynch
- Reflections by [Gina](#), [Simeon](#), [Marie-Sophie](#), [Ellen](#), and [Daniel](#)

Youth Culture

- [What's Wrong With Boys?](#) by Michael Shaughnessy
- [Boys Adrift - A Book Review](#), by Jerry Munk

God's Word Alive

- [Where Do We Rest Our Hearts?](#) by Sam Williamson
- [The Woman with the Hemorrhage](#), by Jeanne Kun

Mission Forward

- [Building Christian community among London university students](#), by Mark Jordan
- [Enchanted](#), by P.M. Graham

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.

copyright © 2011 [The Sword of the Spirit](#) | email: living.bulwark@yahoo.com

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



Revising Truth

How to discern between reality and lies

By Charles Simpson

When does twisting the truth produce a lie? Someone said, “A half-truth is a whole lie.” The enemy of our soul hates the truth, and from the beginning has sought to revise it into a lie palatable to the naïve.

Satan began this process in the very beginning with Adam and Eve, when he asked, “Did God say that? He really didn’t mean that if you ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that you would die! You will not surely die.” But God did say it, and He meant it. Yet they ate the fruit, and they died. People have died ever since. God says what He means and means what He says.

The enemy is too savvy to bluntly say, “God lied.” He just plants doubt and revises the truth into a lie. His method has not changed, and sadly, it still works too often with too many people.

Revised Version

I remember my dismay when the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (RSV) first appeared and translated Isaiah 7:14 this way: “the young woman is with child” instead of “a virgin shall conceive.” One of my seminary professors was on the committee that produced the RSV. After its completion, he rejected it because they consistently chose the weaker meaning throughout many Scripture translations. I admired his stand. Slight revisions can alter the true meaning.

Some believe the Bible is God’s Word to us, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Others believe the Bible “contains” God’s Word to us. The latter position leaves us to decide what is and what is not the Word of God...the “pick and choose” version. Those who take that position often take a similar position with other subjects, even science or math. “The truth is relative, whatever you want it to be.” That approach is often used in textbooks or press releases. Misleading has become a science itself.

“Adjusting” the facts in order to make them more palatable and bring about a different result is a dangerous activity. It is putting nice clothes on a naked truth. It is the “fig leaf” that the disobedient use to hide embarrassment. It brings death.

Revelation 12:9 calls Satan the “Deceiver of the whole world.” There is a very large audience for his insidious work, and he has many willing accomplices. He does not work alone. And the idea that “smart people” are not subject to propaganda is itself a deception, as we shall see.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

I have recently read Eric Metaxas’ book, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*. It is a well-written and well-documented work. Metaxas portrays Bonhoeffer as a deeply committed follower of Jesus, all the way to martyrdom, at the very end of World War II. What I found amazing is how Adolph Hitler and the Nazis manipulated the intellectual community and religious leaders of Germany to accept his Satanic agenda. He cloaked himself in patriotism and German history to ultimately murder millions and bring about the death and destruction of hundreds of thousands more in the war. Hitler often used Christian terminology to deceive. The devil seldom comes to us naked.

Hitler also fooled heads of state, like British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. After reaching a supposed deal with Hitler, he said, “I believe it is peace for our time... And now I recommend you go home and sleep quietly in your beds.” Less than one year later, England and the world were plunged into World War II by Hitler’s continued aggression. Political power and human intelligence are no match for the “deceiver of the whole world”. We may believe that Hitler is gone and Germany was an exception, so the danger has passed; thinking this way would



be a tragic error. Revisionism is alive and well in America.



Nietzsche

Perhaps the most influential person in the last 150 years has been Friedrich Nietzsche, the nihilist cynic, the “God is dead” philosopher. Metaxas calls Nietzsche, “Hitler’s John the Baptist.” Skepticism and doubt are forerunners of hell on earth. Martin Bormann, a high Nazi official, stated that Christianity and National Socialism are incompatible. But the National Socialists did not mount a frontal assault on Christianity. They revised it and adjusted it, until it became something else entirely. The hell they ceased to believe in became an earthly reality. After Hitler shot himself, his body was literally consumed by flames.

Hell

Before I elaborate on Hell, let me confess my own neglect of the topic. I have always believed in existence, but too often failed to discuss it. Failure to address it has a similar result to denying it. But the Bible does address it.

In seminary, I had a professor who rejected the idea of hell. Though I disagreed, I said little. I do know that sometimes hell refers to “the place of the dead” or place of “retribution.” Hell and destruction often appear together in the Scriptures. In Matthew 5:22, Jesus adds the word “fire” to hell. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, hell is described as a place of torment with no exit. In the book of Revelation, we are told that Jesus holds the keys to death and hell and that hell is a “lake of fire”.

The revisionists hate the truth of hell and vehemently attack these references from all sides. What they really hate is the natural and spiritual law of accountability. They seek the removal of the fear of God and eternal accountability, to trivialize moral law; to remove evangelism, missions, and the Ten Commandments. By attacking the doctrine of hell, they have pulled down a culture. By attacking the Word of God, no other document is safe.

We might ask ourselves, do we really believe there is a place called hell? If so, how does that motivate us? Or, does neglect have the same affect as unbelief? Who is more guilty, the one who takes the wrong road, or the one who removes the signs?

Discernment

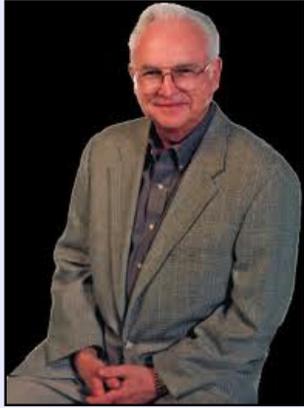
How can we see clearly through the revisionist fog? Here are some ways:

- Study the Word of God; it is the “lamp for our feet.”
- Humble ourselves before God and acknowledge our blindness.
- Love the truth and hide it not from others. Buy it and do not sell it for any price.
- Study history from those who actually made it.
- Walk by truth and not mere emotions.
- Be accountable to God and godly friends.
- And do not be passive about evil; it is malignant!

You are not alone in your desire for truth. Many are coming to realize that they and their children have been robbed. We do not have to agree on everything, but we can agree to seek the God who is true...together, in love. We can love freedom and hate the lies that would bring us into bondage. And, we can seek to walk worthy of those who died for truth so that we might have it.

[This excerpted article was originally published in [One-to-One Magazine](#), Autumn 2010, © Charles Simpson Ministries. Used with

permission.]



[Charles Simpson](#) is senior pastor of Gulf Coast Covenant Church in Mobile, Alabama. He is author of *The Challenge to Care and Courageous Living* (Servant Books) and is Editor-in-Chief of [One-to-One Magazine](#).

(c) copyright 2011 [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 Post-Christian Mind

Maintaining a Christian way of thinking in a non-thinking world

By Harry Blamires

Introduction

There is no doubt that, as the twenty-first century begins, Christendom faces formidable hostility, not least in those developed Western countries once regarded as bulwarks of Christian civilization. Looking around us, we Christians cannot but be aware of how powerful and insidious is the assault on the faith which we hold, the faith we have assumed to be the foundation of Western culture. Current secularist humanism a mish-mash of relativistic notions negating traditional values and absolutes – infects the intellectual air we breathe each day. There is a campaign to undermine all human acknowledgment of the transcendent, to whittle away all human respect for objective restraints on the individualistic self. The hold of this campaign on the media is such that the masses are brainwashed as they read the press, listen to the radio, or watch television.

The post-Christian mental world is not a world of structures but a world of fluidity. For all that can issue from the mind bereft of divine affiliation is passing opinion, transient feeling, today's or tomorrow's capricious preference. The universal language of reason and morality gives place to a wholly relativistic vocabulary of emotive predelections. The standard articulation of moral judgments in terms of virtues and vices gives place to a strange amalgam of subjectivist concepts such as self-esteem and self-realization. We are always hearing that someone has round himself or herself, got to know himself or herself, learned to live with himself or herself. On all sides people are prating about discovering their 'identity', as

though one could help having one. A figure famous in the eyes of the media's public will explain how, after some remarkable experience and as a result of some mighty effort, 'I found out who I really am'. Most of us acquire this knowledge before the nursery school age. Incidentally, the Christian call to lose oneself stands at the very opposite pole of experience to these truly meaningless slogans.

Individualistic notions of "rights"

If we examine how the word "rights" is used today we shall see that individualistic notions of the human role have deeply infected the post-Christian mind. No longer do we hear simply of the rights of man or the rights of woman, of human rights and civil rights. Demands are now made in the name of children's rights and animal rights, minority rights and prisoners' rights, gay rights and lesbian rights.

We must bring a little logic to bear on this issue. The expression 'gay rights' shows how grossly the word 'rights' has been abused. Special rights do not attach to being homosexual any more than they attach to having red hair or being left-handed. You might speak of a defendant's right to a fair trial when he is charged with murder, but it is not by virtue of his being a murderer that he has that right. On the contrary, he has the right to a fair trial because he may not be a murderer after all. An individual may justly be said to have rights as a citizen, but a gay man cannot claim any rights at all specifically by virtue of his being gay. He enjoys the usual rights of a free man, but no distinguishable rights as a gay man. Nor in fact does he really want such rights. He would be the first to admit that he does not want to be distinguished from others in any context specifically because he is gay. What he really wants is to meet with exactly the same treatment as his happily married neighbor. In other words, as a gay man he wants the tact of his homosexuality to be of no account, to be totally disregarded when such matters as applications for jobs are concerned.

The Bill of Rights, which settled the succession of the English crown in 1689, and whose provisions, where applicable, were embodied later in the American Constitution, spelt out the liberties of the subject and was specifically designed to put an end to religious persecution. That all subjects have the right to subscribe to whatever religious faith they choose is a principle of a just society. But to say that a person has the 'right' of religious freedom does not tell you anything about the person. It tells you something about the legal code to which the person is subject.

There are of course 'rights' that properly belong to individuals. I have a right to live in the house which I have purchased. This right, however, is better called an 'entitlement'. English law and general practice in England still speak of the 'title' and the 'title deeds' in respect of property ownership. Notions of proprietorship properly belong to this kind of right or entitlement. There would be a sense of outrage against injustice if a man's claim to live in his own house were questioned. Something emotively powerful is stirred within us when we hear of any challenge to a person's rights in this respect. It is regrettable that, when we transfer use of the word 'rights' out of this proprietorial sphere into the sphere where 'rights' testifies to nothing more than allowances conceded by the criminal law, we carry over the emotive baggage that accompanies the word. Human 'rights' will not play much of a part in the thought and talk of a Christian. Where there is tyranny in government or injustice in a legal system, the Christian ought to be as zealous as anyone in resisting official pressures. But the Christian will not go around sticking the label 'rights' on every human demand to be free of discipline, obligation, and moral imperative. The word 'right' cannot but carry with it connotation derived from the basic distinction between right and wrong. It is an emotive word, and usage of it has corrupted the post-Christian mind as overtones of virtue and righteousness have been allowed to wash over claims for dispensation from the moral law.

A distortion of language

There is another sphere in which we currently hear abuse of the words 'right' and 'rights'. The abortion debate gives us phrases such as the 'right to choose' and a 'woman's rights over her own body'. In each case there is a parallel

distortion of language. Free will is divinely granted to us. We can choose between good and evil: we can choose to be righteous or to sin. But the Christian knows that to choose sin is to forfeit freedom. That is the first message of the story of Adam and Eve and their fall. Freedom for the Christian consists in choosing obedience. You are acting freely if you play the Good Samaritan at the roadside, but you are acting in slavery to selfishness if you pass by on the other side. To preserve an unborn baby is an act of freedom. In many circumstances in which it happens, to kill an unborn baby is act of slavery to selfishness. The 'right to choose' can never, for the Christian, be the right to sin.

Gap between the secularist mindset and Christian thinking

Now we are perfectly aware that those who are possessed by the post-Christian mentality will reject these statements outright. But this book is not being written in order to achieve an accommodation between the Christian mind and the post-Christian mind. On the contrary, it is being written with the precise aim of highlighting the tremendous gap that has opened up between the mind of the secularist media and the mind of Christendom.

Thus we can assert with assurance that, philosophically speaking, a woman's 'rights over her own body' are nonexistent. I do not mean this only in a strictly Christian sense. I do not mean only that none of us can have 'rights' over what is intended to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. I do not mean only that we Christians have surrendered any such 'rights'. (For that is what baptism is all about.) No, I mean also that 'choice' in respect of our bodies is a peculiarly irrelevant concept. We do not choose to be born. We do not choose to be male or female. We do not - more's the pity, you might say - choose our own body. We have to accept it as an endowment wholly given to us. Yes, we should keep it inviolable. And we should submit it to uses for which the Creator intended it. But as for 'rights' over it, why, our authority over it is so weak that we cannot prevent it from ageing and decaying.

Whatever we may say in theory, in practice we know well the limitations of our authority over our body. We cannot deny to the influenza germ or the fever virus the 'right' of entry to it, the 'authority' for a complete takeover of it. Indeed, we have to respond to the body's demands upon us with slavish promptness. When these demands become pressing and clamorous, we have to run off to the doctor and have the body's latest requirements of us spelt out in detail. And woe betide us if we fail to respond to the body's dictates.

The imperiousness of the body's demands upon us and the groveling servitude with which we answer them make nonsense of claims to unqualified rights over it. Whose impulse am I obeying and what is the authority to which I respond when I break inconveniently into my work schedule to attend a medical appointment, when I ponder the doctor's diagnosis, when I receive the prescription he presents to me, when I rush off with it to the pharmacy, when I study and implicitly obey the instructions on the bottle or the pill-box? 'Three tablets to be taken daily on an empty stomach', 'Two teaspoons to be swallowed after every meal'.

It is true that, in a certain crude sense, I can direct the motions of my body – other things being equal. I can order my hand to propel the pen across the page. I can order my legs to propel me across the room. I can order my arms and hands to remove a dictionary from the shelf so that I can consult it. I can direct my fingers to find the right page and my eyes to follow line after line. But can we seriously apply the word 'rights' to this kind of mechanical operation? You would not speak of a steering wheel's 'rights' over your car's direction, or the tuning knob's 'rights' over the radio station it selects.

Many great saints – St Paul, for instance – have eventually declared their desire to escape servitude to the body which this life on earth prescribes. Many poets – such as Shelley and Keats – have seemed impatient with the human being's imprisonment in the fabric of flesh and blood. Such people would surely have thought that to speak of exercising 'rights' over their bodies would be like prisoners speaking of 'rights' over their dungeons.

Common sense versus illogic reasoning

Common sense can help us here. How can you talk of exercising the ultimate authority of 'choice' over this thing which you earnestly wish to be shorter or taller, thinner or plumper, better proportioned and better complexioned, more graceful and more attractive, less weary, less worn, less wrinkled? Surely' the pretence to exercise such authority is illogical. And how can you talk of enjoying the rights of free choice over this machinery of involuntary ingurgitation and exhalation, unpredictable in its bursts of indigestion and constipation, its bouts of headache and toothache, its susceptibility to rheumatism and arthritis, asthma, heart attack, paralysis, cancer and the rest? The idea of exercising the rights of free choice over it is lunatic. You might as well claim 'rights' over the weather.

The concept of duty

The truth is that Christian thinking does not focus on human rights but on human duties. The connotation of the concept 'right' points back to the individual. The connotation of the concept 'duty' points outwards from the individual to some authority claiming recognition. But, of course, if there is no overall authority transcending that of the civil power, then the concept 'duty' cannot be brought into play except within the sphere of civic and legal obligation. That being so, it is interesting to observe how the concept of 'duty' has all but disappeared from modern thinking. We prefer the concept 'responsibility' which puts us in charge of things to the concept 'duty' which points to authority outside and above ourselves.

Indeed, human duty, in the personal moral sphere, is an essentially religious concept. Yet I myself have heard a sermon in which the congregation were told that to attend church merely out of a sense of duty was wrong. They ought to come because they wanted to, indeed because they enjoyed it. Such a denigration of duty as a motive is a grave and dangerous error. And it is particularly out of place when the services in question are such that no one with any literary or musical taste could possibly find 'enjoyment' in them.

It so happens that I once saw in the same newspaper two photographs of people worshipping. The one showed a handful of people kneeling in a village church. The other showed a packed mosque in which rows and rows of human hindquarters protruded from bowing worshippers of every age. The two contrasting photographs come back to my mind whenever I hear a parish priest introducing some new vulgarization of worship on the grounds that it will 'attract the young'. What attracts those packed rows of worshipping Muslims? Their behavior testifies to a strong sense of duty. The last thing it suggests is that the worshippers are thoroughly 'enjoying' themselves. And, indeed, emphasis on worship as a duty to God ought to be the priority for all of us. It should supersede any specious notions of 'attracting' men and women to a place of worship as though it were a place of entertainment.

Ode to Duty

There is a much neglected poem by the poet who is often considered to be the arch apostle of veneration for Nature, William Wordsworth. He was 37 years old when he first published it. It is called 'Ode to Duty' and begins:

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty!

It is not long before Wordsworth is making a remarkable confession:

Loving freedom and untried;
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust;
And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray;

But then' I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

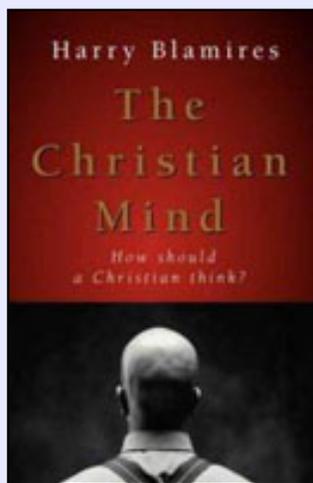
So, in middle life, the poet pauses to examine himself, and he has to admit that, under cover of a love for freedom, he has too rashly and hastily accepted the guidance of personal inner impulse, shrugging off the call for obedience to divine authority.

The final stanza reads:

To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee; I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth, thy Bondman let me live'

So the great prophet of the Romantic revolution, the seeming advocate of Nature's authority over us, finds his highest calling as a Bondman to duty, the offspring of God's voice. Even so we are all called to recognize our creaturely status as men and women made by God and called to his service. That recognition will naturally impel us to ask 'What do love in return?' rather than 'What more can I claim?', 'What are my duties?' rather than 'What are my rights?'

[This article is excerpted from the book, *The Post-Christian Mind, Introduction* from Chapter 1 and *Rights* from Chapter 2, by © Harry Blamires, first published in Great Britain by SPCK in 2001. Used with permission.]



Harry Blamires is an Anglican theologian, literary critic, and novelist. Now retired, Blamires served as head of the English department at King Alfreds College (now Winchester University) in Winchester, England.

He began writing in the late 1940s at the encouragement of his friend, C.S. Lewis, his tutor at Oxford University. He has written more than thirty theological and English literature books, including *Where Do We Stand?* and the bestselling *The Christian Mind*.

(c) copyright 2011 [The Sword of the Spirit](http://www.swordofthespirit.net)

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



The Truth of All Things

a philosophical inquiry by Josef Pieper

If you study any philosophical treatise of our present era you will with almost absolute certainty *not* encounter the concept, and much less the expression, “the truth of all things.” This is no mere accident. The generally prevailing philosophical thinking of our time has no room at all for this concept; it is, as it were, “not provided for.” It makes sense to speak of truth with regard to thoughts, ideas, statements, opinions—but not with regard to things. Our judgments regarding reality may be true (or false); but to label as “true” reality itself, the “things,” appears to be rather meaningless, mere nonsense. Things are real, not “true”!

Looking at the historical development of this situation, we find that there is much more to it than the simple fact of a certain concept or expression not being used; we find not merely the “neutral” absence, as it were, of a certain way of thinking. No, the nonuse and absence of the concept, “the truth of all things,” is rather the result of a long process of biased discrimination and suppression or, to use a less aggressive term: of elimination.

[Originally published as, “Wahrheit der Dinge—ein verschollener Begriff” in *Festschrift für Leo Brandt* (Köln-Opladen: Westdeutscher-Verlag, 1969). Translated by Lothar Krauth.]

Things can be known because they are created

The fundamental statement about the “truth of all things” is found in St. Thomas [Aquinas]’ *Questiones disputatae de veritate*; it reads: *res naturalis inter duos intellects constituta (est)*; whatever is real in nature is placed between two knowing agents, namely – so the text continues – between the *intellectus divinus* [God’s mind] and the *intellectus humanus* [human mind].

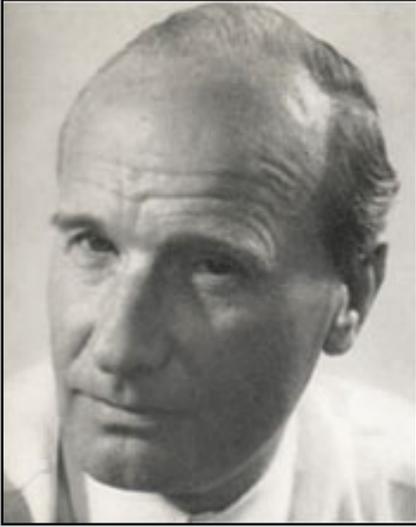
These “coordinates” place all reality between the absolutely creative, inventive knowledge of God and the imitating, “informed” knowledge of us humans and thus present the total realm of reality as a structure of interwoven original and reproduced conceptions.

Based on this twofold orientation of all things – so Thomas continues his reasoning – the concept of the “truth of all things” is also twofold: first, it means “thought by God”; second, it means “knowable to the human mind.” The statement, “All things are true,” would therefore mean, on one hand, that all things are known by God in the act of creation and, on the other hand, that all things are by their nature accessible and comprehensible to the human mind.

All things can be known by us because they spring from God’s thought. Because they originated in God’s mind, things have not only their specific essence in themselves and for themselves, but precisely because they originated in God’s mind, things have as well an essence “for us.” All things are intelligible, translucent, clear and open because they are created by God’s thought, and for this reason they are essentially spirit related. The clarity and lucidity that flows from God’s knowledge into things, together with their very being (more correctly: as their very being) – this lucidity alone makes all things knowable for the human mind. St. Thomas, in a commentary on Scripture, remarks: “A thing has exactly as much light as it has reality.” And in one of his late works, in his commentary on the *Liber de causis*, we find a profound statement that expresses the same thought in almost mystical terms: *ipsa actualitas rei est quoddam lumen ipsius*; “the reality of a thing is itself its light” – and “reality” is understood here as “being created”! It is precisely this “light” that makes a thing visible to our eyes. In short: things can be known because they are created.

[Originally published in *Unaustrinkbares Licht* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1963). Translated by Lothar Krauth.]

Excerpts from *Josef Pieper: An Anthology*, © 1989 Ignatius Press, San Francisco. Used with permission.



Josef Pieper (1904-1997) was a German Catholic philosopher and noted author. Among his most notable works are *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance; Leisure: the Basis of Culture; The Philosophical Act; and Guide to Thomas Aquinas* (published in England as *Introduction to Thomas Aquinas*). He translated into German *The Problem of Pain*, by C.S. Lewis.

Pieper died at the age of ninety-three on November 6, 1997. In a tribute entitled "A Philosopher of Virtue," published in *First Things*, Gilbert Meilaender summarized some of Pieper's core principles:

Pieper emphasizes the close connection between moral and intellectual virtue. Our minds do not – contrary to many views currently popular – create truth. Rather, they must be conformed to the truth of things given in creation. And such conformity is possible only as the moral virtues become deeply embedded in our character, a slow and halting process.

We have, he writes on one occasion, "lost the awareness of the close bond that links the knowing of truth to the condition of purity." That is, in order to know the truth we must become persons of a certain sort. The full transformation of character that we need will, in fact, finally require the virtues of faith, hope, and love. And this transformation will not necessarily – perhaps not often – be experienced by us as easy or painless. Hence the transformation of self that we must – by God's grace – undergo "perhaps resembles passing through something akin to dying."

(c) copyright 2011 [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

Readings from the Early Church Fathers on the Light of God's Truth



What can blind us to the light of truth?

by Theodoret of Cyrus, Syria (393-457 AD)

The light allows the eye to distinguish, for example, gold from silver, copper from iron and tin. Moreover, it allows us to note the difference between colors and shapes, between the plants and between the animals. But only for those who have sound eyesight. The blind gain no advantage from the rays of the sun: they do not even see the brightness of the light!

There are people who do not want to open their eyes to the light of truth but are quite happy to live in darkness. They are like the blind. They are like the birds that fly by night and take their name from it, night-jars, or like bats.

It would be stupid to be angry with these animals. Nature has assigned them that destiny. But human beings who purposely choose the mirky gloom, what reason can they give to justify themselves?

What prevents them removing the mist from their eyes is arrogance. They fancy they know the truth better than others because they have studied a lot. But they are like fish in the sea: they live in salt water, but, nevertheless, once they have been caught they still

need to be salted.

- The Cure of Pagan Diseases, 2, I ff. (SCS7, P.I36)

More true than the truth?

by Irenaeus of Lyons (115-202 AD)

Some people abandon the teachings of the church and fail to understand how a simple and devout person can have more worth than a philosopher who blasphemes without restraint.

Heretics are like that.

Heretics are always wanting to find something more true than the truth. They are always choosing new and unreliable ways. But like the blind led by the blind, they will fall into the abyss of ignorance by their own fault.

The church is like paradise on earth. “You may eat freely of the fruit of every tree in the garden,” says the Spirit of God. In our case he means: Feed on the whole of Scripture, but do not do it with intellectual pride, and do not swallow the opinions of the heretics. They pretend to possess the knowledge of good and evil, but they are impiously elevating their own intelligence above their Creator.

Beware! By devouring the ideas of the heretics we banish ourselves from the paradise of life.

- Against Heresies, 5, 20 (Harvey II, P.379)

Knowledge is no good without charity

by Maximus the Confessor, Constantinople (580-662 AD)

If you have received from God the gift of knowledge, however limited, beware of neglecting charity and temperance. They are virtues which radically purify the soul from passions and so open the way of knowledge continually.

The way of spiritual knowledge passes through inner freedom and humility. Without them we shall never see the Lord.

“Knowledge puffs up whereas charity builds up” (1 Corinthians 8:1). Therefore unite knowledge with charity and by being cleansed from pride you will become a true spiritual builder. You will build up yourself and all those who are your neighbors.

Charity takes its power to build up from the fact that it is never envious nor unkind. It is natural for

knowledge to bring with it, at the beginning anyway, some measure of presumption and envy. But charity overcomes these defects: presumption because "it is not puffed up" and envy because "it is patient and kind" (1 Corinthians 13:4).

Anyone who has knowledge, therefore, ought also to have charity, because charity can save his spirit from injury.

If someone is judged worthy to receive the gift of knowledge but allows his heart to be full of bitterness or rancor or aversion to another, it is as if he had been struck in the eye by a thornbush. That is why knowledge is no good without charity.

- *Centuries on Charity*, 4, 5'7 ff. (SC9, PP.164ff.)

How can we satisfy our need to know?

by Diadochus of Photica (5th century AD)

True knowledge is the light whereby we can infallibly distinguish good from evil.

That limitless light illumines the way of righteousness which leads the mind towards the Sun himself. In that light the mind strives with all its energy after divine charity.

Our longing for true knowledge is satisfied by spiritual discourse, provided it comes from God through the exercise of charity.

The intellect ceases to be tormented as it concentrates upon the Word of God.

Whereas previously it was troubled and made wretched by its worries, now the exercise of love expands the compass of its reflections.

- *Spiritual Works*, 6, 7 (SCSb, PP.57ff.)

[Translation by Paul Drake. For more readings see *Drinking from the Hidden Fountain: A Patristic Breviary*, by Thomas Spidlik, Cistercian Publications, 1994.]

(c) copyright 2011 [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

[September 2011 - Vol. 52](#)



¿Acia Que? – “Where To?”

Reflections on Adelante 2011

by Tadhg Lynch

Ten days to prepare for something is a long time. Having worked with a team of about 100 others to transform an army base in the Basque region of Spain into a venue for a week long Sword of the Spirit gathering – it was time to take a break. So Sunday the 7th of August found young people from all over the world emptied into the town of Vitoria-Gasteiz for a break from their exertions in planning and preparation. We barely made a dent in the place – the local regional festival being in full swing with various musicians, vendors, and parades choking the narrow streets.

Wandering away from the crowds, I sank down in a plaza to watch a local exhibition match of a game I had never seen before. It looked a little like a mix of handball and squash – but much tougher. Traditionally, *Pelota* is played outdoors with a hard leather ball and with no form of glove or covering for the hand beyond a few strips of tape. The game rewards untiring running, preparation, and footwork as players in teams of two judge the flight of a ball bouncing from one or more walls and maneuver backwards and forwards into the optimum position to hit it back

La Pelota Vasca

The País Vasco (Basque Country) in Spain has a unique sport showcased at the yearly festival in the regional capital Vitoria - Gasteiz.



Basque player hitting the ball with bare hand

Pelota is not a complex game. The object is to hit a small hard leather ball against a rectangular area of a wall one more time than your opponent – similar to squash. Perhaps uniquely however, it is played in an L-shaped court with a wall to the left hand side and one directly in front of the players, leaving the ball free to run out of the back or right hand side of the arena into the spectators.

Teams of two compete against one another; a defensive player controlling the back of the court while an attacker plays closer in to the wall, waiting to pounce on a moment of weakness from the opposing team to deliver a killer shot and finish the point – similar to a volley in tennis.

Traditionally, Pelota is played outdoors with a hard leather ball and with no form of glove or covering for the hand beyond a few strips of tape. Players wear one another out from the back of the court with long rallies, continually hefting the ball high into the air, attempting to get it to bounce back close to the wall on the left hand side.

against the wall.

The players were genuine athletes – expending a huge amount of energy in preparation for each shot. They were also undeniably tough as, after a couple of shots (having first amply displayed my complete lack of Spanish during a break in the game) I could testify that it really hurts to hit the ball with the naked hand.

Finally it seemed that the whole town had turned out to watch. As six o' clock struck and the players trooped out into the arena for the adult exhibition match, the crowd around the middle of the Plaza de los Fueros in central Vitoria was at least six deep.



participants from Spanish speaking communities enjoy singing together

It was the seventh of August – we were deep into the ten preparation days for the European and Middle East regional conference [Adelante](#) – and three days before it was due to begin. I was glad of the chance to relax in the midst of a crowd of strangers, watching the athletes run endlessly back and forth in front of the wall, pounding the ball with the flat of their hand while the shadows lengthened and a partisan crowd bayed for their favorites.



The game rewards untiring running, preparation, and footwork as players judge the flight of the ball as it ricochets from one or more walls and maneuver backwards into position one more time before running forward at the apex of the bounce to slap it with the ridge of their palm high against the wall and force their opponent to play one more shot.

The player who fails to run back far enough behind the bounce of the ball and catch it at the optimum time, is either unable to generate enough force with his palm to get it back to the wall or offers up a weak shot which the attacker from the opposing team can attempt to volley.

Surrender my life to God



a personal reflection on Adelante
by Gina Benedetto

During the Adelante Conference I felt strongly called to surrender my life to God completely so that I can discover his perfect plan for my life. I



Prep 10 participants from Europe enjoy a break between sessions

Die Konferenz

Six years ago in the European and Middle East Region, we hefted a shot against the wall. An enormous amount of effort and expense was poured into five days in Germany for “die Konferenz” a gathering of about 220 people from many different countries with a theme of sacrifice. Now a team of 105 people from all over Europe and even farther afield prepared tirelessly for Adelante – running back and forth across a huge military base, sending thousands of emails and coordinating everything from travel plans, to intercession needs, to allergy information – I found myself looking at Adelante with critical eyes. Mission in the European part of our region seems so difficult, and often fruitless.

The image of the players endlessly maneuvering forward and back against that wall dogged me during the preparation days. Were we merely keeping the ball in the air? Was all of our running and preparation doing no more than keeping the game alive in a continent sometimes hostile but more often completely indifferent to the message of the gospel and the call to community life?



an evening of entertainment featuring some of the Adelante participants

I wondered whether the preparation and planning could somehow

know I am called to do mission work but I need to trust God to point me exactly where he wants me to be. I felt God’s presence very tangibly during all of the prayer times and I know others did as well.

The strongest message I am taking away from this week is to always be strong and have courage because no matter where God leads us he will be with us and be strengthening us.

John Keating, presiding elder of the Servants of the Word, gave three presentations from scripture on godly men and women who responded to the challenges of their times with faith, hope, and courage.

Here are a few highpoints from his presentations.

Teaching # 1: Daniel and his friends – faith, hope, courage, boldness and humility against the current (based on Daniel chapter 1)

Daniel’s story has been told over and over again as a children’s story or as a nice little example of God saving his people from exile but until now I’ve never been able to see how it relates to my life.

Daniel has a lot in common with most modern-day youth, in terms of being faced with a non-believing and immoral culture, so he is set up to be the perfect example of how to respond to such negative surroundings.

Daniel and his three friends find their identity in God and therefore they love who they are and refuse to change for anyone. God calls them to a specific mission, just like he calls us, and they pursue him with all of their being.

They show us that God is faithful when we put our hope and trust in him.

Teaching # 2: Daniel Chapter 3 – hope, faithfulness, and courage under fire

spark a new wave of mission and outreach in our region amongst the participants or whether we would allow the moment to pass us by. Would the young people who came be expecting a holiday in the sunshine of Spain or would they be expecting to meet the Lord? As I considered the team which had put so much effort and energy into Adelante – a mission spanning continents, languages and regions – I noticed more than a few sore palms. Some of those shots can hurt when you make them for the 100th time.



The goals for a conference like [Adelante](#) are many and varied. There are perhaps three that stand out however:

Firstly, Adelante was a place to gather and receive encouragement and vision for our mission in Europe. Bringing a large group of young people together – 400 in total – was an astonishing and encouraging number for that part of the Sword of the Spirit region.

Perhaps more importantly and indeed prophetically, Adelante gathered young people from 22 different nations across the globe. In a continent where unity amidst the many blessings and challenges inherent in being a people of diverse language, church tradition, and culture is so important – ambassadors of so many nations together was a sign of the Lord’s favour to us.

Adelante also marked a significant step in the living out of our ecumenical call as [Kairos](#). Following a successful application to host a large venue in a prominent position at the Catholic World Youth Day in Madrid, Adelante had been a practical and spiritual preparation for the exercise of our living witness to unity in the body of Christ. As the conference itself brought more than a hundred young people from various Orthodox and Protestant church traditions to join the Roman Catholic majority a living witness to fellowship together was being forged by the days of the conference itself.

This talk focused on being bold when responding to God’s call, no matter how crazy it may seem. John Keating gave us some examples (Queen Esther and also the story of Daniel and his three friends who were cast into the fiery furnace) of God’s seemingly crazy plan which ends up being perfect and has amazing results every time. God wants us to take on a spirit of martyrdom for him so that we can be strong and courageous when spreading his word to those around us and those around the world.

Teaching #3: Joshua takes the lead – Be strong and of good courage

The story of Joshua is about God commissioning him to take up Moses’ work in leading God’s people. Throughout the story, God promises Joshua that he will always help him and will never leave him abandoned. John Keating was calling us on to be a “generation of Joshuas” and lead God’s people to follow the Lord. John encouraged us to listen to God and to be ready to completely surrender ourselves to God so that we can follow his plan and lead accordingly.

[Gina Benedetto, from Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, recently completed a GAP year of service in London, UK with Koinonia and Antioch Community.]

Be strong and courageous



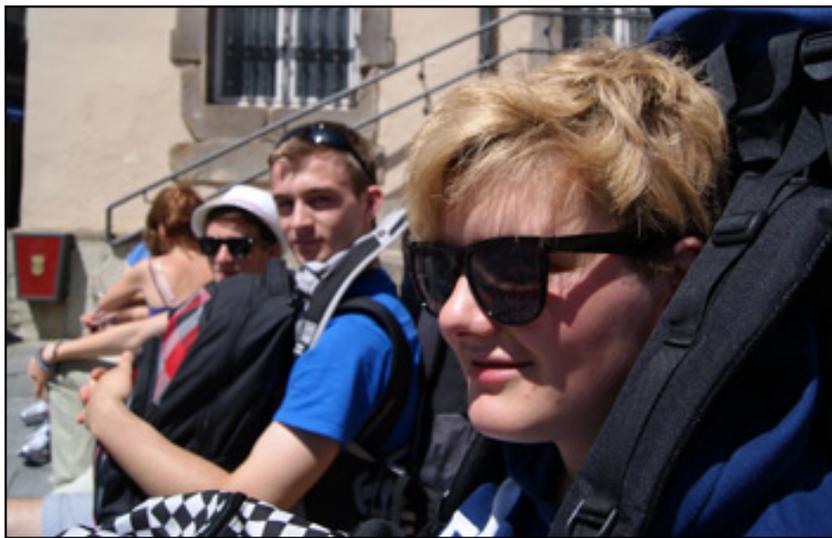
a personal reflection on Adelante
by Simeon Mead



Tadhg Lynch (right) leads worship with musicians and singers

Secondly, Adelante was a place for young people to worship together, to be changed by the experience of the presence of the Lord and to listen to his word – as individuals and as a group.

As the conference progressed throughout the week, the experience of being bound together by worship increased. Learning songs in the language of another people, singing in German surrounded by a Scot, a Pole, a Russian and a Philippino, being led by a Lebanese in fluent Spanish – these were things growing directly out of our worship together as the Lord moved among us and formed us into a people who sought him together.



Finally, Adelante was a place to offer young people a call to radical discipleship and to give them a chance to choose for deeper discipleship as they returned home. As I progressed through the conference speaking to people about their future, their path in life, and what their calling from the Lord might be, I could not help but think about a good friend from Belgium I saw respond to an altar call on the final night of the “Die Konferenz” in Germany. He brought his fiancée to the back of the meeting to ask one of the leaders to pray with them for direction in their new life together. Six years, a wedding, a new house and two children later – I could see the blessing in his life.

I personally experienced a great time of growth during Adelante, both spiritually and through growth in new relationships and strengthening of old ones.

I enjoyed the series of talks given by John Keating during the conference. He spoke about the characters of Daniel, Esther, and Joshua in the Bible – who all responded with faith, hope, courage, boldness, and humility to the situations they faced.

I was particularly struck by the promise of God to Joshua, “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1:5-6).

I was also struck by another verse from Deuteronomy 31:6 which said, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

As Christians we have to be courageous, and following the example of people of faith and courage, we have to stand up for what we believe, even if it means going against the grain or risking dangerous consequences.

The prayer meeting on Saturday evening was brilliant, and I could really feel the Holy Spirit among us and experienced a wonderful time of fellowship and worship with young people just like me from 22 different countries.

I also attended World Youth Day in Madrid, where we ran a Soul Food Café, where we met with different groups around Madrid and invited them into our huge tent for events, performances, entertainment, talks, and a hugely successful prayer meeting on Wednesday evening – we made several links with different groups who seemed interested in our way of life, and I really was strengthened in faith and enjoyed the atmosphere and meeting different people from around the world who share the same beliefs and want to follow Christ.

[Simeon Mead lives in Acton, London and is part of the Antioch Community. He recently graduated from high school and will attend university in the autumn. He is currently



Simeon Mead, from Koinonia London, takes command of the ball

And yet, as the conference drew to a close my mind once again returned to those unique athletes, pounding the unyielding ball against an immovable object with their bare hand. It seemed like they expended so much effort for so little reward – the ball always returned. More often than not, the points were decided by the team that got tired first and made a mistake, rather than a winning volley.

I wondered about Adelante – was that all we were doing here? Merely taking another shot that would come right back at us? Would we live more for the Lord Jesus because of what had happened in Spain? Or was it merely a pressure cooker experience – rash decisions made in the heat of the moment to be ground down by the pressure of living in a place which neither supports nor values Christian discipleship? When we all go home, when all is said and done – would it all make any difference?



Sebastian Pourie, from Munich, Germany, prepares for a GAP year of service

involved in the university Christian outreach in London called Koinonia.]

Overwhelmed and blessed



a personal reflection by Marie-Sophie Vanderstuyft

If I would have to explain Adelante in 3 words I would say: *overwhelming, genius and blessed.*

Overwhelming

My first impression. We arrived a little late at the military base due to bus problems. The opening session was about to begin. We got dropped in the middle of 400 mostly familiar faces. I think I have never been hugged/greeted/kissed one, two, or three times (depending on the person's custom) by so many people in such a short time. So many nationalities, so many languages, so many faces and smiles. A little overwhelmed I sat down for what would become a crazy welcome party including balloons falling from the ceiling, confetti pistols shooting around, and the soldiers at the barracks preaching. Beautifully done. It did set a tone for the rest of the conference.

Genius

How can you avoid getting lost in an impersonal crowd of 400 people at a conference? The pastoral team for the conference solved this by dividing us into households with caring household leaders and into villages with village leaders caring for the household leaders. In addition to that we had regional representatives looking after us. I thought this was genius.

Forward

In Spanish the word “Adelante” means to move; to go forward, to walk through. As God’s people come together to seek him, to try to walk further into his presence, the Lord responds. In a square, simple hall, in the back of a military base in the north of Spain. God spoke to the young people of the Sword of the Spirit.

He walked amongst them and showed them his nature. He spoke as a God of compassion to those who have strayed far from him – a God who welcomed back with open arms many who sought forgiveness and relationship with him once again.

He appeared as a God of challenge, adventure and hope for those he calls into mission to build up his people in Europe. He appeared as a God of healing and power as we witnessed the healing of two broken legs, numerous minor ailments, and also the miraculous granting of a Visa on the very last day before the conference to enable a participant to travel from India.

Finally, he revealed himself as a God of infinite majesty, unfathomable depth and gracious relationship to those who had prayed until they were empty and finally sat quietly beholding him in worship.

He spoke to the young people of Europe and the Middle East – telling them that he was taking up an offering of young lives for mission, telling them that they were a group of young people whom he was calling together into a continuing call – a “Joshua Generation” as main speaker John Keating expressed it.

Finally an image of an ink blot spreading across the continent of Europe reminded us that our God is calling us to himself to be his warriors in a time of difficulty, trial, and testing for the Christian people here, and that our response to him would demand struggle and sacrifice as we fought for his kingdom.

As a household leader I was able to share during the week with 6 other sisters from different countries and communities. We had some rich conversations together. It was an honor to be able to watch people struggle, search and find, make big steps, and try to live a holy life.

I also had plenty of meetings and chats with my village leader, which made it possible for me, too, to fully engage with the program and to keep the right focus.

Blessed

When I came home after the conference, I felt the urge to list all my blessings. They were too many to keep in my mind, so I had to write them down. Adelante was a very blessed time for me. Even though the conference was very challenging, I felt God speaking to me clearly through teachings, workshops, meetings, prayer times, conversations. I came from a dry land. I had not heard the Lord for a long time. It was incredibly refreshing to hear his voice again!

The teachings were very interesting. They were mostly given by John Keating. We talked about young people in the Old Testament being examples for us in our daily lives.

I will not go into this too deeply, but here are a few star-thoughts.

- Daniel 'Wherever I place you, I want you to be who you are, living your own identity in humble boldness, for me.'

- Our generation as a Joshua generation: "I have called you and chosen you. Do not be afraid. Be strong and of good courage. I will be with you. Follow me!" - A key strategy: Seek the Lord first before all else!

In addition to the teachings, we were able to go to some workshops. The workshop on mission was a personal highlight of the conference for me.

"Our generation is not called to simply continue our parents' mission, but we hold the keys for a new way of mission. Do you want to dream with God?" This message struck me very deeply. I want



Acia que?

Writing to our staff team a month before the conference, a faithful prayer warrior shared these words: “Being a disciple on mission is primarily about learning to be like him – the witness we give is not really about being a miracle worker, but someone who can persevere and endure because he is rooted in trusting that the Father’s will is nothing but love.”

Practically, Adelante achieved its goals. It brought young people together for vision and encouragement; it provided an opportunity to approach the Lord Almighty in prayer together, and many young people were afforded the opportunity to take a step of faith towards the Lord. Although a true movement of the Lord requires some time in which to assess the fruitfulness it brings in the life of his people – the bus to Bilbao on the return journey from Adelante afforded me an opportunity to reflect once again upon the conference and the endless slugging against the wall.

As we bounced across the dry landscape and I recalled once again the amphitheatre, the crowd, the players and the relentless mocking return of the small hard ball, I saw a new angle on *pelota*. The players were more than simple athletes. For the crowd, they represent a tradition, a continuation of a way of life – the symbol in motion of a people. Gathered together for one day during their regional festival – today’s players join a long line of others who have played in the exhibition match before them. Veteran athletes, mothers, brothers, family, coach and community now seated on the warm stone steps watching them run back and forward again and again – delighting in the intense imperative of the present moment – “hit the ball now!” – sure in the knowledge that with each passing year far more than a temporary spectacle is being performed.

to be a missionary, I want to dream with God and do whatever I can to make it come true.

During the rest of the conference this theme was in my head and in my prayers.

I made a decision during the closing session, and with God’s grace I will go and tell the good news as Jesus commands. And I hope we can do this together, as a generation.

Let’s get this work started! Adelante! I’m more than ever ready for my GAP year now!

Thanks to everybody who made this week possible, and special thanks to the mysterious benefactor who made it financially possible for me to attend this conference!

[Marie-Sophie Vanderstuyft (age 23) lives in Belgium and is part of the Jerusalem community and Pharos, a university student outreach in Leuven. She recently finished her 5th year of medicine at the Catholic University of Leuven. She is currently doing a GAP year in London with Koinonia, a Christian outreach to university students.]

A people is being moulded. God, we may be thankful, does more than “this time and this time only.” But he does do “now.” Adelante was a “now” moment. The ball was at its apex, it was ready to be hit by a fresh generation of young lives.

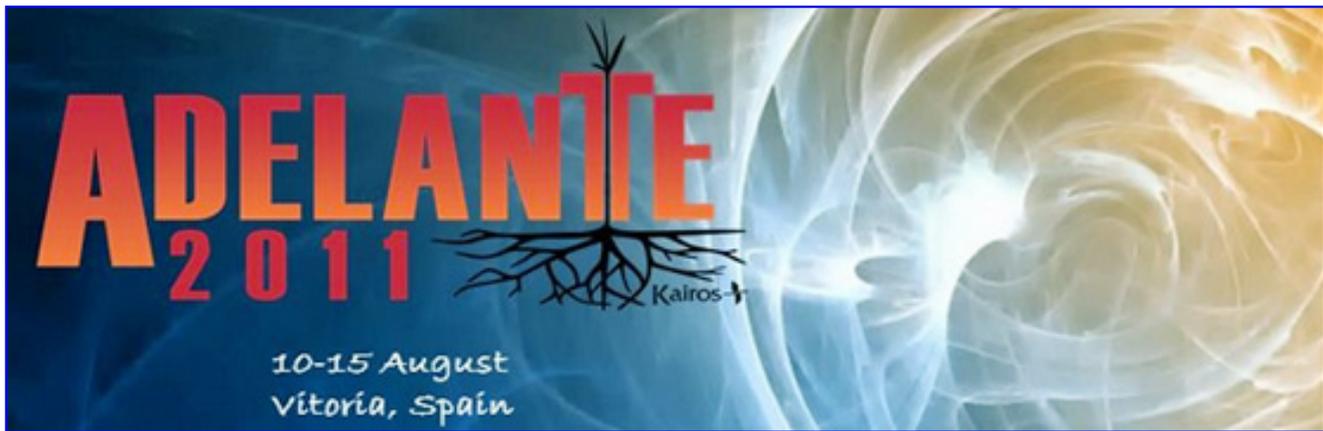
The question on many people’s lips as we left Spain was, “Adelante? acie a que?” – “Go forward? Where to?” For the next shot, we may have to wait for the bounce of the ball, but the direction is clear. Forward into a people, forward into someone who can persevere and endure because he is rooted in trusting in the Father’s will.

[Tadhg Lynch works for [Kairos – EME](#) in resource and outreach development.]

(c) copyright 2011 [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



Call to the second generation of the Sword of the Spirit

a personal reflection on Adelante by Ellen Karagoulis

For me, the entire experience of Adelante could be summed up by Joshua 1:1-9. “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

Joshua was the insufficient heir to Moses’ legacy. He had been Moses’ right-hand man, and followed the Lord with understated faithfulness. Now he was slated to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

The word adelante means “go forward” in Spanish. At this conference, we, the second generation of the Sword of the Spirit, are the insufficient heirs to the legacy of the first generation. Born into community or adopted, we have been called to pick up the baton and run with it. However, like Joshua, we are called not just to circle the same desert, but to extend the territory and move into the new land the Lord is promising us.

As I was meditating on the words given during our worship times at Adelante, I felt the Lord tell me, “Go out and move forward. Every step you take will be consecrated to me as holy. Take the land I am giving you.” I know he wasn’t just speaking to me, because many of the prophecies we heard later confirmed this.

The Lord is calling the second generation of the Sword of the Spirit to move into new territory and forge out new paths for this mission. I like what Martin Steinbreithner said at his missionary training workshop: “Some of you may be thinking to yourselves, why doesn’t the Sword of the Spirit do more of _____? That’s because you haven’t started it yet.”



Ellen with students in Detroit

What is my response? For now, I know more clearly that my call is to “take the land” in [Detroit](#). I have been working as a missionary there for a year and a half, and I am beginning to see more clearly the new paths the Lord would have me carve out. For me, it’s to bring the light of Christ to a dark world plagued with violence, addiction, and the sorrow of broken homes.

However, that’s just for me. In talking with my brothers and sisters at Adelante, I was encouraged to hear all the great ideas they had for being salt and light in their respective regions. I am doing my small bit in Detroit, but there are hundreds of others like me doing the same in Belfast, Dusseldorf, Leuven, Syria, etc. The possibilities for new mission are endless.

And you? Where will you “adelante”?

[Ellen Karagoulis is a Women’s Mission Leader in [YouthWorks-Detroit](#), an inner-city ministry of Detroit Community Outreach.]

Moving forward as a new generation of Joshuas

a personal reflection on Adelante by Daniel Spokoinyi

The Adelante conference impacted me greatly. I could really sense that God was very present among our generation. My guiding thought of the week was that God is moving us all forward as a new generation of Joshuas to enter together into the promised land even though we are all different – but the goal is the same.

The most amazing experience was the prayer times at Saturday night and Sunday night, when so many people responded to God knocking on their door, and the atmosphere made it possible with ease to respond to this call together as a nation of Joshuas.

At the World Youth Day in Madrid, we hosted the Soul Food Café. It gave us a visible presence there and enabled us to show many others who we are as Kairos. It was especially challenging to tell people from many different countries who we are in words they could understand. We really had to be totally

open, welcoming and strategic to capture their attention and to be able to witness about the role of Kairos in helping us live for the Lord. Having a charismatic prayer meeting in the middle of World Youth Day, praying for people there, and together praising the Lord was a powerful and great experience, and I believe that it had a good impact on many people's lives.

[Daniel Spokoyni is originally from Moscow, Russia. He is a student at the Catholic University of Leuven in Leuven, Belgium. He is also a student staff worker for Pharos, a university Christian outreach to university students in Leuven.]

> Return to [Adelante 2011](#)

(c) copyright 2011 [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



What's wrong with boys?

by Michael Shaughnessy

When asked what's wrong with boys today most people can give you a list. At the top of nearly everyone's list is irresponsibility. Why are young men so irresponsible? Why are boys taking so long to become men? One reason is social change. It is no longer necessary for a young man to be responsible at thirteen, twenty, or even thirty. If it isn't necessary, why bother?

A boy growing up before 1950 often went to school during the day, but every night and all summer there were jobs to do. Jobs that gave him real responsibility and impact. He might feed the chickens (that fed the family) or he milked the cows (milk they drank). Or maybe he was the paperboy. The news was delivered to everyone in the neighborhood, not by the TV or the internet, but by him. He had responsibility and it mattered. At 18 he probably went away to defend his country from a clear and evil enemy. His life counted. He had to be responsible.

A baby-boom boy didn't have the same need to be responsible. He had chores to do, but many of them were domestic: clean sinks, pull weeds, vacuum and dust. He had chores, not responsibilities. He might have had a job bagging groceries, stocking shelves or working a till. His job was important if his income was helping him to get set up in life – preparing for responsibility – but not if was spent on self indulgence.

Many a boy today has no need to be responsible. Nothing (or no one) depends on him, so he stays home and plays video games (boys games – games of war and competition because he wants to be a

man, a winner, important.) He is the man in fantasy baseball. He makes his trades on time but he still doesn't take out the trash in the real world.

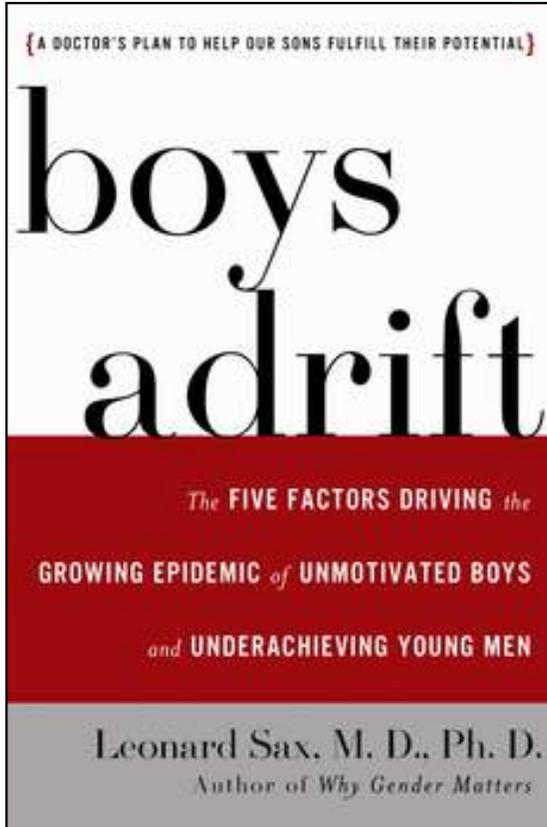
Every boy is a Sherlock Holmes. When needed Sherlock was sharp. The adrenaline flowed. But when he wasn't needed he was full of lassitude and could sit for days doing nothing.

A boy without real responsibility does not become a man. When real responsibility is delayed until the mid-twenties it should be no surprise that many boys are not becoming men. There are still ways to make boys carry real responsibility. Parents just need to find them.

Mike Shaughnessy is an elder in [The Servants of the Word](#) and the Director of [Kairos in North America](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people.

(c) copyright 2011 [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



BOOK REVIEW

Boys Adrift: The Five Factors Driving the Growing Epidemic of Unmotivated Boys and Underachieving Young Men

by Leonard Sax, M.D., Ph.D.

2007, 2009 © Basic Books

Boys Adrift reviewed by Jerry Munk

Recently I read the book, [Boys Adrift: the Five Factors Driving the Growing Epidemic of Unmotivated boys and Underachieving Young Men](#), by Dr. Leonard Sax. The book deals with a growing problem here in America (and many Western societies): a substantial percentage of young men are reaching their twenties without the drive necessary to take on adult life and adult responsibilities. What is happening? Is it society? Is it family? Is it the environment? Good questions all, and *Boys Adrift* attempts to answer them. Dr. Sax paints the picture of a “perfect storm” for boys today. He offers five reasons why we are seeing more under-motivated boys and offers several things that parents can do to address the situation. Allow me to present a chapter-by-chapter synopsis of the book.

Factor 1, Schools. Dr. Sax argues that recent changes to school curriculums create an environment that disengages most boys. Making kindergarten an academic experience, rather than a socializing one, is developmentally inappropriate for 5-year-old boys. Some boys are quick to see school as boring and stupid. They may disengage in kindergarten and never re-engage. Sax recommends (at the very least) holding boys back a year, but he also recommends single-sex schools, giving boys more hands on, real-world (nature not computer) experiences, and incorporating the element of team competition into education.

Factor 2, Video Games. Dr. Sax expresses concern about the violence and sexuality associated with video games, but he also cites research that video games can change brain development in profound ways: effectively isolating motivation from human activity and shutting it down. This dynamic (isolating and depressing motivation from human activity) is an end result of several factors discussed by Dr. Sax. We end up with boys who have little or no motivation to take on adult life and responsibilities.

Factor 3, ADHD Medications. Because schools are becoming less developmentally appropriate for boys,

distracted boys are increasingly likely to be medicated. Only a small percentage of boys medicated actually have ADHD, Sax says, but boys are medicated to make them fit better into a developmentally inappropriate environment. Many of these medications work (i.e., they do help boys fit into a developmentally inappropriate environment) in the short term, but they have a side effect that is just beginning to be understood: these drugs appear to isolate and depress motivation. This side effect can develop after a short time on the medication, but its impact can be lifelong.

Factor 4, Endocrine Disruptors. There is growing evidence, Dr. Sax says, that chemicals in the environment tend to physically feminize boys. One source of these chemicals (among many) is plastic packaging commonly used for bottled water, carbonated drinks, and food. The links are not absolutely clear, but there is growing evidence that these chemicals are responsible for girls reaching puberty earlier, and boys later. There is also evidence that these chemicals work to isolate and depress motivation in boys.

Factor 5, Revenge of Forsaken Gods. In this interestingly-titled chapter, Dr. Sax discusses (among other things) how the breakdown of male community impacts boys. Becoming a man (as opposed to reaching physical maturity) is learned from other men. Boys fail to become men because there is no community of men in their lives who teach them to become men. Sax focuses more on community structures, but the breakdown of family and absentee fathers is also mentioned.

What do I recommend?

I recommend that people read *Boys Adrift*. It is available at most book stores and on-line from Amazon and Barnes and Noble. I should be clear, this is not a “Christian” book and I do not necessarily agree with every point Sax makes in it. Even so, this is an important read for parents of boys, for pastoral leaders working with parents of boys, and for youth leaders as well. The book lays out a discussion which I think parents and pastorals leaders need to have if we want to effectively counter this drift and help our young men grow in character and maturity.

I also recommend the following:

1. Parents may want to consider delaying school for their boys. A later start can help boys better plug into an academic environment and thereby avoid the suggestion of medication to treat ADHD. There are many pressures to start school early; Sax makes a compelling argument for starting a little later. Parents who home school will find valuable information in this book (and in Sax’s previous book, *Gender Matters*) about how boys learn differently than girls do and how important it is for boys to see, touch, and feel the real world.
2. In the *Sword of the Spirit’s* Christian Parenting course we strongly encourage parents to limit computer, video game, and TV use. Sinful and worldly content is one problem, the wasted time is another. Sax’s discussion of how video games depress motivation highlights another warning signal. I have talked to several community parents who have read Sax’s book, and now wish they had been more diligent in this area with their children who have now grown up – and these parents already tended to be on the strict side.
3. Parents should be cautious about putting their boys on ADHD medications. Many doctors will advise, “Let’s try it and see if it helps.” It probably will help, but that’s not the question. The real question is this: Does the boy have ADHD? There are tests for ADHD, but they can be expensive and time consuming. If, however, parents better understood the down side (their sons becoming unmotivated adults) they may be more inclined to look at other ways of dealing with easily distracted boys.
4. The science is not exactly clear just yet, but the evidence Sax presents makes me concerned about endocrine disruptors in the environment. At the very least, I would avoid giving my children drinks in plastic bottles, and I would have a long talk with my local water provider. I would also consider changes in diet and lifestyle that limit exposure.

5. Here in the Work of Christ, our community, we have a Cub Scout group, summer camp, prayer meetings for grade-school boys, and a boys group for our middle-school boys that helps them experience the society of godly men. More and more of our (North American) regional middle school and high school programs are having gender segregated activities, as well. It seems that we are pointed in the right direction, but I am sure there are more things we should be doing. Our Christian Parenting course encourages dads to take the lead in the spiritual life of their family and the formation of their sons. There are many good reasons for fathers to do this (like the Bible commanding you to do so in Ephesians 6:4); Sax provides another good reason – helping young boys grow into men.

What others are saying about *Boys Adrift*

“Boys Adrift is a must-read for any parent of boys. This is real science, and Dr. Sax thoroughly uncovers the important health issues that parents of boys need to be tuned into.”

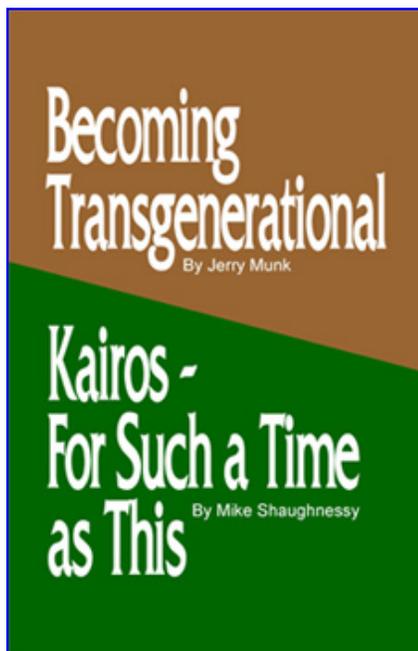
– Dr. Mehmet Oz, Professor and Vice Chairman, New York Presbyterian Hospital, Columbia University

“Excellent and informative references and information are provided . . . Powerfully and persuasively presented.”

– The Journal of the American Medical Association

“Startling . . . like a brick thrown through your window.”

– Canadian Broadcasting Corporation



Jerry Munk is a regional coordinator in the Sword of the Spirit, and co-author of [*Becoming Transgenerational—Kairos, For Such a Time As This*](#) (available at www.taborpub.com).

He and his wife, Jan, have three adult children, all of whom are active in the Sword of the Spirit.

(c) copyright 2011 [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



Where do we rest our hearts?

by Sam Williamson

My son David recently married “the girl next door” (almost literally), and the reception was at our house. The day before the wedding, my sons and I took an old porch swing from the barn and hung it from a large branch. A few days after the wedding, the branch broke and smashed the swing. The branch had looked solid, but it was rotten.

I am so grateful no one was sitting on the swing when that branch broke.

While no one was hurt, the smashed swing caused me to consider that one of the greatest risks of all may be where we rest our hearts.

Some of us find rest in success or career. When work goes well, our hearts find peace. But jobs are fragile branches. They cannot bear the weight of our lives.

Some of us find rest in family. When our kids are good or when our spouse loves us, our hearts find peace. But families are fragile branches. Our spouse may die (in fact, will die), and our children will make mistakes, and they too may suffer grave illness or death.

Some of us find rest in ministry. When our talks are loved and our blogs are read and people are converted, our hearts find peace. But ministry is a fragile branch. We can do everything right and not see fruit. Jesus did everything perfectly, and he was murdered.

Jeremiah 17:7 says: *Blessed are they who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.*

I think this verse says it is not enough to merely trust in the Lord. If we stop there, it can in fact be a huge mistake.

What? Isn't that heresy? Not if we see what Jeremiah is really saying here. If we trust in the Lord to obtain what we rest our hearts on, we actually may not trust the Lord himself. Our hearts may be resting on something else, like a rotten branch.



What might we trust in the Lord for?

- Successful careers
- A loving spouse
- Financial security
- A happy healthy family
- Approval of friends
- A successful ministry

If we are trusting in the Lord primarily to provide us those things, then we are not really trusting in the Lord himself. Instead, we are trusting in those things. What we call “trusting in the Lord” is simply using God to get the things that we most trust in; we are manipulating God to get what our heart most rests in.

And when those things fail – illness in the family, pink slips [job termination] at work, seemingly fruitless ministry – then our hearts are crushed because we’ve been resting our hearts on rotten branches.

The final phrase in the Jeremiah verse explains true heart rest: *Blessed are they ... whose trust **is** the Lord.*

When our hearts find rest in God alone, not in external circumstances, then – and only then – we have found an enduring and solid rest. We often cannot comprehend why God allows illness or pain or suffering; but we always know God is using everything for our good. Pink slips may free us from resting our hearts in career, and illness may save us from resting our hearts in this world. This world is crashing down; what we see around us is passing away. God, and God alone, will last forever. As will those whose trust *is* the Lord.

We are making big mistakes, and we are taking huge risks, until our hearts rest in God alone, until our trust **is** the Lord.

The biggest risk of all may be where we rest our hearts.

© Copyright 2010, [Beliefs of the Heart, Ltd.](#) All rights reserved.

Sam Williamson grew up in Detroit, Michigan, USA. He is the son of a Presbyterian pastor and grandson of missionaries to China. He moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1975. He worked in London England from 1979 to 1982, helping to establish [Antioch](#), a member community of the Sword of the Spirit. After about twenty-five years as an executive at a software company in Ann Arbo he sensed God call him to something new. He left the software company in 2008 and now speaks at men's retreats, churches, and campus outreaches. His is married to Carla Williamson and they have four grown children and a grandson. He has a blog site, www.beliefsoftheheart.com, and can be reached at Sam@BeliefsoftheHeart.com.

(c) copyright 2011 [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

[September 2011 - Vol. 52](#)



The Woman with the Hemorrhage

By Jeanne Kun

If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well. -
Mark 5:28

She touched the hem of his garment, she approached him in a spirit of faith, she believed, and she realized that she was cured. . . . So we too, if we wish to be saved, should reach out in faith to touch the garment of Christ.

- Ambrose of Milan,
Exposition Evangelii sec.
Lucam, VI, 56, 58

Reflecting on the Word

Imagine how discouraged this woman must have felt! For twelve years she had futilely sought a cure for her bleeding disorder, only to be disappointed time and time again (Mark 5:25). She had spent all her money on doctor after doctor, but had only gotten worse (5:26). Yet what tremendous faith she exhibited when she reached out to Jesus in her distress!

Jesus' healing of the woman with the hemorrhage is one of many instances in which he showed concern for women. In fact, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all relate that this encounter occurred while Jesus was on his way to help Jairus' daughter, whom he raised from the dead (Matthew 9:18-25;

Faith's Prayer

At times
I have no words
to pray to you.

And then,
simply being in your company,
breathing in the fragrance of your presence
or stretching out my hand to touch your garment's
hem,
is prayer enough.

- verse by Jeanne Kun

The Scene: Mark 5:24-34

A great crowd followed [Jesus] and thronged about him. 25 And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, 26 and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. 28 For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well." 29 And immediately the hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, "Who touched my garments?" 31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32 And he looked around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

See also Matthew 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48

Pondering the Word

Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56). He also healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (Mark 1:29-31), showed his compassion for the widow of Nain by restoring her only son to life (Luke 7:11-18), and straightened the bent back of a woman who had suffered from her deformity for eighteen years (13:10-17). He treated the woman caught in adultery with mercy and kindness as he encouraged her to sin no more (John 8:1-11), freed Mary Magdalene from the demonic influences that plagued her (Luke 8:2), and enjoyed deep friendship with Martha and her sister Mary (10:38-42; John 11:1-3; 12:1-3). Women were among Jesus' most dedicated followers (Luke 8:2-3; Matthew 27:55-56), and it was to them that he first showed himself after the resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-10; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:11-18).

Scripture commentators describe this woman's physical ailment in various ways. Whatever its cause, the disorder was chronic—and surely quite unpleasant. Besides the pain and inconvenience the woman suffered from such steady bleeding, she probably experienced weakness, weight loss, and anemia. No medical treatment relieved her symptoms or cured her.

Much more than this woman's physical well-being was affected by her condition. According to Mosaic law, a woman was considered "unclean" each month for seven days during the "regular discharge from her body" (Leviticus 15:19). The purpose of this law was not to demean or disparage women; rather, it reflected the high regard the Israelites had for the sacredness of life, and for a woman's contact with that sacredness in reproduction. But the nature of the ailment of the woman in this gospel scene—a continuous flow of blood—would have rendered her constantly unclean nonetheless:

If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity; and everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her impurity. And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes,

1. List all the verbs in this story that describe what the woman with the hemorrhage did and what she experienced. What do they indicate about this woman's character?

2. What does Mark's account reveal about Jesus? How would you characterize Jesus' response to this woman? What does this suggest to you about how he regarded and treated all women?

3. Why do you think Jesus wanted to know who touched him?

4. Reflect on these other instances in the gospels in which Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well": Luke 7:36-50, Mark 10:46-52; Luke 17:11-19. What do these scenes indicate about the importance of faith? How did those in need respond to Jesus?

5. Jesus told the woman whom he healed, "Go in peace" (Mark 5:34). In what ways do you think she experienced peace because of this healing? Describe how you think her life changed after she was freed of her long-standing and troubling condition.

6. Read Mark 5:21-24, 35-43, the account about Jairus and his daughter. What similarities do you see in this story and in that about the woman with the hemorrhage?

Living the Word

1. Imagine yourself in this scene with Jesus. What is the one pressing need you would bring to him? How do you imagine him responding to you?

2. In what ways do you identify with the woman in Mark 5:24-34? Do you have a need that is so long-standing—like the woman's twelve-year problem—that you feel discouraged and have little hope of any solution? How does this gospel story give you hope?

and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening. (Leviticus 15:25-27)

If this woman was relatively young, it's quite likely that her condition would have made marriage and childbearing impossible. If she was already married and had borne children before the onset of her disorder, its chronic nature would have severely restricted her contact with her husband and family and curtailed her activities. Regardless of her age or marital status, her continual "uncleanness" would have cut her off from her friends, since any contact with her would have made them ritually unclean, too. Moreover, she was isolated from participation in the public worship of God.

This woman "had heard the reports about Jesus" (Mark 5:27). Encouraged by stories of how he had healed so many people of diseases and physical impairments, she dared to hope the same for herself. Her belief in Jesus' power made her bold—she was determined to reach out to him for help. But because she was legally unclean and embarrassed by her illness, she wanted to slip through the crowd and touch his robe without attracting any attention. Just coming in contact with the fringe or hem of Jesus' garment—a detail Matthew and Luke tell us (Matthew 9:20; Luke 8:44)—would be enough to heal her, she reasoned with amazing faith.

Later in Mark's Gospel, we read that "wherever Jesus came, in villages, cities, or country, they laid the sick in the market places, and besought him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well" (Mark 6:56; see also Matthew 14:35-36). It is likely that Jesus, a pious Jew, wore tassels called *tzitzi* attached to the corners of his robe or cloak, as enjoined by the law: "The LORD said to Moses: ' . . . Bid [the people of Israel] to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout the generations, and to put upon the tassel of each corner a cord of blue; and it shall be to you a tassel to look upon and remember all the commandments of the LORD'" (Numbers 15:37-39; see also Deuteronomy 22:12). Consequently, the popular belief that such tassels had the power to heal or bring good fortune, especially when worn by holy men, may have influenced this woman's thinking.

The woman's hemorrhage ceased when she touched Jesus' clothing, and she immediately felt that she had been healed

3. What are some concrete ways that you can reach out and "touch" the garment of Jesus? Are you willing to take a risk, like this woman did, to try something new (perhaps fasting, asking others to pray with you, attending a healing service)?

4. When have you felt Jesus' power healing you physically or spiritually? What was your reaction to this healing? How did it change your life?

5. Can you think of any situation when you felt that Jesus honored or commended you for putting faith in him? How did you respond?

6. Do you know someone with a chronic illness? What might you do to show them love and compassion?

Rooted in the Word

The Woman with the Hemorrhage: A Portrait of Faith

The woman who suffered from the bleeding disorder for so many years heard the reports of those who had been healed by Jesus (Mark 5:27), believed them, and cast herself upon his mercy. Faith in Jesus' compassion and power gave her the courage to approach him with the confident expectation that she would be healed simply by touching his garments.

Sixteen centuries later the great Carmelite reformer St. Teresa of Avila mirrored the faith of this woman of the gospels when she wrote, "God is full of compassion and never fails those who are afflicted and despised, if they trust in him alone." Writing in a very similar vein, St. Jane de Chantal, founder of the Congregation of the Visitation, encouraged her sisters, "With the confidence of a son, rest in the care and love that divine Providence has for you in all your needs. Look upon Providence as a child does its

(Mark 5:29). She had come up behind Jesus, unseen by him as she stretched her hand out to his robe (5:27). Now her hope had been fulfilled—after so many years of suffering, she was well, her body healthy and free of pain! But when she tried to disappear into the noisy throng unnoticed, Jesus gave her away.

Jesus was certain that he had not simply been jostled accidentally in the press of the crowd. He'd been touched purposefully by a hand reaching out in eager faith, and he felt energy go out from him (Mark 5:30). When Jesus asked "Who touched me?" (5:31), he wanted to know who had drawn upon his power with such firm confidence in him.

The woman must have trembled, ashamed to admit that in her uncleanness she had dared to touch the teacher. Yet she was sure of his mercy, for had he not just granted her healing? So falling at his feet, she told "the whole truth" (Mark 5:33). Her story, so long one of repeated disappointments, had culminated in joy and gratitude. She "declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed" (Luke 8:47). In reply, Jesus commended and affirmed her: "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (Mark 5:34).

In summing up the significance of this woman's encounter with Jesus, biblical scholar George Montague, S.M., noted that the account has much to teach us:

First, healing is a personal encounter with Jesus. It is not a magical or mechanical event, though physical touch may be involved. The healed person must meet Jesus, even if the meeting takes place after the healing. Second, a public confession of Jesus is part of the healing process. Others may thus come to faith through this woman's witness. Finally, even though the physical event of her healing has taken place already, Jesus' word of healing completes the action. He further personalizes it, and teaches that her touch would have been meaningless without faith. (*Mark: Good News for Hard Times*)

Not only did Jesus restore this woman's health, he also restored her place in society. When Jesus called the woman forth from the crowd to publicly acknowledge her healing, he established her as clean in the eyes of all. By Jesus' gracious affirmation of her, she was given full and abundant life.

mother who loves him tenderly. You can be sure that God loves you incomparably more."

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen," the author of Hebrews wrote (11:1). He then describes the faith of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and other heroes. We can add to that list the faith of those in the gospels—like the woman with the hemorrhage, Jairus, the centurion of Capernaum, and Bartimaeus—and the many holy men and women throughout the history of the church, who make up the "great cloud of witnesses" that surrounds us (12:1).

Read and prayerfully reflect on these additional Scripture passages that illustrate faith and its fruits and teach us how to grow in faith:

They brought the boy to [Jesus]; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. (Mark 9:20-27)

Jesus answered [his disciples], "Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Mark 11:22-24)

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord said, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamine tree, 'Be rooted up, and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you." (Luke 17:5-6)

Excerpted from [My Lord and My God: A Scriptural Journey with the Followers of Jesus](#), by Jeanne Kun ([The Word Among Us Press](#), © 2004). Used with permission. This book can be ordered [online](#).

Jeanne Kun is President of [Bethany Association](#) and a senior woman leader in the [Word of Life Community](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

In hope [Abraham] believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, "So shall your descendants be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:18-21)

You know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:3-4)

As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:9)

(c) copyright 2011 [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



Mark Jordan and son John (upper right) are joined with staff and members of Koinonia at Prep 10 Conference

Building Christian community among university students in London

By Mark Jordan

Some years ago I built a wall. It was a simple wall between the driveway and the path from the house to the shed. I think every man, at least once in his life, should build a wall. It was made from pieces of wood that were six inches square and 12 feet long. I had to dig a trench, treat the wood, and cement in posts for it. It was two exhausting days' work. But once it was finished it was highly satisfying. The wall was to have two main impacts: the first was on the path behind the wall. Previously when it rained, this path would be flooded, but after the wall was completed the path no longer flooded. The second impact was on the driveway. Every time it rained, part of the driveway would subside slightly. Our theory in building the wall was that it would stop the subsidence and hold the driveway in place. I saw with my own eyes that the path behind the wall no longer flooded. Whether we were successful in preventing the subsidence only the years will tell.

Support structures for young people are greatly eroded today, especially when young people leave home. Around 70% of Christian teenagers in the UK will not find spiritual support while at university, and many will be swept away by the flood of secularism and other anti-Christian influences. [Koinonia](#), the Christian community that we're building amongst university students in London, is striving to keep the "rain off the path." We've seen a half-dozen students find new life in Christ this year, some for the first time, some coming back to him. We've seen a number of

students who were already Christian find a home with us and flourish. In helping them find a spiritual home we aim to help them stay in touch with their Creator in a secular university environment that often opposes any belief in God.

Laying a foundation allows us to build for the future and prevent “subsidence.” We’re working to play our part for the Gospel for the years to come. We’ve secured funding to keep our center in the student union open for the new academic year. We’ve established men’s and women’s households, and we’ve restructured our staffing for next year to help us be more effective in training people in Koinonia for active mission at university. Beginning this month (September) we launch our first mission school. This last one has got me particularly excited as it brings together a lot of what I’ve been moving forward these last years. We’ll also be appointing our first student program leader for the central University of London Student Union (ULU) area where most of our mission is based. This is an exciting time for us, and we work in the hope that God will be enabling us to build on solid ground for the years to come.

It’s clear to me that the Lord has been touching lives in our midst and drawing men and women to himself. It’s a tremendous privilege to witness that, and even participate in it. It’s also been great to see how he has brought ideas and initiatives to us that have helped us plan for the future. The future of this mission is in his hands and it brings me great joy to see him bring fruit from it. Fruit this year and fruit for the future.

[Mark Jordan is the director of the university Christian student outreach, [Koinonia](#), and has been involved in student mission work for seven years. He also works for Kairos Europe where he runs the student worker outreach training program. He lives in London with his wife Rachel and son John.]

(c) copyright 2011 [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



Enchanted

by P.M. Graham

I read *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* at age 10 and finished *The Deathly Hallows* aged 19. With each book I experienced a phenomenon that millions of my peers can relate to: *I wished this was happening to me.*

What is so attractive about Rowling's universe? There is more here than just magic. At Hogwarts friends are good-humored and loyal. Speech is seldom malicious. Cursing is rare and sexuality is innocent. Hogwarts is a near-utopian teen community: fun, fascinating people, adventure and a sense of purpose.

The premiere of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2*, that I attended, was packed with teens in costume – mostly generic costumes not based on a single character, but simply Hogwarts' school uniforms and wizard's robes. The people who dressed up for the premier aren't interested, for the most part, in *being* Harry, Hermione, or any specific character. They want to be themselves, but themselves in *that world*, a world where strength of character is valued, where good and evil are still seen to exist, and where there is a battle worth the fight.

As one who grew up in Gen-Y, Hogwarts – as much as Middle Earth and Narnia – awakened in me an ideal of nobility. Like Frodo or Peter, Harry is a strong yet clearly flawed young man. Nonetheless, he accepts with courage and growing self-knowledge the fierce challenge placed before him.

Then, as a 19-year-old, I was whisked away into another world – a Christian one. I discovered the excitement of radical discipleship and a difficult mission, and the support of a community of true friends. But this was in the real world. I was ready to put away the things of a child, to move from

fantasy into reality.

As one who now works with youth, I see value in things that inspire magnanimity, that longing to be a hero who serves with a band of brothers to accomplish a great purpose. Millions of *Harry Potter* youth have now had the *noble-ideal* seed sown in them. Let's hope that the Hogwarts Express might carry them from the world of fantasy into the real world of Christian mission and community.

Paul Michael (PM) Graham, from the [Community of the Risen Christ](#) in Glasgow, Scotland, graduated from the University of Glasgow with a degree in English Literature in summer 2010. He recently finished a year of GAP service for the Work of Christ Community and University Christian Outreach in Lansing, Michigan, US.

(c) copyright 2011 [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