

LIVING BULWARK The online magazine of The Sword of the Spirit sources of strength and renewal for Christian life and mission in today's world

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Communities United in Mission

"You shall be my witnesses to the end of the earth" – Acts 1:8

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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.

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Strength in Unity and Mission Together

In this issue

There is great strength when Christians are united in a bond of fraternal love, mutual care, and support in helping one another grow as disciples of Christ. In this issue Bruce Yocum explains the significance of covenant communities as a signpost of the unity God wants for all Christians. God wants to renew all of his people through the power of the Holy Spirit. Renewal movements are one of the means the Lord uses to advance the work of mission and spiritual renewal in the churches and the world at large.

This issue focuses on some of the initiatives which the Sword of the Spirit and the Kairos student outreaches are doing in the areas of evangelism, mission, formation and training in discipleship, and building communities of disciples on mission. Read, enjoy, be inspired, and be renewed in your zeal to love and serve the Lord in unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sincerely in Christ,
Don Schwager
editor

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Covenant Communities

A Signpost of the Unity God Wants for All Christians

by Bruce Yocum

Covenant community was born in almost the same moment as charismatic renewal began in the Catholic Church. In 2015 we celebrated forty-five years of covenant community, dating from the first covenant commitments in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA in 1970, but we had been living community for a year or so before that.

It all happened so rapidly! In the autumn of 1967 there was nothing. By May of 1968, 300 people were gathering in the main hall of the Newman Center at the University of Michigan. We went from obscurity to coverage in *Newsweek* magazine, from a local group to relationship with other groups in Lebanon, the Philippines, Nicaragua. By 1971 we had a fully staffed year-round guesthouse to help welcome the 1500 visitors who came each year. It was head-spinning. It was exhilarating and it was a bit dangerous.

A work of unity in the Holy Spirit

We knew we had been caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. We knew for one thing that we Catholics had been swept along in the great river of God's work that began with Pentecostalism at the start of the twentieth century, and before we knew it we were an ecumenical community. Protestant and Pentecostal brothers and sisters just started showing up. When we evangelized at the University, some of those who responded were Lutheran, or Baptist, or Methodist. What could we say to them? "Oh, sorry, didn't mean to evangelize you – we are a Catholic group"?

The Pastor at the Newman Center said, "If God sends them, you need to receive them." For good measure, the Bishop said the same.

Charismatic prayer groups started springing up all over the country, and soon, all over the world. The first National Service Committee was organized. The first conferences were held. *New Covenant* magazine was published.

We were caught up in a roaring river of God's grace and swept along.

Back in those years some of us would go on vacation in the springtime down in the Blue Ridge or the Great Smokey Mountains, where the spring rains and melting snow formed gushing rivers coursing down the mountain sides. You had to be careful because one misstep and you could be pulled in and pulled along. Well, that is what happened to us spiritually. We were caught up in a roaring river of God's grace and swept along.

Called to shared life together

We were all university students back then, or recent graduates, and all of our projects and plans were abandoned as we felt the power of this river of grace and yielded to its pull. Community came about because we were pulled or pushed together by that same grace. It was as if we had all become magnetized and just stuck together. What we read in the Acts of the Apostles we saw in our own lives:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

Now when you are caught up in a rushing torrent it can be very hard to keep your head up and see where you are: that river becomes your world and you think that's all there is.

But after some time in this roaring flood the river broadens and deepens, the current is more powerful but less dramatic and thrilling. Then you can get your head up and look around and... Lo and behold! We are not the only stream on this mountainside!

A few years ago in Stuttgart Germany, representatives of more than two hundred and fifty "new movements and communities" came together to celebrate "[Together for Europe](#)." We were there, together, from many nations, from many churches, thrown together by the force of the Holy Spirit who is renewing the Church. This meeting was a response to the meeting with Pope John Paul II in Rome in 1998, a meeting he called together so that he could address the many streams of renewal that were springing up and changing the face of the Church.

A signpost of God's action today

What is the place of covenant community in all of this? Some years ago Don Schwager described it this way:

What is the significance of covenant community for today? **First, it is a signpost** of what God is bringing about through the gift of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. It is a visible public sign of the Lord's work of renewal in bringing people into a revitalized relationship with God, and it is a sign of the unity he desires for all his people. The unity we already have as brothers and sisters in Christ stems from Baptism and the gift and working of the Holy Spirit. This gift of life together enables Christians of different traditions to recognize one another as brothers and sisters in Christ and to live together in real shared life. This unifying grace is a hallmark of God's work today.

Second, covenant community is a servant of the renewal. It is meant to be a prophetic sign to the rest of the charismatic renewal, and to the churches, and to the world of the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit and Christian unity. It's a message to everybody, but not everybody is called to this particular form of community. People should be able to visit covenant communities and see how the Holy Spirit is renewing his people and restoring to them a fuller shared life together. It is part of the nature of a sign that you cannot be everything. Covenant communities... are only a part... of God's work of renewal and restoration.

The dynamic of the Holy Spirit tends powerfully to unity. If we in charismatic renewal are to be an effective and genuine sign of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, we must be a sign of unity as well – unity with one another within the Renewal, unity amongst the various ministries and manifestations of the Renewal, unity with other new movements, unity with Christians from other churches, and unity with the leaders and pastors of the Church.



Bruce Yocum is President of [Christ the King Association](#) and a member of the International Executive Council of the [Sword of the Spirit](#). This article was originally published in *Pentecost Today*, Spring, 2015. Used with permission.

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Reflections from the Sword of the Spirit International Coordinators Meetings

Lansing, Michigan USA - May 27-30, 2016

Introduction

Over the last 12 years the Lord has spoken very strongly to the [Sword of the Spirit](#) about an open door for mission and a special season of grace, especially on the young people in Sword of the Spirit. Given the increasing difficulties and challenges which Christians face around the world – increasing religious persecution, drift from Christian morality, breakdown of marriage and family life – there has been a growing sense of urgency among Sword of the Spirit leaders to work more closely together internationally and regionally to strengthen the work of building Christian communities and preparing community members to be fully engaged in mission.

Every four years, since 2004, the coordinators from all of the [communities in the Sword of the Spirit](#) have gathered to seek the Lord together. This past May 27-30 2016, some 400 coordinators and main Kairos leaders met for four days in Lansing, Michigan. They came from the 75 communities located in Asia, South Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, and Central and South America.

The overarching Scripture verse for the International Coordinators Meeting (ICM) is from 1 Peter 2:9, 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.' The Key topics and themes, drawn from that scripture verse, focused on Unity, Holiness, Mission/Proclamation, and Spiritual Warfare.

The following personal reflections from some of the participants give a sense of the personal impact and highlights among those who took part in the recent gathering of coordinators in Lansing. A more detailed report of the ICM will be featured in the August Issue of Living Bulwark.



some 400 leaders from 75 communities world-wide were present at the ICM

"The great cloud of witnesses"

It was such an honor and blessing to come and attend the 2016 International Coordinators' Meeting here in East Lansing, Michigan. First, it was fabulous to see the "great cloud of witness" in our work in the Sword of the Spirit. Sometimes I get discouraged thinking how small, isolated and insignificant the work we do in New Zealand. But seeing and being part of the Army of God in a very real way through prayer, worship, fellowship, playing sports, teaching and sharing opened my eyes to see the significant role we have in doing our part in building his Kingdom here on earth. I had a great time building terrific camaraderie and brotherhood with my brothers in arms and co-workers in the Lord's vineyard.

God spoke to me strongly in three areas: The first area is the unity God wants for his people and how much I should strive for building and maintaining unity at all levels in my personal life, and in my work and service. The second area that God showed me where I can grow more is in doing spiritual warfare. Lastly, God revealed me how blessed and fortunate that I am in the midst, and at the cutting edge, of a work of ecumenism which the Lord is doing among his people at this time and age. Indeed, I now appreciate more the time I live in where I can see God's amazing grace in action.

Ironically, it felt both like an oasis in the desert and a dry ember being set on fire – being refreshed and restored spiritually but also being convicted to act and move at the same time. God is truly good!

*Tom Caballes, Lamb of God Community
New Zealand*

"Lord, use me"

The International Coordinators Meeting (ICM) held in East Lansing has been grace filled, and a blessed opportunity to meet with many of the Sword of the Spirit leaders from around the world, some of whom I hadn't seen for 15 or 20 years. One key highlight has been a stirring address to the community leaders by Anton Collela on our mission. [Anton is a coordinator from Community of the Risen Christ in Glasgow, WScotland.] Our mission, which is fundamentally to present Jesus Christ to a world dying in their need of him is something that we as leaders cannot just delegate to the young people among us. All must be engaged in mission.

Anton challenged each of us to pray a two word prayer "Use me!" As leaders we need to lead from the front in our mission. But the Lord also spoke to the leaders on Sunday night at our prayer meeting to not be those who would hold back our younger brothers and sisters in their own part of the mission. Rather, we are to rejoice as we see them in their own right as saints,

missionaries and martyrs take up the call and mission of our people. May the Lord indeed do this in our midst.

*Bruce Franson, Word of Life Community and Servants of the Word,
Ann Arbor, Michigan USA*

An imperative to be a missionary in tune with the Holy Spirit

"This has been a blessed time at the ICM - rich times of prayer and worship together, excellent teaching, testimony and fellowship. A couple of things that have particularly struck me... One was Bishop Mike Byrnes speaking (at his homily during Sunday's Catholic Mass) - He said that the Holy Spirit acts as a 'centrifugal force' always driving us outwards, bringing his life to others.



Another was an image from some testimony and discussion .. the Lord has told us to go out into the deep as fishers,not sailors.

I have experienced a growing call - a sense of the imperative of the need to be a missionary - whether it be planned, focused mission work or spontaneous appointments set up by God. I pray that my 'spiritual antennae' will be tuned into the promptings of the Holy Spirit - to be ready to pass God's love and His message of hope and life to others.Thank God for a great ICM."

*John Hampsey, Community of the Risen Christ,
Glasgow, Scotland*



“Knitted together” in brotherly love

I recently attended the ICM and was touched by many things.

The Worship: I feel very blessed every time I attend the ICM because of the corporate spirit of praise. There is nothing quite like praying with 400 men who are baptized in the Spirit, who love the Lord, and who are from so many different countries. The praise we had reminds me of the way saints and angels pray in heaven (Revelation 4:8; 11; 5:9; 5:12). I was particularly moved by the Sunday night prayer meeting. We had a blessed time that focused on words of knowledge - which I have hoped would be included at the ICM for many years.

Brotherhood and Relationships: I am blessed to know so many people around the world. As always, I met a significant number of new men and I was able to connect with men I have known for 45 years—but many who I only see at the ICM’s. I was the only American in my small group. It was a real international experience. I was grateful to hear their stories about their personal conversion and their way of life.

I am deeply grateful to the Lord for the great work he has done in all of the men—the ones I just met and the ones I have known for what seems like 400 years. I feel the same kind of “knitted together” brotherly love with these men that David had with Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1). I am also very grateful for the way they are giving their lives to God.

Teachings: The themes selected for each day—holiness, unity, warfare, and mission—were appropriate because they identified the delicate balance we all face as we try to follow and serve the Lord. Holiness is setting ourselves apart for the Lord. Holiness moves us to “love one another” and live in unity. These are God’s marks. At the same time holiness moves us to go out.

We are all called to go on mission. Paul said, “Devote yourselves to prayer and pray that doors will open so that you can evangelize.” The he said, “Be wise in the way you act, make the most of every opportunity, and be ready with good answers to questions new people will have” (Colossians 4:2-6). In short, the talks urged us to find the right balance between the inward and the outward, between community building and evangelization.

Gratitude: Finally, I want to personally thank all the people who put in countless hours to make this conference so effective. For me, it was the best ICM yet! I purposely did not name any one person till now. But now, I want to take a moment to honor and thank Steve Clark, who I first met when I was 18—45 years ago. Over the years Steve has had in incredible influence over my life and I was glad to spend some time with him on Monday.

May the Lord bless our communities and have them more closely resemble the way we were told in “Acts 2:42-47.”

*Joe Difato, Spirit of Christ Community,
Jacksonville, Florida USA*



A great bond of unity and joy together

This is the 1st time at an International Coordinators Meeting and my 2nd time in Michigan, having previously spent a year in Ann Arbor 27 years ago with the Servants of the Word. Firstly, what a blessing to catch up with brothers from my previous time here. It is a great bond of unity being part of the Sword of the Spirit and a joy to see faithful brothers still committed to our life. A joy also to spend time with brothers who have visited New Zealand over the years and been part of the Lamb of God's journey.



In terms of the conference the worship times were excellent, the teachings, life-giving and the sharing group I participated in very honest and supportive. What will I take away from it (other than too many extra pounds...), the encouragement of time with brothers travelling the same journey, refreshment for my spirit and an inspiration to be more effective in evangelism. Thank you to all those who served selflessly to enable this conference to run so smoothly. God Bless.

*Mark Challies, Lamb of God Community
New Zealand*



Refreshed and transformed

By the end of the ICM I profoundly realized what a unique privilege it is to be part of the Sword of the Spirit. I now go back home as a new and refreshed man, touched and transformed by Him through the unity and fellowship amongst my brothers from around the world. The Lord showed me that our communities are a living evidence that He is at work. Come Holy Spirit, Use me in my daily life, service, and profession! Amen.

*Jeroen Geleyn, Jerusalem Community,
Belgium*



A witness of God's limitless power and love at work

I had imagined that as I arrived I would see my many friends from my youth and we'd greet each other and catch up. I'd be encouraged and we'd talk about the old days and share a laugh about when I traveled in high school visiting other youth groups in the US and then as a young man doing a year of missionary service in Europe after UCO.

But when I first walked into the meeting room I was overwhelmed with the sense of God's power at work among us. It was tangible. I could definitely feel it. These leaders from all over world were a group of not just my young friends but also older men who have impacted my life since I was a youth, across all ages, and then even those younger than me.

Immediately I felt the power of God present among these men like it was a heat lamp. And I knew I had to tap into that power of God in order to be taken to the next level in my service and leadership.

Honestly I came in spiritually limping in many ways into this conference. One brother asked us to imitate each other. I thought, I am not an example myself, compared to these brothers, I am not worthy of imitation. Christ is worthy to be imitated, but I've got large areas of weakness. But then again I thought that in this room my brothers individually, like me may be limping.

Collectively, as a body united together as brothers in Christ, we can be a witness of God's limitless power and love at work in each other.

That awareness off my need for greater strength and that of my weaknesses, prepared me for Sunday night's ministry time. And I felt and heard God speaking to my weaknesses and repairing my heart and mind for the service that I return to in the days ahead.

*Jon Luea, Work of Christ Community,
Lansing, Michigan USA*



several fathers and sons who attended the ICM

Blessing of unity and common mission

God has tremendously blessed us in the Sword of the Spirit. It was great to see, hear, and experience what the Lord is doing around the globe through our unity and common mission. This is not a common experience nor natural because only the Lord can join us together as one. With many brothers and sisters in Christ from many nations, cultures, races, and Christian denominations - all sharing together our rich experience of being united together in Christ. This is a real living testimony of God's grace at work in the Sword of the Spirit communities.

*Jim Orbe, Ligaya ng Paginoon and Servants of the Word,
Manila, Philippines*



We were challenged to engage in more personal evangelism

One of the most powerful aspects of the conference for me has been the small group time. My group was half younger leaders and half older leaders, with about an average of thirty years separating the two groups. During our four sessions together, we experienced the Lord speaking to us through one another. We were able to be very honest with one another, and found that we all struggle with many of the same difficulties in our lives and service. We prayed over one another several times, and everyone agreed that our group time was very special; the Lord was present with us. We concluded with a discussion about mission and evangelism, and we were all personally challenged to engage in more evangelism ourselves and we return home.

*Jon Wilson, Word of Life Community,
Ann Arbor, Michigan USA*



Striving for unity in the bond of peace

"The Lord has always exhorted us his people to discern the 'times and seasons' in which we are living in - like the tribe of Issachar, who never flagged in that ardent task. But that is easily said than done. However, I thank and praise the Lord that at every ICM, through the prophetic gifts, He has made this task easy for us in the Sword of the Spirit.

At this ICM, He has made it very clear, that we are to make this a 'season' to 'strive' to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace: to redouble our efforts in our ecumenical endeavors. Second, the Lord has revealed to us that we are to expect the

Church to be drawn in to a more intense spiritual battle worldwide, and that we as Sword of the Spirit are to respond and prepare ourselves for this battle, courageously and fearlessly - knowing at the same time, that we can trust in his promises of deliverance, in the midst of these testing times. Thirdly, this is to be a 'time' for us in the Sword of the Spirit to garner all our resources and energies to engage with a resolute urgency, in the proclamation of the Gospel - both corporately as local communities, as well as in our personal capacities, on 'one on one' evangelism - expecting the Lord to confirm his Word, through signs and wonders."

*Romeo Fernando, Community of the Good Shepherd
Vasai, India*

Blessing of life together in covenant community

One of the things that impressed me at the ICM was the cumulative investment made by the men attending the ICM over the years in response to God's call to them to build and lead covenant communities. Each of the men attending the ICM have given generously of their time, abilities, finances, and so much more over the course of many years in response to this call. Yet even this offering, this sacrifice, is so far outweighed to the blessings God has poured out upon us in our life together.

*Dallas Burkholder, Word of Life,
Ann Arbor, Michigan USA*



Unity and mission together

This year's ICM was a truly blessed event where, I believe, all of us experienced the Lord's presence in so many ways: in our times of worship (the music team did a great job leading us in singing songs in both English and Spanish), through prophetic words received (I was personally struck by the Lord's assurance that his power and grace were especially available in these times of darkness), during times of fellowship when old friendships were rekindled and new acquaintances made.

The four major plenary talks made deep impressions on us, but for me, Dave Hughes ("Unity") and Anton Colella ("Mission") brought fresh and powerful perspectives on topics that would otherwise have been ho-hum.

This ICM has been described by a good number of brother-coordinators as being "the best" so far; I tend to agree. Maybe we have had three ICM's and so know what works (and what doesn't). Maybe it's because the conference venue served its purpose admirably. Maybe it's the presence of so many younger men (coordinator-trainees; Kairos leaders) while we still have the "giants" around (Steve Clark, Jean Barbara, John Keating among others). Maybe it's Ken Noecker's excellent presiding at all the sessions. Maybe ... everything.

To be honest, before the ICM I thought that such an event, involving much expense, time and energy, was not worth the effort. Now I am convinced otherwise: what a time of grace, spiritual ministry, and brotherly love! May the ICM's long continue!

*Jake Yap, Servants of the Word and Ligaya ng Paginoon,
Manila, Philippines*

Transforming power of prayer for mission

As at previous ICM's, it was very inspiring to meet with brothers from all over the world who are engaged in the same call and mission as we are in Pittsburgh and North America. My discussion group included brothers from the Phillipines, Ireland, Mexico and USA. The fellowship was refreshing, the talks inspiring and the worship uplifting. I was especially struck by Anton Colella's talk on mission and the power of the simple prayer "use me" to transform our lives. I have been praying that prayer often since hearing the talk.

*Joe Doyle, People of God,
Pittsburgh, USA*



A bulwark of radical disciples on mission

For me, the Lord's power was evident at the ICM. He spoke his word to us the first night about holiness, not making excuses, and obeying him even when we suffer. The gifts of the Spirit were more manifest than any Sword of the Spirit conference that I've attended, particularly words of knowledge. Brotherhood from all over

the world was genuine, a real blessing for me. It was an honor to see hundreds of brothers from all over the world, each building their part of the wall (the bulwark). It's incredible to see communities, after years of faithfulness, make their commitment as full members of the Sword of the Spirit. May the Lord continue to form us as life-long radical disciples together who have been entrusted with such a wonderful mission.

*Jeff Smith, Triumph of the Cross,
Maryland, USA*



Coordinators from Ligaya community in Manila at the ICM

God's refreshing presence and profound unity

I experienced a profound sense of God's refreshing presence throughout the ICM; not only at the sessions, but at everything we did together. I think some of this flowed from the profound unity present among all the men there from around the world. It was a concrete example of Psalm 133, the scripture we reflected on during the first session.

*Ken Dorman, People of God,
Pittsburgh, USA*

A great encouragement to grow

I experienced the ICM conference as an encouragement to grow in three specific areas: spiritual, practical and relational. The first area is *personal spiritual growth*: The witness of many other men from around the world praying, teaching and sharing a common vision inspired me to give myself in a more committed way to the Lord. I had an experience of being called "to approach the throne of the Lord" more often in my own life.

The second areas is *growth in relationships*: I was able to reconnect with men whom I have served with in Mexico and New Zealand. My roommate at the conference was a man I got to know ten years ago while living together in a Christian household in Mexico. I was also able to connect with many of the Kairos leaders whom I have served with on YES retreats for the past few years.

The third is a more *practical area for growth* in witnessing to young people: The "sounds bites" talk by James Munk was very

insightful and we had a great session in learning how to come up with inspiring one liners that are easy to remember and which invite youth to think deeper.

*Philip Quense, People of Hope,
New Jersey, USA*

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Called for These Times

A brief history of the People of God community in Beirut

updated May 2016

When the People of God community first began in Lebanon, its members did not know they were about to be plunged into a civil war that would decimate their country and threaten their lives. The encouragement they received from other Christian communities made it possible for the members of this community to stay in Lebanon and survive the 15-year war, helping to maintain hope and vision for the future. Now the community is playing an important role in revitalization of the local Catholic and Orthodox churches.

A founding member and former senior leader of the People of God, recounts the early history of the community.

Beginnings

The People of God community in Lebanon traces its beginnings to August of 1969 when a young Lebanese university instructor encountered the Catholic charismatic renewal movement in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. As a result of his experience, a prayer group of university faculty and students started up in Beirut in mid-September of that year, when he returned home.

In 1974, the local parish run by Capuchin priests invited a French priest to preach during the Lenten season. He had recently experienced the Catholic charismatic renewal, and his preaching led to our expansion into parish life in Lebanon.

Life in the Spirit Seminars followed, and by the summer of 1975 the charismatic renewal movement was thriving in the Beirut area with many people attending the weekly prayer meetings that we hosted.

The war years in Lebanon

The wars in Lebanon erupted in April of 1975. The Lord had prepared us initially for this major upheaval and for the challenging years that were to follow. But the final preparation came when a group of us felt called by the Lord to leave Lebanon for a period beginning in October of 1975. Eighteen of us went to Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, for a crucial period of bonding among ourselves and with The Word of God community located there. By April of 1976 we had firmly committed ourselves to God's call to live a shared life as a community in taking a name, People of God. Our commitment together was formalized with a community covenant.

In the spring of 1976, we responded to the Lord's invitation to return to Lebanon at what was perhaps the worst period of the wars in our land. For five months we continued to live together in a set of apartments in Beirut. The process of growing together as a people that had been in place for us during our stay in Ann Arbor went on to further maturity as we deepened our relationships, while ministering hope to people in the limited area we could reach because of the war.

September 1976 witnessed the next step in God's careful plan to equip us for the years to come. We felt his call to come out of the enclosed area around the universities and into the broader area that had become the "Christian" heartland in Lebanon.

Public meetings and Life in the Spirit Seminars resumed at the parish church of the same Capuchin priest who had hosted us in 1974. With the shifting areas of political influence, the parish by 1976 was on the border of the Christian area. The number of people coming to our weekly prayer meetings increased rapidly, and in one year's time we felt called to move more deeply into the heartland. This proved once again God's careful shepherding, for soon after our peaceful move the border area became the scene of constant warfare. This new location has been the center of our activities ever since. A Maronite bishop was happy to let us take over his vacated family home, and in the recent past we purchased it from him, and now have with God's grace built a permanent center for the charismatic renewal movement on that site.



The People of God is a multi-cultural, ecumenical community of some 800 adult members and their children. Members belong to Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches in Lebanon, including Greek Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Maronites (Catholics), Greek Catholics, Syriac Catholics, Chaldean Catholics, and Catholic Copts.

The community celebrated its 40th anniversary in April 2016.

Two main periods of community development

Two main periods are recognizable in God's ongoing faithful providence for us.

1. Foundation building period - 1976-1989

The years between 1976 and 1989 were a period of establishing the People of God as a stable, growing community, along with building solid relations with local church authorities, and a period of expansion through prayer meetings (reaching 1200 attendance at one point in the war) and Life in the Spirit Seminars (attracting up to 600 for a single annual Life in the Spirit Seminar).

During this period, we also built some solid structures to serve the growing numbers of people who wanted to participate in the charismatic renewal movement. In 1986 we developed a "Movement of renewal in the Holy Spirit" (with the important help of the Ligaya ng Paginooon community from Manila, Philippines) to cater to the swelling numbers that could not be incorporated in the People of God community. All of this activity and expansion took place in the midst of constant and severe wartime circumstances. Indispensable to all this was our being a Christian community and not just a spiritual movement or prayer group.

2. Institutional structure-building period from 1989 to the present

The second crucial phase – and vital to our survival long-term and transgenerationally – saw a further development to put in place the necessary structures that would ensure our ability to go on beyond our early growth. The focus is on clearer structures and the fostering of strong personal relationships to support our ongoing expansion, both internally as a covenant community and externally in outreach movements.

Our contacts have continued with leaders of the various churches our community members belong to and are bearing good fruit (our work has been solidly ecumenical from the outset, reaching out to the eight or more Christian churches in Lebanon). We have been asked by bishops and groups to help with building communities in neighboring Arab countries such as Syria, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, as well as in other countries such as the Holy Land, Turkey and Armenia, and in other parts of Lebanon. Our main leaders have also been called to serve internationally in building up the international Sword of the Spirit.

Our community outreach ministries include a family-based renewal movement (called "Living Hope"), three evangelistic outreach programs to university students (called "UCO"), a youth outreach program (called YOut), an outreach to young professionals (called "YPO"), a "Scouts" association, public prayer meetings in different regions of the country, and other ministries as well. Taken together they involve more than 3,000 people.

Current situation

"It is for these times that I have called you." We have heard this word throughout our life in community, but have been hearing it with greater urgency more recently. Thus every time there is a new war threat, we are not surprised. Rather we ask the Lord to continue to shepherd us and protect us from sin, faithlessness, and division, and that we might be an instrument in his hands that he wishes to use for these times.

The current situation has been particularly malicious, as the spiritual war rages beneath the external strife. A special pressure now is put on all young people to emigrate – this perhaps is the ugliest face of the current battle. Vying with it is the ever-present enemy of civil hatred and strife.

We invite you to join with us in praying that we play our part in remembering that our enemy is not "flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6:12) and that a deep love for and witness to our non-Christian fellow citizens be nurtured and maintained. Otherwise we lose our "saltiness" (Mark 9:50) and our clear call to be a "message" as a nation. The late Pope John Paul II, after he had visited Lebanon, said, "Lebanon is more than a nation – it is a message for the world." That message entails Christians and Muslims living together as children of Abraham. I believe that this is possible only if Christians live out their true witness and avoid resentment, hatred, and prejudice.

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The People of God community in Beirut, Lebanon celebrated its 40th anniversary on the 17th of April 2016

The 40th Anniversary of the People of God, Lebanon

A report and reflection by Danielle Younan

We are a community of 800 brothers and sisters from different church backgrounds and traditions, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. The Holy Spirit at work in us, transforming our hearts, teaching us to worship and serve together as one, has allowed us to reach out to many people around us. God has called us to be a bulwark amidst an enflamed Middle East, missionaries called to be saints and martyrs seeking to follow Jesus Christ every day of our lives in spite of our weaknesses and our differences. God knows they are many!

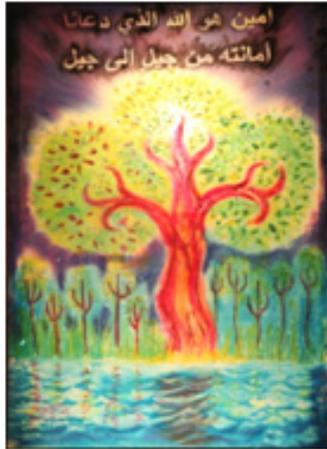
Our branch group in Kuwait, and two member groups in the UAE and in Qatar witness to the open doors of mission that God has been speaking to us about. They, too, carry that same ecumenical dimension with members from different cultures and church traditions seeking to follow the Lord. Our community building led to the development of a sister Armenian community in Lebanon, and other community developments in Istanbul, Turkey; Antioch, Turkey; Aleppo, Syria; and Haifa, Israel.

Living, working and serving in the People of God has been a source of great blessing in my life. It has given me the opportunity to put into practice every basic Gospel truth I have been taught. In my work, I get to serve alongside a lot of brothers and sisters in the Lord. I have learned to love them for who they are, the way they are, and most importantly, to serve them all with the same zeal and fire of love.

When I first started working at the community office, my boss said to me that I had to invest in the “Love Bank” (what you give will return). I have been trying to do so ever since. Investing in love hasn’t been without a cost but the returns were much greater than the cost. More love, tolerance, joy, trust and peace are some of the fruits I have experienced over the years. Working for the president of the Sword of the Spirit, a man of vision and mission, has deepened my desire to serve the Lord with greater zeal and to be ready to go wherever the Lord leads, and to do what he is asking of me no matter the cost.

My service with married women and with young women in our University Christian Outreach (UCO) program, two different generations, has helped me understand the real meaning of being part of a trans-generational community of disciples on mission. It has also helped me realize the importance of passing on the baton to the next generation - now that the foundations for community life and mission have been set.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of our community, a series of events were planned, starting with an exhortation from our senior coordinator Elias Baz who explained the significance of the 40 years in the life of our community. A party to celebrate with song and dance preceded the covenant celebration. A month later we did a field day involving games and a UCO concert. A documentary relaying the history of our community was prepared for the occasion and displayed on screen during the field day.



A special banner, painted by our community brother David Kurani, was displayed during our community anniversary covenant celebration. The banner depicts the "tree of life" bearing much fruit and with large roots planted by streams of water (Psalm.1, Revelation 22)

The script at the top of the banner, written in Arabic, reads, "Faithful is the Lord who called us and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation."



During the community covenant celebration on April 17, our brother Bruce Yocum, who had witnessed the birth of our community from the beginning, while honoring the founding generation, addressed the next generation as well. I was deeply touched by what he said. I quote:

“I want to honor the founding generation - to a great extent their [foundational] work is done. Now I don’t mean by that, that they don’t have more work to do. There isn’t any retirement from the call of God, we serve up until the final day the Lord calls us home.”

[To the next generation Bruce said] “...If you do not honor where you came from [your spiritual heritage], and if you do not honor what brought you to where you are now, you dishonor yourself. If you do not honor the history of what God has done among you here, you dishonor yourself... Your failure to honor those who went before you doesn’t harm them because they will be honored by those who are honorable and by God. They don’t need your honor, but you owe it and if you don’t give it then you, yourself, become dishonorable and cut off like a spiritual suicide.”

Our anniversary celebration will continue in June, when our coordinators return from the [International Coordinators Meeting](#) (ICM), to inaugurate the new offices and meeting rooms we have been able to build thanks to the generosity of our community members.

Belonging to the older generation, a mother of three young women, and recently now a grandmother, I feel privileged to be part of a work of God greater than my imagination, my limitations, and my own strength. I walk in faith totally relying on God and on my brothers and sisters in the Lord.



Danielle Younan, member of the [People of God](#) since 1988, is married to Tony Younan, also a member of the People of God since 1984. She and her husband are physiotherapists. They have three daughters, Esther (27 yrs), Marie-Jo (21 yrs), Christie Louise (19 yrs), a son-in-law Fadi Barakat, and their first grandson Noah James (1 month old). They lived and worked in Sweden for a few years, then returned to the People of God in 1997.

Danielle has been working as the Sword of the Spirit president's executive assistant since 2008. Part of her time is dedicated to the community office. She and her husband serve as pastoral leaders in the People of God, and as senior leaders in the Kuwait branch and UCO.

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The Reluctant Evangelist

[also in Spanish > [Español](#)]

A passage that explains why many don't respond to the good news

by Steve Clark

Many years ago I went through a time when I felt a strong inner resistance to evangelizing others. As I would head out of the house, something inside of me would object with a groan, “Not another time of evangelism.” This feeling arose because I thought people wouldn’t respond. Maybe I needed to learn a new evangelistic technique; maybe I was not fit to evangelize; or maybe I hadn’t prayed enough beforehand.

In fact, most people did not respond to my evangelistic endeavors – at least not in any measurable way.

Then I read a passage in Second Corinthians that revealed to me that I could not guarantee success every time I tried to evangelize someone, no matter what I did. Something more was going on, something spiritual. Here is the passage:

“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. We have renounced disgraceful, under handed ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled; it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. For what we

preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Cor. 4:1-6).

This passage explains what is really happening when we do evangelism. Paul is presenting truths that clarify the spiritual problem we face in bringing the gospel to others. Let's examine some of them.

God himself is at work revealing the truth about Christ. We don't have to rely solely on our own efforts. In the New English Bible translation, verse 6 reads, 'For the same God who said, 'Out of darkness let light shine' has caused his light to shine within us to give the light of revelation – the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

God reveals himself when the gospel is proclaimed, but he wants **us** to do the proclaiming.

God brought light out of nothingness. With that same infinite power, God is causing the light of his revelation to shine in this world. People see the truth in the gospel because God gives light and revelation. He is revealing his glory through Christ. God's "glory," his greatness or power, is manifested through the character, works, and words of Jesus.

How do those without faith see the glory of God in Christ? Verse 4 describes "the light that comes from the good news about the glory of Christ." It continues, 'We have seen that the glory of Christ is the glory of God in him.' *In other words, the good news itself gives off light.* It shines in people's minds and spirits. It impresses the truth on them all by itself.

This doesn't mean we are not needed. God reveals himself when the gospel is proclaimed, but he wants *us* to do the proclaiming. Once it is proclaimed, people will automatically see it as the truth, unless they are somehow blinded. Our task as Christian evangelists is to put people into contact with the gospel and to allow God to reveal himself.

Spiritual blindness

Why, then, doesn't God's effective revelation happen more often than it seems to? Paul gives this answer: *Satan is at work veiling the gospel and blinding people to spiritual realities.*

This came as a great relief to me. Spiritual blindness, not simply my own inadequacies, prevents many of those I evangelize from accepting Christ. This truth touches on an important limitation we have in thinking about evangelism: we do not think about it in a spiritual enough way. It is not only a matter between two human beings. Spiritual beings are involved as well – the Lord God himself and Satan, the father of lies. We need to take all of this spiritual work into account.

Some people are so blinded by Satan that they will not respond; others will be cured of their blindness as we speak the truth of the gospel to them. It is a great privilege to be the instrument to bring someone to our Lord Jesus Christ, to see that person's life freed from bondage to sin and Satan. Keep speaking the gospel until you come across someone who is ready to let God's light into himself.

In a certain way, it is a matter of percentages: if we want more people to know the Lord, then we have to proclaim the gospel to more people.

Successful evangelizers

Verses 2 and 4 present another important point about being successful evangelizers: *we need to tell the truth about the glory of God in Christ*. Verse 2 says that we refuse to do anything underhanded but “by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.”

St. Paul is warning us against the wrong sort of success orientation. We can want so much to succeed at evangelism that we will try anything that works – like dressing up a story to make things sound better than they are, or relying on dazzling evangelistic presentations to bring people to conversion. This verse does not rule out a concern for the methods we use to present the gospel, but it does make us consider how we are stating the truth.

Servants for Jesus' sake

Even more crucial is verse 4: “What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

We are not winning people to ourselves. We are not trying to convince them to accept us as their lord. We have something people need. They would want it if they realized what it would do for them. We are like waiters bringing food to hungry people or nurses administering medicine to patients who are in danger of death.

How are we to be “servants for Jesus’ sake”? In the western United States, deserts of brown, dry terrain stretch for miles. Every so often, however, stretches of irrigated land appear where everything is lush and green. The question: “What makes the desert bloom?” can be answered a couple of ways. One is “the irrigation system,” but the basic answer is water.

Without water, irrigation systems are useless; the desert will remain brown and dry. On the other hand, the irrigation system is necessary to bring water to the desert soil.

The Lord is calling us to be something like an irrigation ditch. Our job is to get the water to the field. Once the water is there, it will do its job. The irrigation ditch is the servant of the field, providing water for it. Our role as servants, as irrigation ditches in the work of evangelism, is to make a connection between people in need and the living water that our Lord Jesus Christ gives. We do not have to *make* them believe. We have to make an effective connection between them and the Lord so *he* can bring them to faith.

We cannot think ourselves capable without God

We do not have to be capable of doing the mission on which he is sending us. In fact, it is obvious from the passage in Second Corinthians that we cannot think ourselves capable without God. He is looking for servants who can make a contact for him and who will allow him to reveal Jesus Christ as Lord – something he alone is capable of doing. We do not need to be that effective as evangelists in our own persons, as long as the transcendent power of the gospel is in us, and we are willing to be a channel of it to the world.

Let's keep these fundamental spiritual truths clear in our minds. They are liberating to us. They give us a greater freedom to do that which God is sending us to do – to make the power and glory of God more available to others.

[[Steve Clark](#) is a founder and former president of the [Sword of the Spirit](#), a noted author of numerous books and articles, and a frequent speaker. This article first appeared in New Covenant Magazine August 1989, copyright © Stephen B. Clark. Used with permission.]

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Termite Sins that Undermine Love and Unity and Ruin Families and Communities

by Carlos Mantica

When we look for the reason for our failures, we seldom come across terrible sins or enormous faults. Instead we find sins that we often neglect to confess and ask for forgiveness.

In my work for the Lord I have related with many people. And every once in a while I have met a couple whose marriage has been destroyed by an atrocious infidelity or some serious misconduct. But this has happened very seldomly. What I have normally found are hundreds of ruined marriages, divorced couples, that have been destroyed by what I call "termite sins."

I call them that way because they are so small that you can hardly detect them. When termites infect a house, their presence and destructive work can go undetected for a very long time – often until it is too late and the whole house is on the verge of collapse.

Termite sins in marriage

Termite sins in marriage are things like jealousy, indifference, sarcasm, discourtesy, personal untidiness, biting mockery... These are things that, like a shaving blade, will not kill, but make a wound, and little by little they infect our relationships until one day the whole marriage breaks down.

The same happens in our personal relationships as Christians, especially when we are involved in a movement,

prayer group, or community. Christian groups often enter into a crisis because of some termite sin on the part of their leaders. Someone has a "vedette complex," and if there is a funeral he would like to be the deceased. Someone else becomes resentful because he has attended training sessions for three years, but has never been appointed to a leadership position. Someone else in the group behaves like a dictator in a banana republic. He thinks his word is the law, and whoever does not think just like him or her should be expelled from the group or movement. To make things worse, once such an individual has been appointed to a leadership position, nobody can remove the person from that position except through a bloody revolution.

People usually fail through pride, childishness, cowardice, shyness, or foul play. Let me offer you a mirror for each one of us to see his or her own image (not your neighbor's image) and discover if there are things in you that need to change. And, since I know that the things that often destroy our relations are not usually the enormous sins, what we are going to look at in the mirror are our "termite sins."

Termite sins of speech

I would like to begin with termite sins that have to do with speech. Much of the damage that is done in the world, certainly the most frequent and often the most harmful damage, is done with the tongue. The tongue is the cheapest lethal weapon known to man. And anyone can afford it. The poorest man can use it. And the richest and most powerful ones fear it. It is very difficult to protect yourself from a sharp tongue. Its wounds can last for a lifetime, and can even be carried from one generation to the next. Its damage is one of the hardest to repair.

But perhaps its most terrible feature is the easiness with which this weapon is triggered, and goes off, almost inadvertently. One second, one moment of carelessness... and the damage is done. Like poisoned darts, the wound it causes is almost invisible on the surface, but the inner damage is ravaging. That is why we are seldom aware of the damage caused, and do nothing to repair it immediately.

As I said before, we are not going to deal with the big sins here, and therefore we are not going to deal with the big sins of the tongue, such as slander, defamation, false witness, insult, blunt vulgarity, and the like. I would like to think that they do not even occur among Christian leaders and mature brothers and sisters in Christ. So we are going to focus here on poisoned darts.

Sins of the tongue could be classified into three groups:

1. Sins against the truth,
2. Sins against Christian love, and
3. Sins against freedom to coerce others.

Sins of speech that harm the truth

Examples of sins that harm the truth are exaggeration, sensationalism, generalization, and half-truths. We can understand these better with a couple of examples.

Suppose the husband comes home hungry, opens the refrigerator and says, "I never find anything to eat in this house!" Or says, "The only thing we eat in this house is soup, and I'm already tired of it!"

His wife then replies, "You never come on time for dinner! What do you think this is, a hotel?" The conversation becomes increasingly bitter, and a little later the husband remarks: "Whenever I want to have sex, you have a headache!" Finally, even the kids get into the fray and complain, "You never let me use the car! I can never go anywhere!"

All of this is exaggeration, generalization, sensationalism or mere half-truths. This marriage is about to be devoured by the termites.

Let's now move to the leaders' team meeting of a Christian group, where a plan is under study for improving things. One member says, "The truth is the whole plan is ridiculous! It's never going to work!" We all know this is not true. The plan has some holes in it, but basically it is a good plan. But now the meeting has become bitter, and anything can happen.

Another example: someone says, "The last leaders' training course was a complete disaster!" And the truth is that only one of the speakers did a poor job in presenting one of his talks for lack of proper preparation.

When sensationalism, exaggeration, generalization and half-truths become a habit in our way of speaking, we begin to destroy a lot of things. In every Christian leaders' team, and almost at every meeting, there is often a guy like that (See, I am already exaggerating!). If the guy also happens to have a spirit of contradicting everybody, he gradually undermines all the good things that are proposed, and erodes people's desire to continue working.

Termite sins against Christian love

Let us now move on to some of the termite sins against Christian love, which most often are also sins against the truth.

Let's begin with "speaking against others." Slander is one thing, saying or repeating something that is false and that damages someone's reputation. Speaking against others occurs when you say or repeat something that, even if it is true, damages someone's reputation.

Harming the reputation of others: So, speaking against others simply means harming the reputation of others. It does not matter whether what you are saying is true or false. Speaking against another person causing a damage to that person's reputation I have no right to cause. It does not even need to be anything serious. "So-and-so... she is really lazy." "Ann does not take good care of her children." "Mark never lasts more than six months in a job." Or, "The truth is that Jack is quite stupid."

There are some leaders who return home from a retreat or conference and then takes delight in telling everybody the small failures of the other team members during the retreat. Well, that's speaking against others, the very habit of speaking wrongly about others, because there are appropriate ways to express those concerns privately. Circulating that kind of critical speech does not help to solve faults or failures - it creates a climate of gossip in the people of God. This leads us to the next sin, which is precisely the sin of gossip.

Gossip

Gossip always involves talking about people in a manner that is in some way harmful. Gossip can be direct. For example someone might say to you, "Did you hear? Andrew is having marriage problems." And you respond: "Really? Tell me..."

But gossip among Christians can also be indirect and subtle. Someone in your small group meeting might lead out a prayer of intercession, which goes something like this: "Brothers, let us pray for Andrew and Lucy, because they are having very serious problems at home. Lord, we intercede for Lucy, because her left eye is still black after her husband hit her the other day. And we ask you to give him more patience, with this kind of wife he has. Amen."

Damage caused by gossip: Gossip undermines trust and soils a reputation. It spins a web of innuendo and information that can subject a person's name to criticism and dishonor. We gossip whenever we talk about people in a manner that will diminish our hearers' trust and esteem for them, and whenever we reveal another's personal thoughts and affairs without their permission. When you spread personal and private information you

prove yourself untrustworthy and disloyal. This is particularly true if you possess information because a friend confided in you.

Confidentiality is harmed when you repeat something that was not intended for everybody's ears. Gossip violates friendship by broadcasting openly what was confided in a few trusted ears.

If for some reason righteousness demands that we reveal something that was confided to us, then we must follow the higher law. If we are privy to a murder plot, we are not obligated to keep it secret in loyalty to our friends.

We should not ask others to promise us to keep something we have told them confidential (secret). If we do not trust them to use some information wisely, we should not tell it to them. We should not promise anyone to keep something secret before they tell us what it is. We may have a moral or legal responsibility to reveal it once we know it. Nor should we promise afterwards unless the conditions of the promise are clearly acceptable.

Busybody

One of the worst types of gossip is the busybody. Being a busybody is meddling in something that is none of your business. In the Gospel of John we see an example when Jesus had to correct Peter for prying into the affairs of the other apostle whom Jesus loved:

Peter looked back, and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved, the same one who at the supper had reclined next to Jesus, was following them. When Peter saw him, he said, "Lord, what is to be of this one?" Jesus replied, "If I want him to stay until I come back, what is that to you? Follow me." And thus the saying was passed on among the brethren, that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die, but rather, "If I want him to stay until I come back, what is that to you?" (John 21:20-23)

Perhaps it would be good if this saying would be passed on among our brothers and sisters in Christ, so that when someone asks what he has no reason to know, we can answer like Jesus, "What is that to you?", which actually means, "This is none of your business. Don't be a busybody!"

Our contemporary society has the false idea that everybody is entitled to know everything. This is what the owners of the media proclaim, and especially the reporters or interviewers of newspapers and TV shows that specialize in meddling in other people's lives. Christ tells us there are things that are none of our personal business, even if we hold the highest office in government or church. We must differentiate between what is public and what is private, what is merely confidential and what is secret. Busybodies do a lot of harm in Christian groups.

Constructive criticism

Let's now examine another area of speech, namely **criticism**. Constructive criticism is what people do with the intention to improve something. However, to distinguish it from *destructive* criticism, *constructive* criticism must be delivered in the right place and at the right time, and to those who can do something about it.

Constructive criticism, in order to be constructive, should have the following elements:

1) We must say exactly what it is that we are criticizing. If you say, "Tom did not understand the purpose of section two in the talk we had assigned him, so we should help him next time," that is constructive. Even Tom will appreciate your evaluation of his talk. But if you simply say, "Tom's talk was a disaster," that is clearly **destructive** criticism and Tom will probably hate your guts and prematurely give up his teaching career..

2) The second element of constructive criticism is stating *why* something was wrong or bad. In the preceding case, we noted how Tom did not accomplish the objective of section two of the talk because he missed the point.

Jesus corrected his apostles on many times but he always explained why. (Do not run for the first seats at table because the master may move you to the back.) When we do not explain why something is being criticized, we leave people guessing and they will likely repeat the mistake again.

3) For criticism to be constructive, it should always contribute something towards a solution. And if we don't have a solution, we should say, "I don't know what to do in this case, but I think we all should try to find a way to solve it."

Unqualified criticism is what you do with the sole intention of noting a failure, not trying to correct it, and it is almost always done in the presence of people who have nothing to do with a possible solution.

Criticizing in the proper way is necessary. Otherwise, a Christian group will gradually evolve towards three different kinds of groupings – those who do nothing but criticize and become the judges of everybody else, a few holy people who keep trying to please the critics, and those who simply give up.

Mockery and sarcasm

Let's now examine the termite sin of mockery. Mockery is very harmful, and it is made worse by the fact that it can also be very funny, which makes it easy for you to become popular through it. (Oh! How witty of you...)

A sophisticated form of mockery is sarcasm. I know at least two marriages that were destroyed by the habit of sarcasm that developed between husband and wife. "Oh, so you're back from the beauty parlor? I never would have guessed! Next time do the wrinkles too." Or at the movies, the husband remarks, "Well, that's a real woman, not what I have at home..." This is terrible, and unfortunately it takes place in many Christian environments, and at a very high level. The same can be said about the use of negative humor. "Boy, you don't sound like a donkey because you are so stupid you forgot how!"

Nicknames can be very offensive too. Calling some one "Clove," just because he is short, skinny, black and has a big head is uncharitable. We should only use nicknames if the people concerned are not offended. The key to know this is easy – if we can call a person directly by his nickname and he responds to it without offense, there is no problem. We find many nicknames in scripture: Peter (Simon), The Sons of Thunder (James and John), The Twin (Thomas), etc. But if we have to use a nickname behind a person's back, then we are in trouble.

Jokes should not offend others: We should also consider the use we make of jokes and practical jokes addressed at specific people. It is true that jokes help to build a climate of fellowship and joy. We don't want to become too serious, but we should not talk about love while showing lack of charity. I am not going to say what we can do or cannot do in the area of jokes, but I can give a criterion – if the other person feels offended, this means the joke was wrong and we should apologize immediately. What we think about it makes no difference. It's not a matter of saying, "You're too easily offended." No one should be offended. Jokes are for all of us to laugh and enjoy, including the person concerned. There is no need to victimize anyone. There should be no victims.

Vulgarity needs no comment. It must be totally eradicated among Christians. The same must be said about swearing and cursing.

Manipulation, intrigue, and emotional blackmail

So, let us now move to the last category of termite sins of the tongue, which is the category of sins against freedom. Sins that harm freedom are, for instance, manipulation, intrigue, and emotional blackmail. What these have in common is that they intend to have the other person do my will.

There are many forms of verbal manipulation. A very popular one is saying something to X for Y to understand it. The husband is praying aloud, and he says, "Lord, I ask you that my wife would forgive me for the things I said yesterday." The right thing would be for him to turn around and address his wife instead of God and say, "Honey, I said such and such yesterday. That was very wrong. It will not happen again. Please forgive me." Let's not ask the Lord to accomplish through miracles what we are supposed to accomplish through humility.

A very destructive one is accusation in the form of a question. A wife says, "Why don't you take me to the movies?" If she were to say, "Darling, take me to the movies," I would take her gladly even if I had seen the movie a hundred times. But "why don't you take me" is a question that has no answer, because the only real answer would be, "Well, because you have never asked me to take you, and you are once again expecting me to read your mind." And by then I am already furious, and if I answer I might raise my voice and yell, because what I perceived was not a question but an accusation. So I answer, 'You never take me anywhere' is an exaggeration, and your exaggerations are the kinds of things that make me angry. And it is also unfair, because I often take you everywhere, and if you don't go it's because she doesn't feel like it, and I can't stand all this nagging anymore. As if I had nothing to do! I come home tired from my work, and I haven't closed the door behind me when..." And by now all hell has broken loose.

Or the husband comes home and his wife says sweetly, "Where were you?" That will make him lose his temper: That did it! He explodes, "That's not a question but an accusation! 'Where were you and where did you expect me to come from, except the place I always usually come from everyday? Do you think I go to many different places? All I do is go from my home to the office and from the office to my home, and I can't be a minute late because you might start interrogating me.'" That home can now be declared a disaster area.

Accusations in the form of a question can cause anger much more than a direct accusation, because they are trying to cover mistrust. I concede that in many cases they are just an inherited habit that mustn nevertheless, be corrected.

Emotional blackmailing is similar. The wife wants her husband to buy something for her. He says he can't, and then she starts weeping, her voice falters, and she says: "You don't love me any more! When we were dating you used to give me everything."

Another example: the husband is peacefully reading the newspaper, because the wife in turn had been watching the soap opera that has just ended. So she sits next to him and says, "We never talk!" The husband asks for just one second to finish reading the paragraph he had begun, but then she replies, "Sure! Your newspaper comes first, and I'm second!"

Indifference and lack of expressions of love

Leaving the sins of the tongue behind, let's consider other termite sins. The most appropriate at this time is indifference or lack of expressions of love.

Even though we have laughed at certain situations where there was actual emotional blackmailing, it is equally true that there are also situations where the expressions of affection, courtesy, and various signs of attention we used to have before marriage have now disappeared from many homes. This builds an unbearable trap, because man and woman are able to endure many tortures and sorrows, but they are not able to endure the

absence of affection – long periods of indifference, isolation and the loneliness of two people who live in the same house and pretend to love each other but do not know how to show it. That’s why “verbal affection” and other expressions of love are so important – a compliment, a good-morning kiss, an anniversary gift, a weekly night devoted exclusively for the couple to be together, no matter how busy your schedule.

Visual affection is also important, especially for a man. A wife whose face is white with cream and whose hair is full of rolls that make her look like a Martian is silently telling her husband, ‘I care very little whether I am attractive to you or not.’ The same goes for a man who goes to bed smelling like Limburger Cheese.

And of course, physical expressions of affection are also very important, but I’m not going to dwell on them here because you are familiar with them.

Disorderly desire for admiration and recognition

Every human being has a natural desire or need for admiration and recognition. However, the next termite sin has to do with a disorderly desire for admiration and recognition.

I’m referring to a person who will not do any Christian service if the reward does not include an applause or a medal. Some Christians are very willing to serve as leaders in a conference or retreat, because that is very visible and will make them popular and admired; but they may not be as willing to do the easier service of participating in an intercession team for the same event, because that is silent and no one will ever know about it. I remember someone who never served again in a retreat, because no one told him at the evaluation meeting how tremendous his talk had been. I can also remember someone who was so easily offended that he left because leader so-and-so did not greet him at a meeting by mere neglect. I’m also referring to those who follow every funny idea or trend because of a concern for belonging and a need for being accepted. The idea might have been against his principles, but avoiding rejection was more important.

Normally these people are also deeply concerned for not hurting other people’s feelings. This is the father who allows his daughter to go around half naked, even if he disagrees, because she could feel bad or leave the home if he says something. Or he does not want to hurt the feelings of his son who is asking him to buy a new car for him, even though he does not need it and his father does not have enough money, and a car will only be an encouragement for laziness or vice. But the father will not say no, because this could build a distance between him and his son. He would rather be loved than be respected. And he ends up being manipulated.

Irresponsibility

Another serious termite sin is irresponsibility. Such is the case of a Christian leader who has to give a talk at a retreat, and just two minutes before he discovers he had left the outlines at home. Or a team member who calls the retreat leader just the day before the retreat, saying he will not be able to attend because it is his sister’s birthday.

A Christian leader has to be someone you can trust, somebody you can count with. He must be someone who knows how to say no, but when he says yes we know he will do what he promised.

One form and cause of irresponsibility is disorder. This person has no order in his priorities, or in his money, or in his commitments, or in his schedule. He says yes to everything, and his heart is so big that he would like to do everything and be everywhere. But that’s impossible. This type of leader can be divided in two categories: 1) Those who die of a heart attack, and 2) Those who are so irresponsible that they give others a heart attack.

Conclusion

I hope my mirror has helped you detect some termite sins, and others as well that I haven't mentioned.

We as Christians know that the door to the transformation of the world is the integral, progressive conversion of each one of us to full maturity in Christ. We will not transform the world unless men and women are transformed in Christ, and that means we ourselves have to first change before we can help others change as well. And we have begun to see that the areas we need to change in are not those terrible things we one day left at the feet of Christ, but a large number of small things, of termite sins that are so small that we wouldn't even be able to see them without someone else showing them to us, but which are actually destroying us.

If we were able to leave behind those difficult things, would it be so difficult now to leave behind something small, out of love for the Lord and for his people? To eradicate termites from our house, it was first necessary to see them and to admit that they were there. In order to be consistent, that's exactly what we need first of all – to see them, to see ourselves and to accept, honestly and humbly, whatever we discover inside.

I have not intended to offend anyone. If this helps, I am the first one to confess that if I know so much about termite sins it is because the vast majority of them I found inside myself.

If there is someone who throughout this talk has only rejoiced in the faults of others, and said, “This is X. That's Y. That's the perfect portrait of Z,” then with all respect I will have to remind him of the words of the Lord: Brother, or sister, why do you look at the speck in your neighbor's eye and do not see the log in yours? First take out the log in your eyes, and then you will see better the speck in the other person's eyes.

Let's take out the log in our own eyes. After we do so, our eyes will be clean enough for us to take a positive look at our own Christian group or community.

> See related [articles](#) by [Carlos Mantica](#)

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Our Weapons in Spiritual Warfare

by Michael Harper

To lead a person to Christ and not to show him how he can be filled with the Holy Spirit is like recruiting someone for the army and not providing him with adequate weapons. If he goes to war unarmed, and unprotected for that matter, he will make little impression on the enemy, and likely as not will finish up a casualty or a prisoner of war. Jesus himself made sure that his disciples did not commence battle until they had been filled with the Holy Spirit and equipped with spiritual gifts, and He offers the same resources to us.

There are many kinds of weapons in God's armory, and the Christian soldier needs to be acquainted with each of them. There are some that are offensive weapons, others used for defense. Some to neutralize the enemy, others to protect ourselves from his attacks. Paul describes them well in this way:

It is true that I am an ordinary weak human being, but I don't use human plans and methods to win my battles. I use God's mighty weapons, not those made by men, to knock down the devil's strongholds. These weapons can break down every proud argument against God and every wall that can be built to keep men from finding him. With these weapons I can capture rebels and bring them back to God, and change them into men whose heart's desire is obedience to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

The Name

No one reading the New Testament can escape the crucial nature of the name of Jesus in every part of it. Let us

list some of its uses:

Salvation – "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"
Acts 4: 12 (see also 9:21, 10:43 and John 1:12)

Justification – "you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our
God" 1 Corinthians 6: 11

Healing – "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth walk" Acts 3:6

Preaching – "Philip preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus
Christ" Acts 8:12 (see also 9:27)

Exorcism – "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" Acts 16:18 (see also
Mark 16:17)

Church discipline – "I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus on the
man who has done such a thing" 1 Corinthians 5:3-4

Worship – "always and for everything giving thanks in the' name of our Lord Jesus Christ to
God the Father" Eph. 5:20

Prayer – "whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that The" Father may be glorified in the
Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it" John 14:13-14

The gift of the Holy Spirit – "but the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in
my name, he will teach you all things..." John 14:26

Persecution – "then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted
worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." Acts 5:41 (see also Matthew 5:41, Matthew 24:9 and
Acts 9: 16)

It can all be summarized by the words of Paul, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name
of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17).

You could not have a more comprehensive injunction than that! The name of Jesus, however, is not to be used
as a kind of lucky talisman, and there is nothing magical about the word itself. In Acts 19, as we have already
seen, the sons of Sceva tried to use it this way with painful results. But from Pentecost
onwards the name of Jesus figures very prominently in the whole forward movement of the Christian Church.

The name of a person in both the Old and New Testaments means very much more than the word itself. It
means the entire person, his attributes, personality and power. We recognize the same in everyday life. A
cheque without a signature is only worth the paper it is printed on. It all depends on that name at
the bottom right-hand corner. That signature or name represents that person's financial resources and the part
of them which he is prepared to part with. It is as if Jesus left behind Him a cheque book full of blank cheques
which He has signed with his name. The believer fills in the amount as the will of God is revealed, and the
cheque once presented is met by the inexhaustible riches of Christ. So through the name of Jesus, some
believe, others receive the Holy Spirit, others are healed and others are delivered from satanic power. How
tragic when we use the cheque book of our own resources and find the cheques are always bouncing! God's
cheques, when signed with the name of Jesus, are always honoured.

The name of Jesus is a powerful weapon

When we use the name of Jesus we are recognizing the fact that we are not ministering in our own name or for our own blessing. We are acting as his representatives. When people accept Christ through our witness, or are healed through the laying on of hands, or set free through the ministry of exorcism, then it is Christ who has ministered. He has met with these people, and we have only been his representatives and means. As we invoke the name of Jesus, we are bringing that person into his presence that He might minister to them. We must also guard jealously the glory and honor of Jesus' name, and see that none is given or received by ourselves.

The name of Jesus is a powerful weapon in our hands, and since we are to do everything in that name it should often be on our lips and in our prayers. We must always use it reverently and discreetly. We must never want to become so familiar with it that we lose the sense of awe and wonder that surrounds it. It is the name to which one day every knee will bow and every tongue have to confess. We must bow to that name now, and confess it boldly and believingly, and as we pray for others according to their need, let us use it firmly and confidently.

The Word of God

This weapon has already been mentioned in the previous chapter. It is the one offensive weapon referred to in the famous passage on spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6. The armor is for protection, but the sword of the Spirit "which is the word of God" is useful for both attack and defense. In Hebrews 4:12 the word of God is again likened to a sword-it is "alive and active. It cuts more keenly than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the place where life and spirit, joints and marrow, divide. It sifts the purposes and thoughts of the heart" (NEB).

There is nothing quite like the word of God, proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, for forcing the enemy into the open and revealing the presence of Satan's influence. Martin Luther recognized this, as part of a verse of one of his famous hymns reveals:

And let the prince of ill
Look grim as e'er he will,
He harms us not a whit,
For why? – his doom is writ;
A word shall quickly slay him.

No doubt too this is the explanation for the experiences of the early Methodists. For when John Wesley and others began to preach in some places, strong people would begin to cry out, sometimes manifesting the symptoms of epilepsy. There is no more powerful combination than that of the Spirit and word of God. When mixed in the right proportions the enemy is sure to be exposed and overthrown.

But the word of God is not only an irritant, it also heals and strengthens. It has been said of preaching that it should "disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed." This aptly describes the ministry of the word. When we are counselling and trying to help people who are oppressed by satanic power, we must know how to apply the word of God not only in diagnosing the cause of the trouble, but also in prescribing the remedy.

Mrs. Jean Darnall has devised a very helpful method in this respect. She calls it "scriptural prescriptions," and like medicine they are to be taken by the patient "three times a day." We simply write out for the one we are trying to help (or for ourselves if we are treating ourselves!) a set of relevant scriptures. It is then suggested that these be read aloud three times, morning, noon and before going to bed. First, they are spoken to God, as

witness that He has written

this and so will fulfill it; secondly, to ourselves, as witnessing to the fact that it applies to us and we believe it; and thirdly, to the devil, as Jesus did in the wilderness, so that he has eventually to flee.

Righteousness

Paul regarded this as a weapon as well as part of the Christian armor to protect him from attack (Le., the breastplate of righteousness). In 2 Corinthians 6:6, he refers to "the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left." It seems as if we should be ambidextrous in our spiritual warfare! Ready for anything! But Paul probably means here "weapons for enemies all round us."

In the context of 2 Corinthians 6, from which this text comes, Paul is defending himself from the misrepresentation and obloquy of his Christian opponents in Corinth, who wanted to exalt others over Paul. His ministry and life had been seriously criticized, and he is at pains to point out the features which could swing the pendulum strongly in the right direction and be the means of drawing millions back to God and his kingdom.

It is not the purpose of this book to give a detailed explanation of these gifts, but to draw attention to the three which are particularly appropriate-"the word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge," and "the discerning of spirits." The first two are often paired together. They are the means of conveying to us inspired understanding of situations and of people's needs.

The best examples of the operation of the gift of the "word of wisdom" can be found in the inspired way in which our Lord answered his hecklers. There were times when many present must have thought it impossible for Him to answer the questions put to Him without falling into the trap that had deliberately been set. "Fetch me a coin" was just such a "word of wisdom," in answer to the awkward question about whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar or not. And we can expect the same help from the Holy Spirit when placed in awkward situations.

To give you a modern example, a minister was facing the danger of division in his church when some of the members were being filled with the Holy Spirit and receiving charismatic gifts. Others in the church resented what was happening. One of them expressed his concern to the minister after a Sunday service. "It stamps us second-class Christians," he alleged, adding sarcastically, "and they're a queer lot for all that." "Well," said the minister in reply, "perhaps they need it more than you do." It was the perfect answer-a word of wisdom. It pacified an irate church member, who very soon was rejoicing in the same blessing himself.

Jesus often manifested the companion gift-the word of knowledge. In the days of his life on earth He was given, on many occasions, supernatural pieces of information which proved invaluable to his ministry. He knew, for example, the real need of the woman at the well of Sychar, and that she had been married five times. He knew exactly when "the hour" had come. He "saw" Nathaniel under the fig tree before He had ever met him.

The gift of "discerning of spirits"

And the Holy Spirit gives this gift today. It is particularly useful when trying to help people who have had damaging experiences in early childhood, which they cannot themselves remember and which they may have repressed. A woman was being prayed for, with deep needs affecting her physically as well as spiritually. Suddenly one of those present, who hardly knew her, described a toy pet. Immediately memories came back of a serious deprivation when a small girl of a much loved toy. Healing followed the release of this among other

memories during prayer and the laying on of hands. Another example concerns a young man at a conference. In a time of prayer someone shared a vision, which exactly described some of this man's past life, and revealed the basis of fears which had hindered his spiritual development and prevented him from witnessing freely. Later that evening the fear was dealt with and a new release experienced.

Jesus, of course, had this gift of "discerning of spirits" and manifested it on many occasions. It is a gift of discrimination, and indispensable in spiritual warfare. It helps us to distinguish between various possible agencies and to discover the true source and motivation of life and action. Jesus' ability is described as "He knew what was in man" (John 2:25). He was able to interpret human motives and assess the genuineness or otherwise of people's words and actions. He seemed instinctively to recognize hypocrisy on the one hand, and reality on the other. He knew when men had faith, and when they did not; when they were telling the truth and when they were lying. The "Word made flesh" was able to discern "the thoughts and intents of the heart" as the written word does according to Hebrews 4: 12.

Since Jesus gives us the same commission as He received from the Father, anoints us with the same power, and promises that we will do the same works, it is not surprising when we read in the Acts of the Apostles that the disciples were equipped with the same discernment. Peter, for example, recognizes the hypocrisy in Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3), and exposes the wickedness of Simon Magus (Acts 8:30). Paul discerns the spirit of divination in the servant girl (Acts 16: 17f), and so on.

The Holy Spirit desires, through the operation of this gift, to enable Christians to distinguish accurately between what comes from above," and what rises "from below." What comes from God, what comes from man, and what comes from Satan. In any given situation there may be a mixture, but the Holy Spirit will help us to analyze the situation and label the parts correctly.

"Trained by patience to distinguish good from evil"

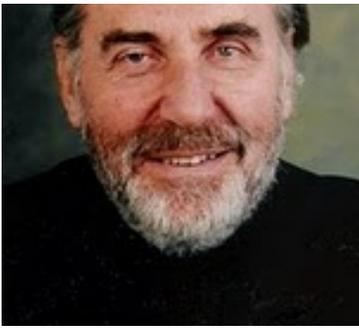
Although these gifts are part of the 'spirituals' (*pneumatikoi*), which means that they are given by the Holy Spirit and are not natural abilities, they will still be manifested in proportion to the spiritual development of the Christian. There is a need, as expressed in Hebrews 5:14, to have our faculties "trained by patience to distinguish good from evil." As with all the other gifts, practice is the surest way to learn. A humble attitude and a readiness to admit failure when it occurs are important factors in the learning process. If one is not able to distinguish clearly at the time, one is often able later to do so in the light of subsequent events. But we should expect to know at the time, and this will be our experience increasingly as time goes on.

There will be some to whom the secrets of this particular area of the kingdom will be revealed in greater degree than to others. This is not necessarily any reflection on either faithfulness or dedication. We need to recognize that there are different ministries in the body of Christ as well as gifts. Just as James in his epistle discourages people from becoming teachers (James 3: 1), for they are to be judged with greater strictness, so naturally we shrink from the responsibility of this ministry of discernment. However, every Christian needs in some measure this gift, for we are constantly forced by circumstances to require it.

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Archpriest Father Michael Harper (1931-2010) was a world-renown leader in the charismatic renewal movement. He was a minister in the Anglican Church for 40 years. He joined the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1995, and was appointed Archpriest of the Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of the UK and Ireland.



He and his wife Jeanne formed the Fountain Trust in 1964, which organized charismatic conferences all over the world at which he addressed thousands of people. Jeanne co-edited the songbook, *Sound of Living Waters*, which is still used by many charismatic churches today. Harper also founded Soma (Sharing of Ministries Abroad), which was committed to sharing ministries between the developed and developing world.

He was involved for many years with the World Council of Churches. He spoke at several Catholic meetings. He met Popes Paul VI, John Paul and John Paul II.

He also edited *Renewal*, the longest-established charismatic magazine in the world. He wrote 18 books, including the bestseller *Equal and Different*, which set out his views on women's ordination and the gender debate. Colleagues remember him as a man with the ability to build friendships across the Christian traditions. A gentle and humble man, Harper was nevertheless a dynamic speaker and networker, able to draw people in, whatever their background or differences from himself. He is survived by his wife, Jeanne.

Some of his books and articles are available online at: <http://www.harperfoundation.com/books.html>.

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The New Dark Ages

“Just as in the Dark Ages, the world without was given up to the vainglory of mere rivalry and violence, so in this passing age the world will be given up to vulgarity and gregarious fashions and every sort of futility. It is very like the Flood; and not least in being unstable as water.”

by G K Chesterton

An Essay from *G.K.'s Weekly* newspaper, May 21, 1927

Certain critics tell us that we wish to return to the Dark Ages about which they themselves are entirely in the dark. They are in the dark, not only about what the phrase ought to mean, but even about what they mean by it. At the best it is an abusive term for the Middle Ages. More often it is a jumble of everything and anything from the Stone Age to the Victorian Age. A man spoke the other day of the medieval idea that our own nation must be supported against any other nation; evidently unaware that when Europe was medieval it was far less national. Somebody else spoke of the medieval notion of a different morality for men and women; the medieval morality being one of the few that applied almost equally to both.

Time of barbarian wars

If they talk thus ignorantly of the Middle Ages, of which even historians are beginning to know something, they naturally know even less about the Dark Ages, of which nobody knows very much. The Dark Ages, properly understood, were that period during which cultural continuity is almost broken between the fall of Rome and the rise of medieval society; the time of the barbarian wars and the first beginnings of feudalism. Naturally these critics know very little about the period; they know so little about it as to say that we want to bring it back. And yet the strangest thing, in all the strange things they say, is the fact that there is some truth in what they say. In a sense quite different from what they intend, there really is a parallel between our position and that of people in the Dark Ages.

Beyond the Roman Wall and Wall Street today

One way of putting it is that both are faced with a possible triumph of the barbarians. As in their time a new and disproportionate military power arose among provincials, so in our case a new and disproportionate money power has arisen among colonials. Then Rome was sometimes weaker than the Transalpine legions; now Europe is sometimes weaker than the Transatlantic banks. The streets of London are altered, if not destroyed, by tribes that may legitimately be called the Vandals; and for the anarchy beyond the Roman Wall we have the anarchy of Wall Street. But though we might work some such fanciful parallel for the fun of the thing, it would really be very unfair to America, which has inherited some Roman traditions more clearly than we; for instance, the tradition of the Republic.

The ark of sanctuary in the midst of turbulent storms and floods

A much truer way of stating the parallel is this; that history is here repeating itself, for once in a way, in connection with a certain idea, which can best be described as the idea of Sanctuary.

In the Dark Ages the arts and sciences went into sanctuary. This was true then in a special and technical sense; because they went into the monastery. Because we praise the only thing that saved anything from the wreck, we are actually accused of praising the wreck. We are charged with desiring the Dark Ages, because we praise the few scattered candles that were lit to dispel the darkness. We are charged with desiring the deluge, because we are grateful to the Ark.

But the immediate question here is historical rather than religious; and it is a fact attested by all historians that what culture could be found in that barbarous transition was mostly to be found in the shelter of the monastic institutions. We may regret or admire the form which that culture took in that shelter; but nobody denies the storm from which it was sheltered. Nobody denies that St. Dunstan was more cultivated than a Danish pirate or that there is more art in Gothic arches than in Gothic raids. And it is in this sense, of science and art going into sanctuary, that there seems to me to be a real parallel between the barbarian anarchy and the progress that we are enjoying just now.

An island of Christian culture in a sea of senseless drifting

Some, even of my own moral and religious atmosphere, have asked why I give such importance to Property, which if it be a human appetite may also easily be a human lust. I confess that my chief impulse is not so much to prevent it from being idealistically denounced as to prevent it being cynically defended. I can listen patiently to a Communist repeating for hours at a time that Property is unnecessary, because men must surrender selfish interests to social ideals. I only begin to break the furniture when somebody starts to prove that Property is necessary, because men are all selfish and every man must look after himself.

The case for Property is not that a man must look after himself; but, on the contrary, that a normal man has to look after other people, if it be simply a wife and family. It is that this unit should have an economic basis for its social independence. If he were considering only himself, he might be more independent as a vagabond; he might be more secure as a serf. But the point at the moment is that I like Property because it is a noble thing. I can respect the revolutionist who dislikes it because it is an ignoble thing. But I have no truck with the cynic who likes it because it is ignoble. But I believe that at this historic crisis it has become not only a just, but in a rather special sense, a sacred thing. Real property will be all the more sacred because it will be rather rare. It will be an island of Christian culture in seas of senseless drifting and mutable social moods.

Crucial role of Christian family life and culture

In short, I believe we have reached the time when the family will be called upon to play the part once played by the Monastery. That is to say, there will retire into it not merely the peculiar virtues that are its own, but the

crafts and creative habits which once belonged to all sorts of other people.

In the old Dark Ages, it was impossible to persuade the feudal chiefs that it was more worth while to grow medicinal herbs in a small garden than to lay waste the province of an empire; that it was better to decorate the corner of a manuscript with gold-leaf than to heap up treasuries and wear crowns of gold. These men were men of action; they were hustlers; they were full of vim and pep and snap and zip. In other words, they were deaf and blind and partly mad, and rather like American millionaires.

And because they were men of action, and men of the moment, all that they did has vanished from the earth like a vapor; and nothing remains out of all that period but the little pictures and the little gardens made by the pottering little monks. As nothing would convince one of the old barbarians that an herbal or a missal could be more important than a triumph and a train of slaves, so nothing could convince one of the new barbarians that a game of hide and seek can be more educative than a tennis tournament at Wimbledon, or a local tradition told by an old nurse more historic than an imperial speech at Wembley.

Fortified bulwarks that outlast the flood tides of social disintegration

The real national tone will have to remain for a time as a domestic tone. As religion once went into retreat, so patriotism must retire into private life. This does not mean that it will be less powerful; ultimately it may be more powerful, just as the monasteries became enormously powerful. But it is by retiring into these forts that we can outlast and wear down the invasion; it is by camping upon these islands that we can await the sinking of the flood.

Just as in the Dark Ages, the world without was given up to the vainglory of mere rivalry and violence, so in this passing age the world will be given up to vulgarity and gregarious fashions and every sort of futility. It is very like the Flood; and not least in being unstable as water. Noah had a house boat which seems to have contained many other things besides the obvious household pets. And many wild birds of exotic plumage and many wild beasts of almost fabulous fantasy, many arts counted pagan and sciences counted rationalistic may come to roost or burrow in such stormy seasons in the shelter of the convent or the home.



Who Was G. K. Chesterton?

by Dale Ahlquist

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) cannot be summed up in one sentence. Nor in one paragraph. In fact, in spite of the fine biographies that have been written of him, he has never been captured between the covers of one book. But rather than waiting to separate the goats from the sheep, let's just come right out and say it: G.K. Chesterton was the best writer of the 20th century. He said something about everything and he said it better than anybody else. But he was no mere wordsmith. He was very good at expressing himself, but more importantly, he had something very good to express. The reason he was the greatest writer of the 20th century was because he was also the greatest thinker of the 20th century.

Born in London, G.K. Chesterton was educated at St. Paul's, but never went to college. He went to art school. In 1900, he was asked to contribute a few magazine articles on art criticism, and went on to become one of the most prolific writers of all time. He wrote a hundred books, contributions to 200 more, hundreds of poems, including the epic Ballad of the

White Horse, five plays, five novels, and some two hundred short stories, including a popular series featuring the priest-detective, Father Brown. In spite of his literary accomplishments, he considered himself primarily a journalist. He wrote over 4000 newspaper essays, including 30 years worth of weekly columns for the Illustrated London News, and 13 years of weekly columns for the Daily News. He also edited his own newspaper, G.K.'s Weekly. (To put it into perspective, four thousand essays is the equivalent of writing an essay a day, every day, for 11 years. If you're not impressed, try it some time. But they have to be good essays – all of them – as funny as they are serious, and as readable and rewarding a century after you've written them.)

Chesterton was equally at ease with literary and social criticism, history, politics, economics, philosophy, and theology. His style is unmistakable, always marked by humility, consistency, paradox, wit, and wonder. His writing remains as timely and as timeless today as when it first appeared, even though much of it was published in throw away papers.

Chesterton debated many of the celebrated intellectuals of his time: George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, Clarence Darrow. According to contemporary accounts, Chesterton usually emerged as the winner of these contests, however, the world has immortalized his opponents and forgotten Chesterton, and now we hear only one side of the argument, and we are enduring the legacies of socialism, relativism, materialism, and skepticism. Ironically, all of his opponents regarded Chesterton with the greatest affection. And George Bernard Shaw said: "The world is not thankful enough for Chesterton."

His writing has been praised by Ernest Hemingway, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Karel Capek, Marshall McLuhan, Paul Claudel, Dorothy L. Sayers, Agatha Christie, Sigrid Undset, Ronald Knox, Kingsley Amis, W.H. Auden, Anthony Burgess, E.F. Schumacher, Neil Gaiman, and Orson Welles. To name a few.

Chesterton argued eloquently against all the trends that eventually took over the 20th century: materialism, scientific determinism, moral relativism, and spineless agnosticism. He also argued against both socialism and capitalism and showed why they have both been the enemies of freedom and justice in modern society.

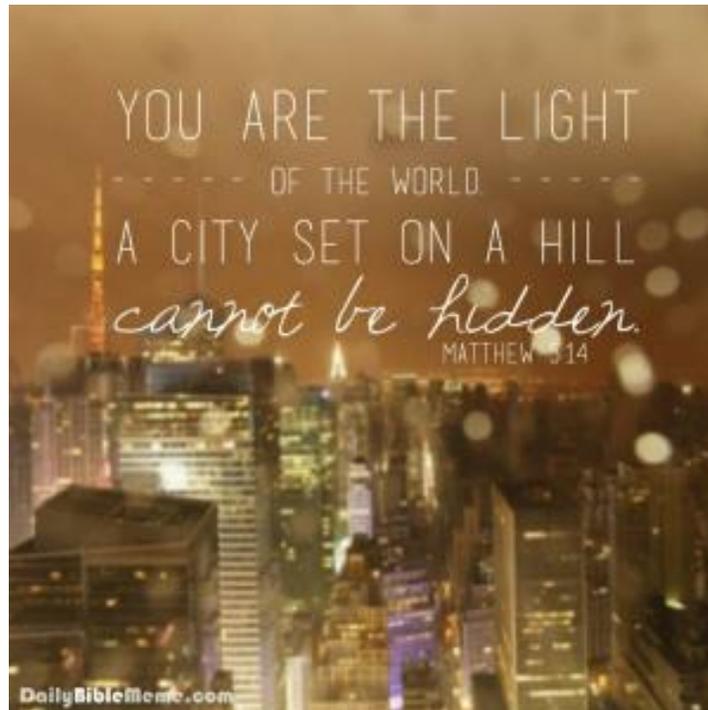
And what did he argue for? What was it he defended? He defended "the common man" and common sense. He defended the poor. He defended the family. He defended beauty. And he defended Christianity and the Catholic Faith.

Excerpted from an essay, [Who Is this Guy and Why Haven't I Heard of Him?](#), by Dale Ahlquist

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Communities of Light

building a counter-culture in a world engulfed by confusion and destruction

by Charles Colson

The Great Nightfall?

But it seems that something has happened that
has never happened before; though we know
not just when, or why, or how, or where.
Men have left God not for other gods, they say,
but for no gods; and this has never happened before
That men both deny gods and worship gods,
professing first Reason,
And then Money, and Power, and what they call
Life, or Race, or Dialectic.
The Church disowned, the tower overthrown, the
Bells upturned, what have we to do
But stand with empty hands and palms upturned
in an age which advances progressively
backwards?

– *T.S. Eliot*

T.S. Eliot said there were two ways of looking at a crumbling culture. The first says that a society ceases to be Christian when material prosperity becomes its overriding individual and corporate aim. The second viewpoint

maintains that a society has not ceased to be Christian until it becomes something else. Eliot believed that the culture of his day, the 1940s, was predominantly negative yet still Christian. The choice for the future, he said, was between the formation of a new Christian culture and the acceptance of a pagan one.

I believe that the decades since Eliot wrote those words have tipped the balance. Vestiges of Christian influence still remain; but those Christian absolutes that have so profoundly shaped Western culture through the centuries are being consciously rejected by the men and women who direct the flow of information and attitudes to popular culture: communicators, educators, entertainers, and lawyers. As Eliot put it, "Paganism holds all the most valuable advertising space."¹

This cultural crisis is all the more sinister because it is invisible to those who have already become captive to its lie. Radical individualism, which has brought us to this critical juncture, blinds most people to the fact that there is a crisis. Freed from the archaic impediments of family, church, and community, these men and women cannot see how their liberty has enslaved them to alienation, betrayal, loneliness, and inhumanity.

They've grown so accustomed to the dark, they don't even realize the lights are out.

G.K Chesterton accurately described their plight: "There are commonwealths, plainly to be distinguished here and there in history, which pass from prosperity to squalor, or from glory to insignificance, or from freedom to slavery, not only in silence, but with serenity. The face still smiles while the limbs, literally and loathsomely, are dropping from the body. These are people that have lost the power of astonishment at their own actions."²

Will the great nightfall soon be upon us?

Whittaker Chambers, the skeptic turned Christian who saw the 20th century first as a Communist spy and then as an impassioned defender of the West, died despairing: "It is idle to talk about preventing the wreck of Western civilization. It is already a wreck from within. This is why we can hope to do little more now than snatch a fingernail of a saint from the rack or a handful of ashes from the fire, and bury them secretly in a flower pot against the day, ages hence, when a few men begin again to dare to believe that there was once something else, that something else is thinkable, and need some evidence of what it was and the fortifying knowledge that there were those who, at the great nightfall, took loving thought to preserve the tokens of hope and truth."³

Perhaps the barbarians have already won. Perhaps the great nightfall will soon be upon us. Theologian Donald Bloesch proposes that it may be out of the utter destruction of culture that the church will emerge, phoenixlike, from the ashes. We don't know.

But one thing we do know: it isn't necessary that such predictions comes to pass. As Christians we cannot be historical determinists. There are no inexorable elements propelling history. God is sovereign over human events.

Yet it is men and women, under his jurisdiction, who write the pages of history through the sum of their choices. We never know what minor act of hopeless courage, what word spoken in defense of truth, what unintended consequence might swing the balance and change the world. "The death of a man at a critical juncture, his disgust, his retreat, his disgrace, have brought innumerable calamities on a whole nation. A common soldier, a child, a girl at the door of an inn, have changed the face of fortune, and almost of Nature," said Edmund Burke.⁴

Burke was referring to historical figures. The man who died at a critical juncture was Pericles, the Athenian general who shaped his culture; the man who retreated was Prime Minister Pitt on his retirement from public life. The child was twelve-year-old Hannibal, taking an oath to one day attack Rome; and the girl at the inn was Joan of Arc.

How barbarism was overcome in the dark ages

Before Rome's fall, its citizens had lost the characteristics that had made them distinctly Roman: discipline, respect, and obedience. Incest and adultery had invaded families, breaking the natural bonds of love and commitment and setting yokes of bitterness, disdain, and hatred in their place. Moral education had been supplanted by indolence, corruption, and decadence.

Thus damaged from within, Rome was unable to resist direct barbarian assaults from without. The once great empire fell in the fifth century, and Rome was sacked by the Visigoths, a Germanic tribe whose cavalry proved superior to the foot soldiers who had sustained and advanced the Roman empire for centuries. During the next few centuries, chaos ruled Europe. Warring bands of illiterate Germanic tribes opposed and deposed one another. Cities and cultural centers disappeared as inhabitants were scattered across the land in crude huts and rough towns. Literacy, law, and order – the pillars of civilization – crumbled, and the aristocratic culture of the ancient Western world nearly disappeared. Early medieval Europe seemed destined for complete barbarism.

One force prevented this. The church.

Instead of conforming to the barbarian culture of the Dark Ages, the medieval church modeled a counter-culture to a world engulfed by destruction and confusion. Thousands of monastic orders spread across Europe, characterized by discipline, creativity, and a coherence and moral order lacking in the world around them. Monks preserved not only the Scriptures but classical literature as well; they were busy not only at their prayers but in clearing land, building towns, and harvesting crops. When little else shone forth, these religious provided attractive models of communities of caring and character; and in the process they preserved both faith and civilization itself.

It is important to note that the church challenged not only the values of the barbarians but those of the Roman Empire as well. Living by a value system dictated by the kingdom of God, they rejected both Roman and barbarian lapses of character, uprooting such attitudes as the aversion to physical labor predominant among the Roman masses and the barbarian love of violence. As points of light in a dark age, they called attention to the values of an endless age. And in so doing, they saved their civilization.

Though the world now appears far more sophisticated than when the Visigoths overran Rome, it's only because today's barbarians wear pinstripes instead of animal skins and wield briefcases rather than spears. Like the monastic communities of the Middle Ages, the church today can serve as outposts of truth, decency, and civilization in the darkening culture around us. For even though the church itself is shot through with an individualism that cripples its witness, even though the church today – like the medieval monastic communities – is made up of sinners like you and me, it is the one institution in society that still has the capability to challenge culture by bearing witness to God's transcendent standards of absolute justice and righteousness.

Why? Because the church has an independent locus of authority beyond itself, beyond the state, beyond the tides of passing fashion. The church cleaves to the absolute standards of Scripture and is infused with the work of the Holy Spirit to guide it.

Metanoia

The monastic orders of the Dark Ages could not have modeled communities of character if they had looked like the troubled world about them. Today, in a new age darkened by the collapse of character and the dissolution of faith, the church cannot model the kingdom of God if it is conformed to the kingdoms of man.

Too often in recent years the church has suffered from the same collapse of character that is so widespread in our culture. Too often the church has been apathetic, marked by individualism, and constrained by the love of self rather than the love of Christ.

If the church today is to be the church, it must diligently protect its spiritual integrity. This begins with what the Greeks called *metanoia*, which means a “change of mind” and is translated in the New Testament as “repentance.”

No less mysterious than God’s dealings with nations is the inexorable operation of his Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals. When a person repents – changes his or her mind – God takes control of even the most indomitable spirit. No one exhibits this more clearly and dramatically than G. Gordon Liddy, as colorful a character as any Hollywood director could order up from Central Casting.

A student of Nietzsche, the German philosopher who venerated the will to power as the highest of human goals, Liddy saw the world as a challenge to be conquered. Even as the Nixon White House tumbled around him [during the Watergate political scandal during the Presidency of Nixon in the 1970s that resulted in the indictment of several of Nixon's closest advisors, including Liddy and Colson], Liddy would not be broken.

Eventually Gordon was sentenced to twenty-one years in prison for his role in Watergate. And when I visited him there, he was as tough and unrepentant as ever. As he tells it in his autobiography, titled, of course, *Will*: “Chuck asked me if I had ‘seen the light.’ ‘No,’ I replied. ‘I’m not even looking for the switch.’”

Liddy served four years and was released. Then Liddy and his wife moved to a different state, and in the process renewed a friendship with former FBI colleagues he had known for thirty years. Liddy had always been drawn to these people; they were intelligent, compassionate, well-read. So when they asked him to study the Bible with them, he agreed – but only after spelling out his terms. “I’m an agnostic,” he said. “I’m here because I’m interested in the Bible. Period. Please do not try to convert me. I don’t want to be bothered.”

Liddy, you see, felt no compelling need for God in his life. His interest in the Bible was purely historical. But then he thought about his friends and their thirty-year example of Christian love and excellence. “If they are persuaded of the correctness of this,” thought Liddy, “then maybe I should take another look.”

Many people, says Liddy, experience a “rush of emotion” in conversion. Yet for me there came a “rush of reason.” He realized Christ was who he claimed to be, and Gordon Liddy became a Christian.

Since then, the man who wrote *Will* has said, “Now the hardest thing I have to do every single day is try to decide what is God’s will, rather than what is my will. What does Jesus want, not what does Gordon want. And so the prayer that I say most frequently is, ‘God, first of all, please tell me what you want – continue the communication. And second, give me the strength to do what I know you want, what your will is, rather than my own.’ I have an almost 57-year history of doing what I want, what my will wants, and I have to break out of that habit into trying to do the will of God.”⁵

Repentance is a rare message in today's church because it requires confrontation with an uncomfortable subject – sin. And sin does not sell well in our feel-good culture. When sin gets personal, people get skittish. Only the conviction of personal sin, however, brings us to Christ.

G.K. Chesterton observed that the doctrine of original sin is the one philosophy empirically validated by 3,500 years of human history. Certainly the Middle East, South Africa, Central America, Northern Ireland, and the streets of America testify to that fact. Yet we are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. Unless the church recognizes this and preaches it, there is no way it can be a strong model of an alternative community of character to a culture corroded by sin.

Communities of Light

The monks and nuns of the Dark Ages acted out of obedience to God, and God used their faithfulness – without their knowing it – to preserve culture and ultimately restore Western civilization. As Christopher Dawson [an early 20th century Christian historian who wrote many books on cultural history and Christendom] has said: “The culture-forming energies of Christianity depended upon the Church’s ability to resist the temptation to become completely identified with, or absorbed into, the culture.”⁶ Only as the church maintains its distinctiveness from the culture is it able to affect culture.

Out of tiny monastic outposts come education, moral endurance, and artistic excellence that can save a civilization. And out of holy obedience today, in communities of light, will come what he wills, as we are faithful.

Notes

1. T.S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1968), 18.
2. G.K. Chesterton, *A Chesterton Anthology*, ed. P.J. Kavanagh (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 359.
3. Quoted in Russell Kirk, “The Wise Men Know What Wicked Things Are Written on the Sky,” *Modern Age* (Spring, 1985): 113.
4. Quoted in Russell Kirk, “Wise Men.”
5. Quotes taken from the transcript of a speech Gordon Liddy delivered at a Good Friday prayer breakfast, April 17, 1988.
6. Quoted in Russell Hittinger, “The Two Cities and the Modern World: A Dawsonian Assessment,” *Modern Age* (Spring/Summer, 1984): 193.

Charles Colson was the founder of [Prison Fellowship](#), an international Christian outreach to prisoners. He has written a numerous books, including *Born Again* and *Kingdoms in Conflict*.

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The Truth Will Set Young People Free

by Paul Jordan

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).

Men and women were equal from the beginning – equal in the dignity of his image. The fall made us equal in our need of rescue from sin. The cross restored equal access to the Father as sons and daughters. For the most part Christians have upheld these equalities, and at the same time upheld in perfectly logical compatibility that men and women are different and supposed to be complementary in their differences.

Many ideologies have sought to dismantle these truths over the past 50 years. Consequently, of great challenge to the Christian people today is not only the unholy confusion around manhood and womanhood but the binding fear in even addressing the topic. We need to rebuild from the ground up.

Working with young people is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, they are probably the social group most prone to the contemporary currents of the world. At the same time, they are one of the most teachable, one of the most hungry for the truth. I believe Kairos is supposed to courageously speak words of biblical truth into this confusion. It is the truth, after all, which sets us free.

[Paul Jordan is the Director of [Kairos Europe and the Middle East](#).]

A Weekend That Freed People For Mission

by PM Graham, Regional Event Director

When the prodigal son returns, he is prepared to be renounced as a son: he is willing simply to be a servant. As we know, this isn't the father's plan for him, or for any of us. It isn't enough that we serve, no matter how faithfully. Each of us is first and foremost a daughter or a son. Unless we confidently grasp this identity – the being side of mission and discipleship – then the doing side of mission and discipleship will be lacking.

This is what God was telling us as we prepared for Kairos Weekend 2016 (5-7th February, held in Glasgow, Scotland). We wanted to do something with this year's conference that would allow him to work with us in a special way, and allow us to respond. So in addition to all 100 of us gathering to worship, hear teaching and have fun together, a chunk of the weekend was spent in two separate venues – the men reflecting on sonship and brotherhood, and the women looking at what it means to be daughters rooted in their Father's love.

Whether the individual impact was greater vision, deeper conversion or simply new relationships, my prayer is that the fruit of the weekend is ultimately a stronger Kairos, and a network of mission outposts across Europe that are holier and more evangelistic – places where more and more students can discover their relationship with the Father, just like we did.

Reflections from the Kairos Weekend 2016

Paul Hunter (Belfast)

This year's Kairos Weekend was a truly special time for all involved. Perhaps the highlight of my experience came in the men's sessions, led by our brother Dave Quintana, who delivered a series of talks on what it means to be a son of God in the 21st century. "Man up!" was the blunt yet incisive instruction to encourage and call us on to build God's kingdom here in our fallen world, heeded by a group of young men who, empowered by the fire of the Holy Spirit, can make a difference and inspire more brothers than we could have imagined. Seeing so many men give their lives over to Christ, maybe for the first time, was such an amazing experience to witness.

Seeing faces old and new was a personal highlight, as relationships which will last a lifetime were built up. I always leave Kairos events eagerly anticipating the next opportunity to reconnect with my brothers and sisters in outreaches far and wide, and my time in Glasgow was no exception.

On reflection, this year's Kairos Weekend brought to me personally a renewed desire to follow the Lord, and stirred in me an impetus to live as a son of God, using the life and teaching of Jesus as a model for discipleship.

Jonasz Golick (Belfast)

"With every hour spent with the men, I received it as a huge blessing to build relationships with my brothers in faith. I had an awesome sharing group. The lifted hands of Sunday's worship will stay in my memory for a long time. It was really powerful!"

Joanna Whittam (Dublin)

Fear has always played a huge role in my personal life. A fear of being unwanted seems to have often held me back from relationships, while both this and the terror of letting people down or doing things wrong has held me back on so many occasions from playing on the worship team or speaking at a prayer meeting. Two years ago I wrote a song named "Fears Fall Away," in anticipation of the moment when I would be freed from fear. It's about the secret little girl inside me, feeling small.

It was during our prayer meeting on the Saturday night that one of the women at the meeting received an image from God, an image of the very girl I'd actually forgotten about, the girl from my song. God told me at that point "Jo, she's free to grow up now." He released me from the childlike terror that I hadn't understood was still controlling me! Speaking through my sisters on the prayer ministry team God reassured me, "Do not doubt that you are truly free when you go home. Instead there's a lion inside you that today has been released!"

But God would never leave that untested, of course. Within hours of the meeting one of the leaders from home sat beside me. Hesitantly she began "Would you like to share what God's done for you this weekend in front of the group tomorrow?" She wasn't just talking about the women. She was talking the women, men, priests, leaders, speakers, far upwards of a hundred people! During my sharing, I never once felt a twinge of fear. And I haven't felt it since. I do not doubt that in that prayer meeting our wonderful Father in heaven replaced my fear with pure joy.

[Sarah Hillhouse \(Glasgow\)](#)

This year's Kairos Weekend gave me time to spend with sisters and develop relationships with them, time to listen to God and experience his love, with powerful prayer sessions and teachings, as well as of course, time to relax and have fun. In the short time we spent together I really felt a deep level of trust and love amongst the girls in my small group.

The inspiring talks by Heather Semple really spoke to me. The words she shared were very fitting to my life and have stayed with me now the weekend has passed, giving me a lot of food for thought. I didn't realise how much I needed the Kairos Weekend and to take that time out. I was greatly inspired: it felt all of the talks and sharing's were tailor-made for me, as if people were speaking directly to me.

Being in a room full of young people, worshipping and choosing to live their lives for the Lord, is always something I find helps encourages me in my faith. I witnessed two girls praying together, both very new to charismatic worship and prayer, slightly unsure of what to say and do, but whole-heartedly throwing themselves into it. Seeing their love for the Lord, setting aside their feelings of doubt and pride, and focusing on him, praising him and sharing that with one another was greatly inspiring.

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CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



Whose Fool Are You?

by Tom Caballes

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...

- Philippians 3:7-8 ESV

Who or what is a fool? He or she is someone who ‘wastes’ his life for his or her cause. He or she may be labelled as ‘stupid’ – or worse. I believe that all of us are fools for something or someone – whether it be for riches, fame or pleasure. We can be ‘fools’ for noble things too – caring for the poor, the environment and the like. We can be fools for ‘idols’ in our lives – movie stars, great athletes, loved ones, etc. But among all these people and things, there is one who demands utter foolishness – that we leave everything behind to follow Him and be fools in the eyes of the world: Jesus. The questions are: are our actions and words truly reflect we are fools for Jesus? Do people find Jesus in us? Can’t we stop thinking, sharing about, singing, meditating and loving Jesus?

So How Do You Grow in Becoming Fools for Jesus?

1. You must understand that you are never meant to be primarily a people-pleaser, but a God-pleaser first. Jesus was not a people-pleaser. In fact, because He wanted to please God first, He had enemies, who prioritised traditions and man-made rules before God. It is okay if people around you do not approve of what you do or say. It is better to be respected rather than be liked. It is God's approval you should strive for first.
2. One way you can truly exhibit your being a fool for Jesus is by growing in His character – the way you speak and behave. People ought to see a difference in you because you are imitating Jesus – His love, forgiveness, self-control, forbearance, patience, and humility, among many of His traits – should be visible in you..
3. You should '*preach the word, in season or out of season.*' [2 Timothy 4:2] You should complement your daily living by trying to share your testimony and the gospel to others. Someone needs to introduce Jesus to your friends – will you do it? Do not be worried if they reject you – that is their problem, not yours. You will likely be rejected, but there will be a few who are willing to listen to you and accept your message. The truth is this – the best thing you can do to others is to bring them to Jesus and to His promise of eternal life.
4. Aim to live a radical life for God. Radical people are the ones who change the world – for better or for worse. Be a transformer of the world around you, not a conformer in the world's ways. See Romans 12:1-2.
5. Your life should be a '**sign of contradiction**' to the world. When they see your life, people should reflect and ask: '*He/she is living for God. What am I living for? Is life more than just pursuit of wealth and pleasure?*' The way you handle your self should be a mirror to others about how they handle their lives – their ideals, goals and priorities in life; how they handle their relationships and resources; and so on. You are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in your workplace, school or university. When your life truly becomes a 'sign of contradiction' to others, then perhaps you can then say – "*I am a fool for Jesus.*"

Other Scripture passages:

1. *I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!* [Luke 12:49 ESV]
2. *"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ..." You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house...* [Matthew 5:13-16 ESV]
3. *Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* [Colossians 3:22-24 ESV]
4. Other references: Psalm 63:1-5; Matthew 22:37; Galatians 2:20.

For personal reflection or group sharing

1. Do I live my life radically for God that people around me call me a fool for Jesus?
2. In what way am I a sign of contradiction to the people around me?



Tom Caballes is the National Senior Administrator and a National Coordinator of the [Lamb of God](#), a community of the Sword of the Spirit with 7 branches located throughout New Zealand. Tom also leads [Kairos New Zealand](#), an outreach program for high school, university, and post-university aged people.

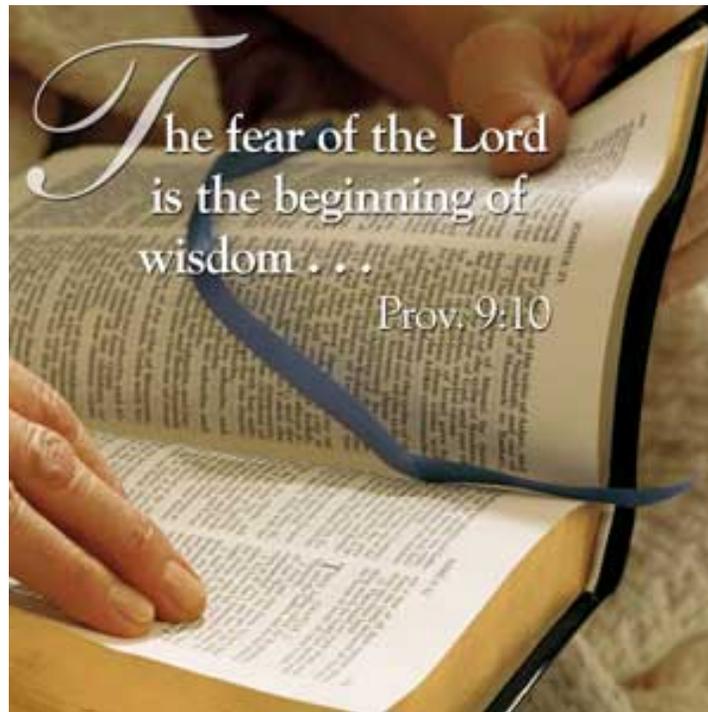
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CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



Growing in the Healthy Fear of the Lord

by Tom Caballes

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

- Psalms 111:10 ESV

Many Christians do not understand what it means to fear of the Lord. They think it only means we all should tremble on our knees because of what God can do with us. Although this is partially true, it does not give us a full picture of what it means to fear the Lord. A healthy fear of the Lord is great for us as His disciples. First, it means we are to be awed by His glory and majesty. Our first response to the fear of God is to worship Him. Second, our God is a loving and caring God. Our fear of God should enable us to obey His commandments and walk in His ways, knowing that God's ways are for our own good. A healthy fear of the Lord keeps us on our toes and makes us vigilant in our daily walk with God. It keeps us aware of the consequences of disobedience to God.

So How Do You Grow in the Healthy Fear of the Lord?

1. See the glory and majesty of God in all things – when you see the beauty of creation; for God's providence; for His faithfulness, forgiveness, mercy and grace. Have an attitude of gratitude with God!
2. Serve Him with gladness. [Psalm 100:2] The King you serve is not just any King – He is the he Alpha

and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. [Rev 22:13.] He is a one of a kind King. So when you praise and worship Him or serve Him in other means, know just how awesome is your God.

3. Love His laws. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. [1 John 5:3 ESV] God's laws are made for our own good. We need to read God's word, understand them and apply them into our lives. Ask the Holy Spirit to change our rebellious hearts so we can love His laws.
4. Try to live a righteous life and repent of all your sins. Have a daily examination of conscience. What sin or temptation is deeply ingrained into your life? How do you avoid them?
5. Accept the discipline of the Lord. Know that He disciplines us for our own good. Our fear of the Lord should allow God to work in areas in our lives that we have difficulty with or we are powerless with.
6. Do not play with the devil. Do not give you enemy a chance [Ephesians 4:27]. Never give in to the thought – "just this once;" as in, just one fling with this woman [or man]. 'Just once' has led many people to troubles and difficulties that they try to undo the rest of their lives. And some things are undoable, especially when they break the bonds of marriages, families and relationships. So say no to 'just once.'

Other Scripture passages:

1. *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.* [Hebrews 12:28-29 ESV]
2. Teach me your way ... that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. [Psalms 86:11]
3. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others... [2 Corinthians 5:10-11 ESV]
4. The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honour and life. [Proverbs 22:4 ESV]
5. Other references: Romans 1:18-32; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11; and Hebrews 12:6-7.

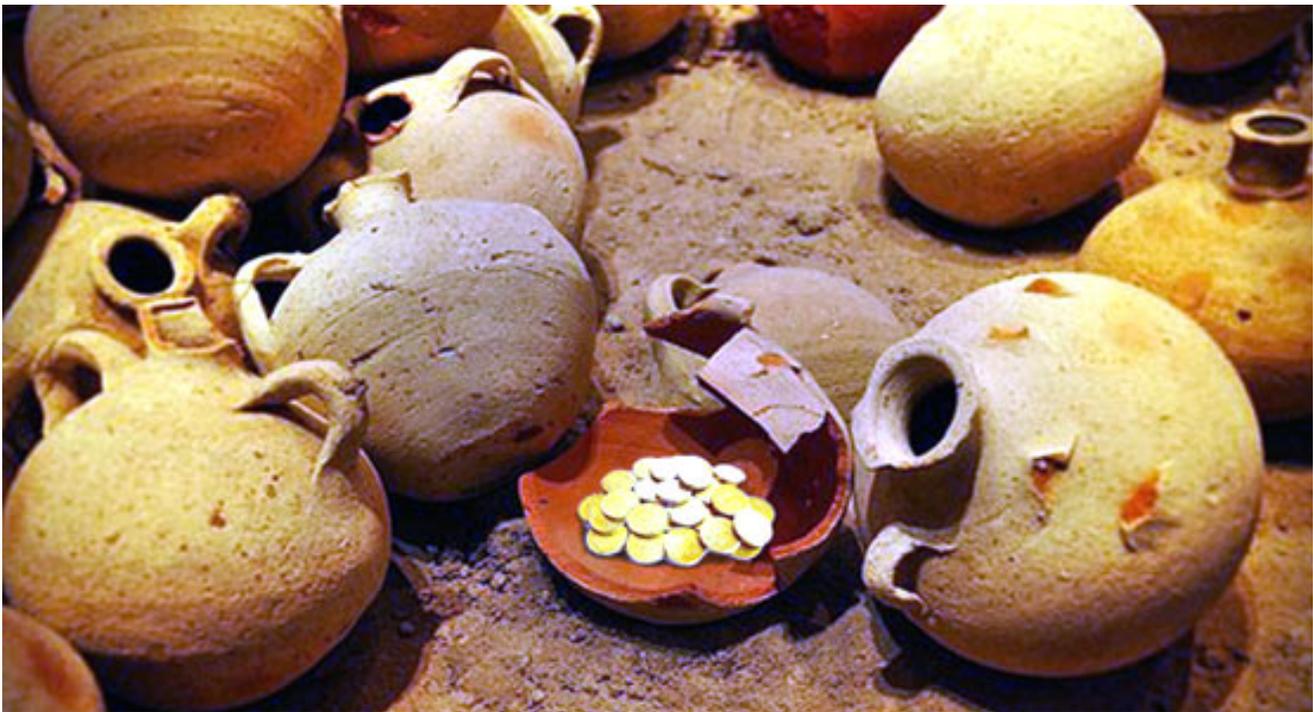
For personal reflection or group sharing

1. Do I have the right and balanced fear of the Lord?
2. In what area of my life am I being tempted to consider 'just once?' Has it got to do with money, possessions, a person of the opposite sex, or something else?



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Treasure Hidden

by Joanie Nath

Introduction

It is frequently the case that expansive thoughts, particularly in Scripture, are communicated with few words. One such example is the very short parable recorded in Matthew 13: 44.

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and in his joy, went and sold everything he had and bought that field.

At first glance, there seems to be nothing remarkable about this parable. It is simple and straightforward. But upon closer examination, wisdom begins to be revealed as we uncover its hidden meaning. To unpack it we need to explore the field, the kingdom of heaven, and the treasure. And in so doing we will gain a rich (pun intended) understanding as it relates to our own lives.

The field

The parable does not define what sort of field this is so we must assume that it's probably like other fields that are described in the Scriptures, four of which we will look at here.

Preceding the hidden treasure parable in Matthew we find the description of the first field. It is the familiar story of a man who has sown good seed in his field only to have his enemy come during the night and sow weeds in among his wheat. Jesus explains to his disciples that the field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom and the weeds are the sons of the evil one, and they are both growing together in this field. That was not the original intention of the landowner, but that is now his reality; wheat and weeds growing together until the harvest.

You will notice in this story that the seeds have been sown in the field which means they have been purposely planted there by the landowner with the expectation that they will grow and produce a harvest. They didn't end up in the field through happenstance. Neither have they managed to separate themselves from the weeds. They are not occupying one side of the field and the weeds the other. No, they have been planted, for better or worse, in the same field, intermixed, side-by-side, together with the weeds. And for now, that's the way the owner of the field wants it to stay. So our first field is where the sons of the kingdom have been purposely planted and are growing intermixed with the weeds who are the sons of the evil one.

In John 4 Jesus says, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest!" And in Luke and Matthew he says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field." In these verses Jesus is using the metaphor of the harvest to suggest that there are great numbers of people in the world who need to hear the Gospel, and we, as willing laborers, should go out to gather them in by speaking to them about Jesus and sharing his salvation message with them. The second field is where the harvest is.

The third field is where the sheep live and graze. Throughout the Scriptures we have many examples of shepherds caring for their sheep in the fields. Perhaps the most familiar passage in the Old Testament is Psalm 23 where the shepherd and sheep metaphor is used to describe the Lord's care for his people and our relationship to him as our personal shepherd and guardian.

Jesus uses this same metaphor frequently in the Gospels. Some of the sheep are familiar with his voice, but there are others who are lost and who need to be brought back to the fold.

And before his ascension into heaven Jesus exhorts Peter to feed and care for the sheep that are now under his care. As followers of Jesus we are asked to care for one another as well.

The field is also where battles are fought. We see the battlefield most frequently described in the Old Testament in stories such as David and Goliath.

Although our approaches to warfare have changed greatly over the centuries, for thousands of years men fought battles by lining up on opposite sides of the battlefield and engaging in hand-to-hand combat.

We see this same kind of battle imagery when we read Paul's description of the armor of God in Ephesians 6. He tells us to take up the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, etc. that we might be armed, ready for battle and able to stand our ground in the face of the enemy. The imagery is not that of a massive invasion but of individual soldiers withstanding assault, protecting their ground, defending their territory, preserving their own lives, the lives of others, and securing the field on which the battle is taking place.

There is a fifth kind of field that is noteworthy. Pope Francis recently described the church as a field hospital in the world. Although not a biblical image, it is a valid one because it accurately puts forth the image of the church as a healer in a sick and wounded world. As the church, we take care of those who are hurting, the broken and bleeding and those who are being injured in the battles that are happening all around them. It is not only our peers that we care for in this field hospital, but our own family members, our children, and grandchildren. It can be a sobering thought to consider that our children and grandchildren are often the victims of the warfare in which we are engaged. They are the ones who are particularly vulnerable; those who most easily get picked off by the sniper's bullets.

Alone, each of these fields can seem overwhelming enough. But what would it look like if what is taking place

on each of these fields individually were happening simultaneously on the same field? Chaos and turmoil, disorder and confusion are just a few words that easily come to mind. It would seem as if life on the field was completely out of control!

What is the Lord saying to us?

What might the Lord be trying to communicate to us through the descriptions of these fields? Whether we consider each field individually or assume that all of this activity is happening on the same field concurrently we can still draw some reasonable conclusions.

First, he is saying that there is a great harvest of souls living here. He has planted us, his children, in this field to take the Gospel to them. We will encounter those who don't want anything to do with the Gospel. Some of them actually mean to oppose or do us harm. But there are sheep here as well. We are expected to look after the ones who know and belong to the Shepherd and to encourage those who are lost to come back to the fold. We will be called to fight battles, not only to maintain possession of the field, but also to fight for those who are vulnerable to an enemy who seeks to destroy them. There will be some who will be injured, even lost in the battle. We will be expected to comfort and care for the wounded and to help them heal from their battle scars.

There is a great deal happening on this field and to care for it seems a daunting task; the very thought of it can seem overwhelming. One minute we may be engaged in a skirmish on one part of the field, the next we're bandaging the wounded on another. Tomorrow, we may have opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to a lost sheep or be looking for ways to live peaceably with the weeds we have for neighbors or family members!

It is tempting to want to run from the field to find respite in the shade of the trees, escape the battles, shirk our responsibility for the sheep, let someone else worry about the harvest and leave the hurting and wounded to the care of those who seem to be more suited to such tasks. But God has left this field in our hands and he expects us to accomplish all that he planted us here to do. This is his field and we have been given a great responsibility in tending to it.

“Buying into” the field

The field in this parable is not just any field – there is something different about it. There is a treasure here that has been left, presumably by the owner, which is of such great value that like the man in the parable, we would do well to sell everything we have in order to gain it. Rephrased a different way, we should want the treasure in this field so badly that we will invest everything to “buy into” the field. We hear this contemporary expression often. Someone might say to a young person, “You need to “buy into” your education if you're going to get into an Ivy League school.” But what does that mean? It means you have to be willing to invest yourself, give your best effort, dedicate yourself wholeheartedly, put aside lesser things, have a singular focus and “buy into” your education if getting into a particular school is the goal. The same is true for this treasure in Jesus' parable. We will have to “buy into” the field in order to acquire it.

Hidden in plain sight

Often in the Gospels, Jesus tells parables like this one to help people understand the kingdom of heaven by comparing it with something they are familiar with; something from their everyday lives to which they can relate. In this parable Jesus is describing something more than a material treasure of great value. He is describing the great riches of the kingdom of heaven by comparing it with very valuable treasure trove, a treasure that has been kept hidden in a field for some time. Hiding treasure in a field was something that was quite common in that day. Many people typically protected their treasure by either burying it in the ground or by hiding it in clay jars used for storing supplies, simple jars made of earth that had nothing special or fancy to mark them. Some would even leave these jars in plain sight and no one suspected there was anything valuable hidden in them. This parable doesn't actually tell us if the treasure was buried in the ground or not. It just says it was “hidden”. It might be buried and perhaps a person coming into the field might have to dig to find it. But

it is also possible that the treasure is hidden in a bunch of clay jars that have been left in this field. Water, oil, wine and food were often stored in clay jars or containers and left for the use of those on the field e.g. shepherds, workers in the field and soldiers.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. - 2 Corinthians 4:7

In this Scripture passage Paul the Apostle is talking about the treasure that is the Gospel – the all-surpassing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of our salvation, the power of God that transforms us from within. And it is hidden in simple, clay jars, jars left out in plain sight. It is hidden within us so that when people look at our lives, in all the living, battling, serving and activity that goes on daily on this field where we live there will be no doubt that something beyond our ordinary strength or power is happening here. In fact, it is something beyond normal human strength and abilities. In ourselves we are quite unremarkable – we are fragile, vulnerable, and weak in many ways. But through the death and resurrection of Christ we have been given new power and new life which comes from God. We carry in us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the very life of Christ in these mortal, frail clay jars as we live our lives on this field so that his life might be revealed in and through us. The Lord wants this new life to shine through us so that everyone around us – even the wounded on the field – may recognize Christ’s presence and power – thus giving glory to God!

The treasure is not something tangible or of the material world. It is the rule and reign of God in our midst. It is having the possession of God within us, living out the life God intended for us from the beginning here on earth through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is experiencing a foretaste of the life we will eventually live in heaven right here, right now. It is our life together in covenant community, in the Body of Christ, in the church, caring for our brothers and sisters, searching for the lost, and fighting the battles we encounter as we live next door to the weeds that are in the field with us. It is found as we participate in serving each other, loving those difficult neighbors, being disciples on mission, engaging in the battles for the hearts and minds of our children, caring for the hurting and the lost, bringing in the harvest as we live the daily challenge that is life on the field. That’s the treasure! That’s the kingdom of heaven! It is the life of Jesus Christ who lives in each one of us being shared with one another. The kingdom of heaven is among you!

This life we live on the field is flawed, imperfect, and it can sometimes feel chaotic. There are battles and losses, hardships, and struggles. But there is great joy here as well. There is treasure here, left to us by our Father who wants us to discover it for ourselves. It is a mystery, this treasure. And it is hiding in our everyday life as we experience it on this field! Recently, I read this definition of a mystery: It is something hidden which has been revealed, something unapproachable which invites entry and something unknowable which offers true understanding. And isn’t that what we are seeing here? How we find treasure on this field is a mystery which the Lord in his goodness is revealing to us as we live our lives here.

Some defining characteristics of treasure

1. Treasure is any person or thing that is considered valuable and of significant worth. (Webster’s Dictionary)
2. Treasure grows in its value. Often, the older it is the more value it has.
3. Treasure is almost always out of plain sight...it requires a person to go in search of it, to look for it, to have a certain determination in finding it.
4. Treasure often isn’t something that has been amassed by the person who has found it; it was put there by someone else and left for his discovery!
5. It is often referred to as hidden, buried or sunken. It generally is not obvious where the treasure is. In this case, the treasure is “hidden” in the field, sometimes not seen or it is out of view.

The word “hidden” also means that it may be unrecognizable by some who walk through the field. Like a rare treasure sold for far less than its true value, e.g. a rare painting or a priceless antiquity sold for pennies at a yard sale. In this context, a treasure could be hiding in plain sight. There are those who will walk upon the soil of this field who will be blind to the treasure hidden there. It can be undervalued or unappreciated. “One’s man’s trash is another man’s treasure!” Only the one who has eyes to see will recognize its true value.

Some others might wonder what is so special about it and question why someone would be as eager as the man in the parable to sell everything he has in order to buy the field. Others may suspect there is something of value in this field but not want to invest the time to search for it or do what is required to take possession of the field; it will appear to require too much effort.

Finding treasure brings freedom

Although falling into an inheritance or finding a lost treasure can and often does alleviate financial concerns for one’s life, as Christians we are more keenly aware of the value of spiritual treasure. Its benefits far exceed any comfort an earthly treasure could ever afford; it isn’t limited to just the temporal, but more importantly it provides for our eternal well-being.

The treasure our Father has left for us is of such great value that we can live securely on this field. Our lives are enriched today because we’ve found this treasure. Our future and our children’s future is full of hope and promise because we have been provided for. We don’t have to wonder or be afraid of what the future will bring because we have all we need. And because we have been blessed with such abundance we have the privilege and the duty to help others who wander onto this field. We can live in peace and freedom as we care for the sheep, bring in the harvest, engage the mission, fight the battles and bind up the wounds of the injured with confidence because our Father has provided for all our needs. And every day there is more to discover, more to acknowledge, more to appreciate and be grateful for, and more that we should be willing to give everything to possess!

When a man found it, he hid it again...

We don’t know exactly why the man in the story hides the treasure again, but there are several reasonable possibilities we can consider.

First, the field does not belong to him. It belongs to the owner. Therefore, the treasure also belongs to the owner. To take the treasure without buying the field would be to attempt to steal the treasure. He knows he can’t do that. The treasure and the field go together.

Perhaps the treasure is too great for him to manage or move alone. Maybe it can’t be removed because it is simply too big!

He hides it again so he will not forget where to find it and so that it will neither be lost nor stolen from him.

He knows in his heart that this is a rare find and does not want to lose sight of it. He knows where it is and he seems to know intuitively what he must do to attain it. As long as the treasure stays with the field he will know where it is.

And then in his joy, went and sold everything he had and bought that field

In recognizing the value of the treasure in this field this wise man would gladly give all for the chance to seize it; it is the *chance of a lifetime* and well worth the purchase price. Even though it costs him everything he has there is no reservation or hesitation about what he is paying in order to gain the treasure. He cannot have the treasure unless he buys the field and he seems to understand that. He doesn’t bargain with himself or the landowner about the purchase price. He isn’t bartering down the price or requesting to buy only the portion of

the field that he likes... “I’d like to buy the part where the sheep are, but I’m not interested in the field hospital or the battlefield. I don’t think I want to invest there.” He is filled with joy at the thought of taking ownership of the *whole* field. Half measures will not do for the kingdom of God. This man seems to know that:

- He cannot be a “renter” on the field and get the treasure.
- He cannot “visit” the field and get the treasure.
- He cannot live as a squatter (for free) on the field and get the treasure.
- He cannot just “take” the treasure; it goes with the field and remains with the field
- He cannot be a bystander simply observing what is happening on the field and get the treasure.
- He must participate in all that is happening on the field. He must decide to “buy into” the field or live apart from the treasure it contains.
- He knows that this is an all or nothing proposition and he is “all in”.

Jesus himself and the new way of life he gives us through the Holy Spirit is the treasure that awaits us in this field. But in order to gain him, in order to enjoy the fullness of the blessings he has for us we need to buy the field, with all that that means, giving everything, all that we have, and all that we are. If we recognize the value of the treasure that awaits us in this field, we too will have great joy at the prospect of taking ownership if it. He wants us to build and to plant, to grow and to produce a harvest on this field, to fight to retain possession of it and to care for those who are living life here with us. He wants us to willingly “buy into” the field, to be “all in”. It will cost us everything, but the reward is a life filled with treasure beyond compare!



Joanie Nath has been married for 39 years and is the mother of three grown children. She has been a member of the People of God Community in Pittsburgh for 33 years where she serves as a Senior Woman Leader and retreat speaker. She also serves in the Sword of the Spirit North American Region as a Regional Senior Woman Leader. She resides in Bridgeville, Pennsylvania, USA.

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The Heart of Spiritual Warfare

recognizing the front lines of spiritual assault

by Sam Williamson

Plato urges us: “Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle.” If you are breathing, you are under a spiritual assault. The question we face is not, “Are we under attack?” but, “What is the heart of the attack?” Let me tell a recent story of mine. See if you can recognize the field of battle for the spiritual warfare.

Two friends and I host a weekly podcast on various spiritual topics. Last Thursday we planned to discuss (I kid you not), *How to Recognize Spiritual Assault in Our Lives*. Schedule conflicts and illness had caused the cancellation of our two previous podcasts. We didn’t want to call off a third.

To complicate matters, one of my friends was still under the weather, the other was swamped with work, and I had a longstanding 6:00 pm dinner date with great, out-of-town friends. I planned to leave the dinner at 7:30 to make our 8:00 call.

That was the situation going in; this is the story that followed:

- Late in the afternoon, my wife and I had a tense discussion. I missed much of my podcast planning time, leaving me irritated, distracted and unprepared.
- Our dinner reservation was changed from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm, leaving me little time for conversation,

and even less time for food.

- The closest parking spot was half a dozen blocks from the restaurant, and I arrived five minutes late.
- As I left the restaurant, a torrential downpour greeted me with open arms, and I splashed and waded the six blocks back to my car.
- Three different traffic jams—three!—delayed me further. I arrived home with two minutes to spare, soaking wet and freezing.
- I began the call in a frenzied, intense, and distracted state of mind.

Do you recognize the frontlines of the spiritual assault?

It's not what we normally think

When I later reviewed that story with a friend, he exclaimed, “Whenever I speak on spiritual warfare, the same stuff happens to me: my wife and I get into a fight, my car breaks down, the PA system shorts out, and I’m an emotional wreck. We’ve got to pray against Satan’s evil orchestration of events.”

But the inconvenient incidents weren’t my problem. The battlefield of my spiritual warfare was not the events. They were just triggers.

The bullets that leave us bleeding on the battlefield are the warped beliefs that burrow deep in our hearts.

The book of Job may be the best spiritual warfare manual ever written. And in it, seven verses describe Satan’s evil orchestration of events: marauders, natural disasters, enemies, weather, and illness (Job 1:14-19 and 2:7). That’s it, *seven verses out of forty-two chapters*.

The rest of the book of Job reveals the distorted thinking—the warped beliefs—of Job, his wife, and his friends. The book of Job concludes with God revealing himself, and it is God’s self-disclosure—displaying how reality really works—that brings the healing Job needed.

It's the lies that we buy that kill us

Scripture’s depiction of Satan underscores his messages, not his physical power. He’s called a liar, the father of lies, a deceiver, an accuser, and a blinder of our minds. Scripture doesn’t call Satan the demon of thunderstorms, the terrorizer of technology, or the evil spirit of illness.

He may cause some of these, but he *always* lies about them. He offers us false interpretations.

Satan’s objective is to distort our view of reality about God, others, and ourselves. Once we believe Satan’s lies about God (others or ourselves), he has us in the palm of his hand. It is those false beliefs that make us act in fear, rage, timidity, domination, misunderstanding, and oppression. Satan’s attack on Job was to get him to “curse God to his face” (Job 1:11).

I could have handled that call differently

The changed reservations, poor parking, and bad weather triggered inner responses: intensesness, distraction, and forcefulness. I thought: “Why does this always happen to me? At the very worst times? Now I’ve *got* to make this call work, even though I’m unprepared.”

What if, instead, I believed that God works out all things for the good? Even poor podcast prep.

I would have approached the call with peace not frenzy (*Success doesn’t depend upon me*), and delightful curiosity not distraction (*What is God up to?*). Everybody would have had more fun. Including me.

Instead of fearing thunderstorms, we can learn to dance in the rain as we wonder, “What great marvel is God up to now?”

Sam

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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 Arbor 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. He 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.



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When Success Turns Sour

by Sam Williamson

Fifteen years ago, a client of mine became president of his company. It all came about through a fluke (he was a mid-level manager), good luck, and a couple coincidences. He was very humble about his promotion, “It was just God’s grace. I hadn’t wanted it, I didn’t deserve it, and I never tried for it. God just dropped it on my lap.”

Within a couple years he began to attribute his advancement to his own hard work and brilliant insights. He said that his promotion had been delayed too long by people who didn’t appreciate him. He fired people who disagreed with his opinions.

He felt his genius was needed everywhere, and he was glad to offer it:

He convinced the high school athletic committee to change coaches because he knew a better way—though he had never played an organized sport in his life.

He became head elder at his church and bullied them into adopting a “better” Bible translation—though he had never studied Greek or Hebrew (not even Pig-Latin).

He once scowled in anger when a friend told him his zipper was unzipped (true story), and he sent his dental hygienist home in tears when she suggested he begin flossing (another true story). The slightest correction was met by him with red-faced fury.

Success turned a wonderful human being into an uncorrectable, insufferable know-it-all.

We Fail the Easiest Test

Several years ago I was a novice blogger when I wrote a blog about Sunday school problems that went mini-

viral (for me) with over 500,000 reads.

People began to ask for my writing advice, and I liked it. I enjoyed the spotlight. I began to wonder if my opinions might possibly save the world. Frankly, I was surprised—and a bit disappointed—that NASA hadn't called me for advice about their solid-fuel rockets.

I had, after all, written a pretty successful blog about Sunday school.

We usually hide our pride, but we secretly applaud our brilliance when:

Our kids behave better than our neighbor's kids;
We don't worry about the future like our other friends who constantly fret;
We advance further and faster than our college classmates;
Our bodies are thinner and more fit than our colleagues.

Of the two tests of God—adversity and achievement, or failure and success—we handle difficulties better than victories. Hardships drive us to God whereas accomplishments drive us to self-congratulations.

The Sinai Desert and the Land of Milk and Honey

When the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, after forty years of adversity, Moses offered them his final advice:

Remember how the Lord has led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling and training you; because the Lord is bringing you to a good land, filled with olive oil and honey. You'll eat plenty and lack nothing.

But be careful, or you will forget the Lord your God. Otherwise, when you have built beautiful houses, and your cattle and oxen multiply, and your silver and gold increase, then you will become arrogant.

You may say to yourselves, 'I have become wealthy by my own strength and by my own ability.' But remember the Lord your God, because he is the one who gives you your abilities (Deut. 8:2-18, selected verses).

In our poverty we ask for mercy, and in our riches we ask for praise.

Sam

P. S. I may be slow to respond to comments today. I'm expecting a call from NASA.

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Content in All Things

by Miriam Holmes

Contentment. I would love to say this article will solve all your problems and head you towards a simple and stress-free life. Unfortunately I don't have that kind of power but I do know someone who does.

In my life I have had ups and downs. Like most I have struggled with my faith and even questioned if God actually exists. I have lost friends, seen people close to me suffer and felt helpless. But I have found myself to have more Joy now than I could have experienced without the pain.

So far, I would say I've had a pretty good life! I am doing a job that I love, I have an amazing family, incredible friends and a faith that grows stronger by the day. However I also fear, I have doubt and I struggle with many things. I want to share some of my experiences with you, in the hope that I can help you understand how I have learned to become content in all circumstances.

When I was 17 years old I lost a friend who I had grown up with and been very close to. It was a sudden, unexpected death and as a teenager who thought she had just found her faith in a most personal way, I was devastated. But more than this; I was angry. I couldn't understand why this had happened and most of all I didn't want to – God was wrong and did not act in love for me or my friend's family. I became quite a hardened person, I did not ever want to talk about what I was feeling and after many tears I did not want to cry again. So I shut myself off from emotion and from love.

It took a long time and some very patient, loving people's help but I eventually found my way back to speaking to God. One of the big game changers for me was the Bible. I began reading it again and used it to understand God's plan for me.

The first bible passage I let mould me after the death of my friend was this:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...” (Hebrew 12: 1 -2)

Clinging to the death of my friend, the injustice of it, was my weight. I felt justified in my grief and at times even enjoyed wallowing in it. God could have stormed in, given me a good talking to and sent me on my way but He knew me and loved me so much that instead He waited with expectant faith that I would find my way back to His love. Joyfully I can say that I did!

Sisters, God is not a tyrant in the sky who will get angry as we do and turn His back on us. He is a Father who loves us so intentionally and so practically. He will not love everyone in the same way because we all need love in different ways. But He has no favourites and He does not look at our sin. He looks at our hearts and He loves them. I am a sinful person and I always will be but God has forgiven me and always will. I will never understand the love of God, I will never understand why good people are taken from us and I will never understand why, even though I love God, I will continue to sin against Him. ***What God has taught me is that I don't need to understand, I simply need to know that His love for me will never end and He will never give up on me.***

For me, this is contentment. It is being ***willing to accept that I do not understand.*** There are things that I will never understand but that is ok because God loves me and He loves you. God won victory when Jesus rose from the dead and opened the gates of heaven.

My goal is heaven, therefore nothing on this earth can shake me, not even death.

But friends, I did not get to this place by myself. It has taken many years for me to allow God into my life. I encourage you to find someone that has a faith like my friends and family do and let that person inspire you in it. But most of all don't be afraid to be honest with God – he knows what is in your heart but will never force himself into that area. He is waiting for you to let Him in and you do this by being honest and talking to Him.

My challenge to you is this: lay aside whatever sin you have, lay aside the suffering and pain that clings to you. Give them to Jesus and accept Him as your loving Father who waits in anticipation for the day He can welcome you home. If you can do this and free yourself from fear; you will know what contentment is.

“I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I have learned the secret

of living in every situation.” Philippians 4: 11-12



My name is Miriam Holmes and I am 24 years old. I have been a qualified teacher now for two years. I absolutely love my job and feel very lucky to be doing something that I am passionate about. I am part of the Community of the Risen Christ in Glasgow, Scotland where I grew up. This community calls me on in my faith every day and I love being a part of it.

This article by Miriam first appeared in [The Lovely Commission](#), a new publishing venture and brand of [Kairos North America](#). It is run by Molly Kilpatrick and Mary Rose Jordan and a team of contributors from various Christian communities in North America and beyond. Together they are working to build a culture of radical love, femininity, modesty of heart, mind, and body amongst young women.

Their aim is to inspire and equip young women to embrace and promote a culture of Godly femininity in which we live out our rich identity as daughters of God and disciples of Jesus Christ.

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Prayer in a Moment of Weariness

by Amy Brink

It's after midnight, and I lie awake in my bed, tears falling softly into my pillow. Knowledge of my weaknesses, failures, and sins eats away at my soul. The weight of this burden threatens to crush me. Oh how I loathe and despise sin! But the hatred of my sin stems not from a spirit of godly conviction, or from a humble sorrow that it was for MY sin that Christ was crucified. I despise my sin because it reveals the folly of my self-reliance. I long to be my own savior, finding in myself all that I need to be and to do good. I weep because I cannot attain perfection by sheer will alone. My striving has proven thoroughly inadequate. The reality that I am so desperately needy causes such warring and discomfort in my spirit. Am I really not enough? In my flesh, I abhor the idea of dependence on another. Even in human relationships, I want to be the giver, not the receiver.

Ever so slowly, the Lord is teaching me to lay down this idol of self-reliance, and to embrace the paradoxical freedom found in my human frailty.

In moments of sheer weariness when my natural strength is all but spent, and no other choice is before me

save running to the Lord, I've experienced the surprising joy and respite of letting go and leaning into the All-Sufficient One.

I'm learning to discover the beauty and peace in accepting my broken state - not because my sin is trivial and insignificant, but because it is so profound, pervasive, destructive, and wholly ruinous that **only the boundless mercy and grace of God can cover it**. My prayer is to grow ever more deeply rooted in the truth of the gospel – that I, a wretched sinner, am lavishly loved, zealously pursued, and wondrously redeemed by Christ Himself.

Father, thank You that I can fully trust in You. Thank You that I do not have to know it all, understand it all, figure it all out. I often try to control things that are not in my control, help me to let go. Help me to let go of reliance on myself and rely on You instead. You invite me to lean on You, to let You guide me. Give me the courage and strength to do that Father. Teach me Your ways O Lord, that I might trust You with my whole heart and seek Your guidance and strength in all I do. I am weary Lord, but Your zealous, lavish love renews and replenishes me. How good you are to us O Lord, how faithful Your ways!



Amy Brink is happily married to Jeff, her husband of 11 years. She has 3 rambunctious yet darling children - Ethan (7), Caleb (5), and Genevieve (2). Her days consist of wiping boogers, preparing food her children refuse to eat, cleaning rampages, schlepping kids to and from school, entertaining an endless stream of guests, acting as business manager/marketing guru for her husband's dental practice, and serving in University Christian Outreach. The great loves of her life are the Lord (of course), her family, ice cold Cokes, KitKats, popcorn (note the food theme), exercising (she likes to get in good shape every few years), reading spy novels, and dreaming up interior design schemes.

This article by Amy first appeared in [The Lovely Commission](#), a new publishing venture and brand of [Kairos North America](#). It is run by Molly Kilpatrick and Mary Rose Jordan and a team of contributors from various Christian communities in North America and beyond. Together they are working to build a culture of radical love, femininity, modesty of heart, mind, and body amongst young women.

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Peace that passes understanding and even exams!

by Joseph Thompson

Note: [Koinonia](#) is an ecumenical Christian university student group based in central London, UK. Members are from different Christian traditions: Anglicans, Catholics, Evangelicals, Orthodox and Protestants. Koinonia aims at being an intentional community where Christian faith comes alive, whether it be through prayer, conversations, growth in Christian life or time spent together. The following sharing is from the Koinonia Newsletter, May 2016.

Having been a member for just over a year now, I have come to find [Koinonia](#) a community that is encouraging and challenging. The weekly meetings provide a time and a setting really conducive to receiving spiritual food and growth, and to encountering the Lord in many ways.

The example and witness of my fellow Christians has been such an encouragement to me, giving me a greater desire to live out the whole of my life for God. Two particular events brought this home to me. During one of our events in the 'reload' series Holly shared with us on the parable of the sower. It proved to be a really powerful reminder to me of some of the ways that I personally can neglect to follow God's word; not allowing it space to take root, or letting it wither from lack of attention. More so than that; it brought home the reality that we are to rely totally on God's grace, and to find peace in that, rather than worrying about salvation through works and personal achievement.

Having members of Koinonia praying for each of us during the exam period was another strong reminder of this truth. It seems to me no coincidence that this has proven to be one of the most relaxed and stress-free exam periods I've ever had, and I think the only explanation can be that the grace of God has been with me especially through the intercession of my peers.

I have also been greatly encouraged to hear the work God has done in the lives of my friends, particularly during the 'kubefire' event a few weeks back. Julian, Michael and Holly all shared about how Christ has influenced their lives as the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is manifestly clear that God is at work among them, and among all of us, but this is a fact easy to take for granted.

Thus to take the time to think over just a few of these actions of the Spirit was a very valuable experience.

This Spirit is not only active in our personal lives, but in our corporate worship and prayer. We have experienced the presence of God very tangibly in our worship, which has in turn strengthened our ecumenism and our drive for evangelism. I feel it is even helping to form our very identity as Christians.

A verse which comes to mind very clearly when I consider this is 2 Corinthians 3:18. 'And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.'

Joseph Thompson studies music at King's College in London, UK. He has been a member of [Koinonia](#) for the past year. Joseph grew up in [Antioch Community](#) in London, UK.

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BLAST 2016 – OMG! [Our Mighty God]

Wellington, NZ, 16 – 18 April – Around 47 young people from Auckland, Christchurch, Napier, and Wellington, New Zealand, and from Sydney, Australia, attended the Youth Camp called BLAST 2016, hosted by the Lamb of God Community in New Zealand. BLAST stands for Believe, Live and Share the Truth. It was the biggest BLAST weekend so far – and the young people were very excited and enthusiastic to come and pray and spend time together. There were significant numbers of first timers, notably the teens from God’s Light Community in Sydney.

The three talks, entitled “Limitless, Measureless and Ceaseless,” “Infinitely Beyond Human Understanding,” and “God’s Goodness – Mindful of Man” were aimed to be meditative, helping people to get to know more about the characteristics of God, rather than to respond with specific actions. Many of the participants thoroughly enjoyed the talks.

As usual, there were praise and worship, games and sports activities, and singing and jamming sessions. A good number of the praise and worship leaders were leading for the first time, and they did a fabulous job. Many of those who came experienced God in the night rally in a very real way.



Here are some comments from participants:

“The talks were so good in explaining such complex things and they were very easy to understand.”

“My OMG [Our Mighty God] moment was the night rally ministry time, as it was really blessed and Spirit-filled. I felt everyone gave their all... People genuinely wanted prayer...”

“What I like about these camps, apart from the talks and the praise and worship, is seeing all you guys... who have the same faith and it is a real blessing...”

“The talk about God goodness hit me... I always take good things for granted and when bad things happen, that's when I seek God because I needed help...”

“... You could really feel God's presence in your life during the camp.”



“I found this BLAST weekend a life-changing experience especially last night during praying over; I could really feel the presence of God...”

“Each talk helped me as I go back to school... things are really confusing. The talks helped me really understand things and stand up for my faith...”

“Mark's talk struck me... science explains the how but faith explains the why...”

“Last night was the first time I really opened up to God and got prayer...”



“It was very encouraging see the passion of the youth, to see everyone taking responsibility in leading worship

and being part of the music ministry...”

“My OMG moment was the sharing time...”

“My highlight was hanging out with the Australian [brothers and sisters]... it means a lot to us with you travelling all the way here. You made our camp so much richer.”

“We want to thank the Wellington branch and it’s great to experience the different side of community. Their hospitality was amazing. Thank you very much! Thanks for the food!”

Adapted from the May 2016 Lamb of God Chronicle, used with permission.

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Steps of Faith: Sowing Seeds of Good News

by Mark Jordan

Back in 2007 when I was serving as director for Koinonia, one of our Kairos evangelistic outreaches for university students, I had an opportunity to speak with a guy who was beginning a period of missionary work with a local church in London. He was 23 and eager to begin his work with students.

Learning perseverance

We talked mostly of the need for perseverance in this work. The need for pressing through challenge and discouragement. We also chatted some about the rewards of doing this kind of evangelistic work. It got me thinking afterwards about some of the lessons, blessings and frustrations of doing university outreach work in London.

One of the main reasons that at times I became discouraged in this work is because I didn't see the things happen that I wanted to see happen. This would be discouraging in any line of work, but in a spiritual work it should have quite a different perspective on it. A perspective that slowly becomes a way of living. Continually, I've called to mind the fact that God is sovereign. If I believe that he does have a plan (and I do), then this brings tremendous freedom in the knowledge that his purposes will be worked out. This in turn helped me grow in learning to rely on God working out his purposes.

Seeing with God's perspective

Sometimes I've clearly seen God's purposes. Sometimes I've seen when my purposes and the Lord's don't quite match up. Sometimes I simply don't understand the purposes of the Lord. I was struck by the story of Uzzah in the Old Testament, the man who touched the Ark of the Covenant when the oxen carrying it stumbled and was struck down by the Lord for his action. In the story David cannot understand why this happened. "And David

was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"(2 Samuel 6:9)

For David this incident did not make sense. That's partly because he didn't see the full picture; he couldn't understand or see what God was about. In his limited sight it seemed such a waste. That's because in this situation he lacked spiritual vision to see what God was doing. Over the last few years, I've grown in understanding that life and service of the Lord is fundamentally a spiritual work. Since we cannot see and understand all the realities going on around us by ourselves, we need firstly to be spiritual people - who know the mind and heart of God and who can see with eyes of faith.

Pressing close to God

Service in God's kingdom, whatever form it takes, should always press us closer to God, and help us to become more effective in pray and fasting for God's will to be accomplished. This in turn helps me to grow in detachment and freedom to do what I think God really wants me to do (rather than what I might think is the best plan for success).

At the same time however, its natural to be encouraged when we see people make steps towards the Lord. Indeed being able to rejoice when I get to be part of someone's spiritual journey towards the Lord is important. I remember one occasion when I was talking with a student who became a Christian - in large part through our work in [Koinonia](#). After I finished the conversation and recognized how much this person had changed, I just sat there and thanked God for bringing this person to a new life of faith. What a privilege.

Taking small steps

If there was one phrase that could have been my battle cry in evangelistic work it would have to be "small steps". Hardly inspiring I know, but I think it does show something of the progression that individuals make towards the Lord and our part in helping them make these small steps.

On another occasion I got to know a first-year English student who came to our [Koinonia](#) coffee stall at the beginning of the academic year. Every week or so we would see one another, each time being another small step in talking about the Lord. He said to me one week that he thought he really should try and go along to a local church. I agreed. For him there was something beginning to move as he started to become open to re-exploring the Christian faith. Small steps.

I started playing cards with a first-year student I met at the university. For a while we mostly talked about sports. He made a good connection with Koinonia and got to know other Christian students and staff workers. By the second school-year term, he was ready to talk more openly about faith and Christianity and what it meant to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Another small step of faith.

Another student I met that year came to one of our social events in Koinonia. He enjoyed the contact with Christians and continued to come to some of our weekly meetings. He not only enjoyed the social contact and discussions about faith, but he also decided to start attending church with some of the men. It's obvious to me that God personally calls these individuals to himself. And I also recognize that God chooses to work through people, like myself even, to help others grow in faith. What a privilege to be a part of God's work of drawing others to himself!

Our reward is in God and not in results

One of the things that God revealed to me early in my time in London was through a passage in Isaiah. It was a call to "Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees." I think it really describes one of the main

things that we are about in Kairos outreach to students. We're helping people who may have some faith or no faith at all, to draw closer to the Lord and to remain steady in their faith in the face of difficulties and temptation. London allures and calls. We help students to choose for life -- the fullness of life that can only be found in Jesus Christ.

It was a tremendous privilege for me to see the Lord's hand in the lives of these young men as they grew in faith. But I've had a deepening realisation that in this work that cannot be my reward. If my reward is only seeing the results of God's action in people's lives, I will often be disappointed because I won't always see or recognize what God is doing. I often will not get to see situations change, or see those that I pray for and encourage respond to the Gospel.

Sow seeds widely

We sow seeds of faith widely. It is only God who can bring faith alive in others. At the beginning of my work in London someone said to me that in this work my reward would have to be in Christ alone. I accepted that as true, but it's a truth that has gradually sunk deeper into how I think and how I act.

It brought a certain freedom as I began to appreciate it more and more. That was what I said to the guy who was starting mission work in London. "Let your one reward in this line of work be in plumbing the depths of your relationship with God. If you can do that, if you can use this work to push you ever closer towards the Lord, then you'll survive and maybe even thrive at this stuff."

[Mark Jordan is the Mission Training Director for [Kairos Europe and the Middle East](#). He and his wife Rachel have two children and live in Belfast, Northern Ireland.]

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Eilidh with women from Charis Community in Belfast, N. Ireland

Mission Year with Eilidh Graham

Mission Year Volunteers serve as Christ's hands and feet on university campuses across Europe. They are recent university graduates who take a year to do part-time or full-time work with a local Kairos outreach, focusing their energy and talents on telling others about Christ, service, and training through active mission. They are leading prayer meetings, organising events, developing programmes, running small groups, giving and receiving training, mentoring younger students, growing in personal prayer and Scripture study, and bringing the Gospel to the universities where they serve. They're building something that will last. We're seeing encouraging growth in Kairos, and Mission Volunteers are men and women who can see this and want to be a part of it.

Mission Year Reflection by Eilidh Graham



This God of ours is a God of blessings, protection, healing and provision. These are the areas where I've particularly experienced the Lord's love this year during my Mission Year in Belfast, Northern Ireland. I'm staying with a family from the local Sword of the Spirit community, Charis, and the love and support of this community have been essential this year as I've seen the truth and joy of a life lived among Christian brothers and sisters.

I wasn't totally sure what this year would be like, but having been here for six months, here's my guide to a Mission Year: 1. Pray. 2. Pray again. 3. Pray more. God wants us to be close to him, and I've found that I can't afford to be far from him, because he upholds everything that I do.

I've found myself regularly praying for wisdom in decisions, humility in leadership, protection in the spiritual battle, and perseverance in my work and relationships. I've also thought a lot this year about choices. My choice to do a year of mission work wasn't influenced by anything but a desire to serve God. We all make

choices every day. Some are good, some are bad, some just need to be made. In all of this, God loves us and is waiting for us, and will always protect us. Making choices may not be easy, but does become simpler in the knowledge of the Father's goodness.

What would I say to someone considering a mission year? Well, it's a lot. A lot of work, a lot of decisions, a lot of growing up, and a whole lot of blessings. Through all of it, I think scripture says it best: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."

Interested in a Mission Year for 2016-2017? Contact us at info@kairos-eme.org for more information. ([Go to Mission Year Page](#))

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Growing in Christian Character Series



Sam Gamgee carries his friend Frodo on the last leg of their quest to destroy the evil ring of power from Tolkien's epic story in *The Lord of the Rings*

Perseverance and the Strength to Finish Well

By Don Schwager

Eric Liddell (1902-1945), called the “Flying Scotsman” for his running speed, excelled in perseverance. As a young man he loved athletics, especially rugby and running. Eric was also a very committed Christian who wanted to follow in his parents’ footsteps as a missionary. His passion for sports was only excelled by his passion for spreading the Gospel in mission lands.

Eric was born in China in 1902. Both of his parents came from Scotland. At the age of six Eric, along with his older brother Robby, attended a boarding school in England for sons of missionaries. In 1921 he joined his brother Robby at the University of Edinburgh. He studied pure science and graduated in 1925. He also studied theology from

October 1924 to June 1925. While studying in Edinburgh, Eric joined the Scottish national rugby union team. He played 7 out of 8 Five Nations matches in Europe. Eric also excelled in running, winning Scottish titles in 100 and 220 yard sprints, and 440 yard contests.

In 1921 Eric gave up rugby to concentrate on running. He didn't think he could give his best by trying to succeed at both. He won several running competitions between 1921-1923.

The movie, *Chariots of Fire* depicts a scene, during a competition between France and Scotland, in which Eric is knocked off the race course by another runner. With remarkable courage and determination Eric picks himself up and continues the race. He not only catches up with the other runners, but surpasses all of them at the finish line.

In 1924 Eric competed in the Paris Olympics. He was favored to win the 100 meter race, but declined to run in it because it was held on a Sunday. He wanted to follow his religious conviction to rest on Sunday in honor of the Lord's Day. Eric ran in the 200 meter race and won a bronze medal. His second race was the 440 meter. He was not expected to do well in the 440 race, but he surprised everyone when he won a gold medal and set a new world record at the same time. After winning the gold medal he told reporters, "The secret of my success over the 400 meter is that I run the first 200 meters as fast as I can. Then, for the second 200 meters, with God's help I run faster."

The Bulletin, Scotland's popular photo paper of that day, wrote: "This is the crowning distinction of Liddell's great career on the track, and no more modest or unaffected world champion could be desired. Liddell has **built up his success by hard work and perseverance**, and although hardly a beautiful runner he has even triumphed over his defects of style."



Eric Liddell makes the finish line in record time for an Olympic gold medal in Paris 1924

At the height of Eric's running career, he gave it up to return to China as a missionary. He married Florence Mackenzie, the daughter of a missionary couple from Canada. Eric's and Florence's first two daughters were born in China. A third daughter was born in Canada, a few months after Eric had sent his wife and children to Canada during the Japanese occupation of China between 1941-1945. Eric was planning to rejoin them later, but was forced by the Japanese occupying army to a prison camp for "enemy nationals." One of the survivors of the camp, named David Michell, who is now Director for Canada Overseas Missionary Fellowship, describes Eric's impact on him and the hundreds of young people who were interred in the overcrowded camp during the war.

Eric Liddell's twenty years in China were eventful, to say the least... Deliberately walking away from the fame and glory that could have been his in Britain, he responded to God's call and went to China as a missionary with the London Missionary Society, following in his father's footsteps. [During World War II the Japanese armies rounded up all "enemy nationals" for internment in a prison camp]... I was sent to the same camp where Eric Liddell was, along with many other missionary children.

Eric Liddell stood out among the 1800 people packed into our camp, which measured only 150 by 200 yards. He was in charge of the building where we younger children, who had already been away from our parents for four years because of the war, lived with our teachers. He lived in the very crowded men's dormitory near us (each man had a space of only three by six feet) and supervised our daily roll call when the guards came to count us.

One day a week 'Uncle Eric' would look after us, giving our teachers (all missionaries of the China Inland Mission and all women) a break. His gentle face and warm smile, even as he taught us games with the limited equipment available, showed us how much he loved children and how much he missed his own."

...But for Eric Liddell death came just months before liberation. He was buried in the little cemetery in the Japanese part of the camp where others who had died during internment had been laid to rest... None of us will ever forget this man who was totally committed to putting God first, a man whose humble life combined muscular Christianity with radiant godliness.

What was his secret? He unreservedly committed his life to Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord. That friendship meant everything to him. By the flickering light of a peanut-oil lamp, early each morning he and a roommate in the men's cramped dormitory studied the Bible and talked with God for an hour.

As a Christian, Eric Liddell's desire was to know God more deeply, and as a missionary, to make him known more fully.

His training, hard work, and perseverance paid off not only on the track field, but even more importantly in his call to be a disciple and a missionary worker for Christ in China. The Lord Jesus was the "pioneer and perfecter of his faith" who trained him through discipline and perseverance.

Athletes and missionaries are not the only ones who need perseverance, every Christian who wants to follow the Lord Jesus needs perseverance.

What is perseverance?

A key Greek word for "perseverance" (*kartereo*) which was used by the ancient Greeks, as well as by the New Testament writers, literally meant "to be strong," "to be courageous," "to persist at," "to hold fast to something," "to occupy oneself diligently with something," "to endure steadfastly," "to suffer." In connection with persons it meant "to stay by," "remain with," and "to be loyal to someone." The New Testament Letter to the Hebrews used the analogy of a race to describe how perseverance is essential for staying the course and finishing well: "Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Another key Greek word for perseverance (*hupomene*) described the inner quality of patiently enduring and courageously bearing up under trials and suffering. It was described as "manly constancy or strength under trial." For the Greeks this virtue depicted strong, courageous, and brave resistance to some hostile power, and the

endurance of pain and affliction with a steadfast spirit that would not be bowed down with grief or despair. The Letter to the Hebrews encourages Christians to follow the example of Jesus who patiently and courageously endured the cross for our sake: “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted” (Hebrews 12:3).

C.S. Lewis describes how perseverance in the virtues builds strong character in people:

There is a difference between doing some particular just or temperate action and being a just or temperate man. Someone who is not a good tennis player may now and then make a good shot. What you mean by a good player is a man whose eye and muscles and nerves have been so trained by making innumerable good shots that they can now be relied on. He has a certain tone or quality which is there even when he is not playing, just as a mathematician’s mind has a certain habit and outlook which is there even when he is not doing mathematics. In the same way a man who perseveres in doing just actions gets in the end a certain quality of character. Now it is that quality rather than the particular actions which we mean when we talk of all “virtue.”

- *Mere Christianity*, Chapter 12, “The Cardinal Virtues”

Perseverance as a character trait

The virtue of perseverance is the patient determination to stay the course and to finish strong in the pursuit of what is good. It holds fast and persists in pursuing the good in the face of difficulty, discouragement, setbacks, or suffering. It does not vacillate, waver, hesitate, or falter in pursuing what is good. And it resists quitting in the face of difficulty.

Perseverance is the mean between giving into “softness” – seeking the path of least resistance, ease, and comfort on the one hand, and the stubborn, unyielding insistence of holding fast to one’s personal opinions, preferences, or self-serving goals.

Distinguishing True Perseverance from Its Two Extremes: Being Soft or Spineless and being Stubborn or Inflexible

Soft/Spineless	True Perseverance	Stubborn/Inflexible
<p>A “soft” person is a comfort seeker, someone who drifts along without making a firm commitment, easily changes course or quits whenever the going gets tough, uncomfortable, or painful.</p> <p>A “soft” person is apathetic, numb, uncaring, disinterested, or indifferent towards pursuing people, activities, or a course of action. Lacks the will-power or motivation to care about much of anything.</p> <p>A “soft” person easily vacillates, goes with prevailing opinions simply to please others and appear likeable.</p>	<p>A man or woman of perseverance possesses the patient determination to stay the course and to finish strong in the pursuit of what is good.</p> <p>Perseverance is the patient determination to stand for what is right.</p> <p>Perseverance holds fast and persists in pursuing the good in the face of difficulty, setbacks, discouragement, or suffering. It resists quitting in the face of difficulty.</p> <p>Perseverance does not vacillate, waver, hesitate, or falter in pursuing what is good.</p>	<p>A stubborn person is headstrong, obstinate, or willful by holding to their own personal opinion, purpose, and course of action in spite of reason, good arguments, or persuasion.</p> <p>Stubborn people are resistant, difficult, and persistent in their personal opinions, preferences, and getting things to go their own way.</p> <p>Stubborn people can be pushed to outbursts of emotion. They have an outward façade of toughness but can be as fragile as eggs on the inside.</p>

<p>A “spineless” person is someone who “doesn’t have a spine” – someone who backs down from confrontation or sneaks around and has others do the job for them.</p> <p>“Spineless” people don’t have a conscience of their own so they play on others’ consciences to get what they want.</p> <p>Soft and “spineless” people are often swayed by anxiety or discouragement.</p>	<p>Those who persevere remain steadfast and resolute. They hold steady to the right course of action; not quitting or giving in to pressure to change one’s course in order to “save face,” avoid opposition, or endure suffering.</p> <p>Perseverance is the patient determination to stand for what is right and to pursue what is good in the face of difficulty, adversity, or suffering.</p> <p>Perseverance is also connected to patience and courage. Patience enables us to bear affliction without anxiety or discouragement. Patience is courage borne out over time.</p>	<p>Stubborn people are determined not to agree with other people’s wishes or to accept their suggestions. They refuse to change.</p> <p>Stubborn people are adamant. They insist that their idea or course be taken regardless of what others think best, always thinking they are right. “I’m right because I say so.”</p>
<p>A “soft” person is afraid to take a stand, not wanting to take a position, make a decision, or hold to a course of action if it will be difficult, or involve sacrifice and pain.</p> <p>Gives up too easily, especially if the most difficult thing to do is wait patiently and endure.</p>	<p>Perseverance is “sticktuitiveness” – the determination to finish what you started regardless of the obstacles that stand in the way.</p> <p>Perseverance grows with the dogged effort to finish a task, render a service, or overcome laziness or some other fault.</p>	<p>Stubborn people are inflexible, narrow-minded, and can’t be persuaded to consider changing their mind, attitude, or approach to a problem, course of action, or strategy.</p>

Patience and courage

Perseverance is also connected to patience and courage. Patience enables us to bear affliction without anxiety or discouragement. Patience is courage borne out over time (James 1:2-4; Luke 21:19).

Courage also requires that we be ready to die for the sake of what is right. We must be willing to die rather than sin. The martyrs, by laying down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ and the spread of the gospel make the supreme act of courage.

Examples from the Bible

In the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament we read the story of two remarkable women, named Ruth and Naomi. They steadfastly stood by each other in a time of suffering for the people of Israel. Ruth was determined to remain loyal to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and persisted in following Naomi back to her home town of Bethlehem where she could serve Naomi and her people.

The Lord Jesus told his follows that he would honor as his true and loyal disciples those “who continue (remain steadfast) in his word” (John 8:31).

In the parable of the widow and the unrighteous judge, Jesus told his disciples to “persevere in prayer and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). He also explained that those who persist (persevere) in “seeking, asking, and knocking” will receive the answer to their petitions (Luke 11:5-13).

Paul the Apostle also taught that perseverance was a necessary condition for prayer: “be constant (persistent) in prayer” (Romans 12:12), “continue steadfastly in prayer” (Colossians 4:2), and “keep alert with perseverance, making supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

Running the race with perseverance

In the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews, Chapter 12, the author exhorts his fellow Christians to persevere in running the race set before them.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

What is the race – the particular course or goal – which the Lord Jesus has set for you, and for all of his followers as well? The image of a race used in Hebrews 12 could refer to a foot race in a stadium or to a long distance run (a marathon) which was often used in battles and for sending messages between distant towns or provinces. A long distance run required great endurance, stamina, discipline, and mental concentration. The author of Hebrews sums it up with the word “perseverance.”

Why is perseverance needed? Runners can get tired, distracted, wearied with sore muscles, or hurt with cuts and bruises. And then there were often obstacles along the path – rocks, ravines, steep hills, flooded streams or rivers to cross, maybe bad weather conditions, or maybe even enemies waiting to ambush them. In the life of a disciple there are many obstacles and challenges that must be faced and overcome if we are to stay on course and finish well. What might be some of the obstacles and challenges which you have experienced?

We do not run the race alone. There is a cloud of witnesses to encourage us to stay the course and not quit, or lose sight of the goal. These witnesses include those who have run the race before our time – our forbearers in the faith who persevered in their faith and calling to the very end of their lives. Our fellow Christians who know us – our brothers and sisters in Christ – also witness the race we are on. They, too, encourage and help us keep our eyes on the goal – the finish line of the race. How can you better draw strength and encouragement from your brothers and sisters in the Lord?

And best of all, the Lord Jesus is the “pioneer and perfecter” of our race. He has gone ahead of us and marked the way for us. We can be sure we are on the right path if we keep our eyes on him. Do you trust the Lord Jesus to show you the way forward? Ask him to free you of any obstacles that might keep you from fully trusting in him.

Hebrews says that Jesus was made perfect through suffering. Through his suffering on the cross he completed the work the Father sent him to do, to redeem us from our sins and win for us eternal life. Jesus is the goal, the one we go to meet and he is the companion who accompanies us on our journey. We struggle with sin and like a runner we must shed whatever would impede us in the race. We must part with old habits, self-indulgences, and associations which keep us from following Christ and his way of holiness. But we do not struggle alone. The Lord Jesus is with us and he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness. Discipline comes from the same root as disciple. If we want to be true disciples of Christ that we must allow the Lord Jesus to train and form us into the kind of men and women he intends us to be. We can resent discipline, approach it with self-pity or in rebellious complaint, or we can accept it as coming from a loving Father.

Joy and perseverance

We face many tests in life – but the most important test is the daily choice and decision to put our faith and trust in

God – to rely on his power and strength, rather than relying on our own human resources. As disciples of the Lord Jesus we can expect trials, challenges, and difficulties. The world, the flesh, and the devil are at war against the kingdom of God and against those who serve it's king, the Lord Jesus Christ. God allows testing – not to fail us – but to make us strong, mature, and complete. That is why perseverance is necessary for passing the test. Perseverance keeps us going strong, not giving up, not quitting, not giving into despair, discouragement, or sadness when difficulties or setbacks try to weigh us down.

Like the long-distance runners, those who persevere in their faith win the “crown of life” when they complete the finish line. James also tells us that they receive a very precious gift right from the start of the race – the gift of joy – a spiritual fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything (James 1:2-4, NIV translation).

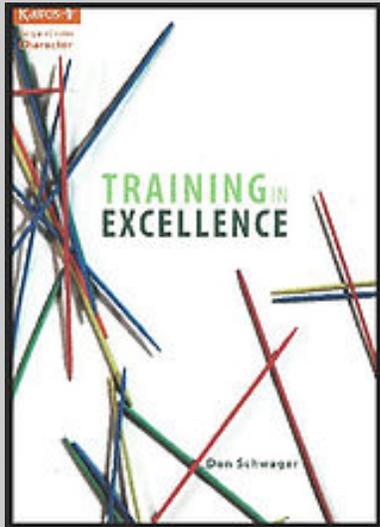
This joy is a spiritual source of strength and consolation – as we struggle, work hard, and patiently endure trials and wait for God's kingdom to become fully manifest. The Lord himself gives us a joy that no sadness can diminish, no trial can defeat. It is a joy that is also contagious – that draws others who want to share in it and to discover its true source.

What is the source of this supreme joy and happiness? When Jesus began preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, he taught his disciples the beatitudes (Luke 6, Matthew 5). The word beatitude literally means happiness or blessedness. Jesus' way of happiness, however, demands a transformation from within –a conversion of heart and mind which can only come about through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How can one possibly find joy and happiness in facing trials and in suffering for the Lord Jesus? If we want to be filled with the joy and happiness of heaven, then we must empty ourselves of all that would shut God out of our hearts. God reveals to the humble of heart the true source of abundant life and happiness. Jesus promises his disciples that the joys of heaven will more than compensate for the troubles and hardships they can expect in this world. Thomas Aquinas said: “No person can live without joy. That is why someone deprived of spiritual joy goes after carnal pleasures.” Do *you* know the joy of persevering to the finish line in God's love and strength?

> See related articles on [Christian character](#) in the Living Bulwark archives.

[Don Schwager is a member of the [Servants of the Word](#) and author of the [Daily Scripture Readings and Meditations](#) website.]



*Training in Excellence:
How godly character forms young people and strengthens Christian
communities*

by Don Schwager,
published by [Kairos - Europe and the Middle East](#).

The book is intended as a study aid for those who have a direct role in helping to form Christian character, especially in young people. It is directed to youth workers, pastoral leaders, teachers, and parents. It aims to help people better understand what the Scriptures say about Christian character and the virtues and helping the young to apply them.

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European Communities Football Tournament Munich – May 2016

by Pete Coyle

The European Sword of the Spirit Football Tournament has been running since its inception in 1992 and remains one of the highlights of the year (if not the highlight) for many throughout the region. It's an event unlike any other, filled with football (obviously), fellowship, banter, prayer, brotherhood and community. The Football Tournament is an event geared toward gathering men from around the region to come together to play together but also to be men together, pray together and build community together. In some ways the football itself is the least important part of the weekend.



Organizers for the 2016 European Communities Football Tournament

In 2016 we gathered in Munich, Germany on the first weekend in May (as is traditional) to celebrate the 24th iteration of the tournament. We were blessed this year to be hosted by the Brots des Lebens (Bread of Life) community in Munich and Olching and to have a great quality pitch on which to play. The weather was even

compliant on the Saturday. This year we had five teams: [Charis](#) (Belfast), [Nazareth](#) (Dublin), [City on a Hill](#) (Bielsko-Biala), [Antioch](#) (London) and [Brot des Lebens](#) (Munich). After playing four games apiece, the final was contested between the two highest ranked teams, Nazareth and Charis. In the final itself, Charis triumphed with a 3-0 win.



2016 European Champions - [Charis Community](#) football team (Belfast/N.Ireland)

Overall, the tournament was also a triumph. Everyone enjoyed the on field and off field aspects and all the matches were closely contested. It was a great experience overall. Away from the pitch, notable events included the Lord's Day in Munich city centre which was followed by a rousing prayer meeting featuring a brief but inspirational sharing by Dave 'Q' Quintana. Q spoke on the different stages of life that many of the brothers were at and the Lord was asking us to respond given our different phases of life. The Sunday night celebration was also a high point as the guys shared some beer and fellowship.



[Bread of Life Community](#) football team (Munich/Olching, Germany)

Perhaps one of the most important features of the Football Tournament is its sense of history and repetition. Given that many of the people who play each year are the same, relationships and brotherhood are developed year upon year so that many of the older men are steadfast brothers who have known each other for twenty five years. For them, the tournament is a permanent fixture on the yearly calendar where they can refresh these friendships.



[City on a Hill](#) Community football team (Bielsko-Biala, Poland)

The overall spirit in which the tournament is conducted is also an incredibly vital part of the tournament's dynamic. While we strive to play hard, we also seek to play fair and to ensure a brotherly atmosphere is created. For many, the environment of the tournament is a precious thing: men coming from across the continent to be together. The spiritual aspect is also crucial for many. The Saturday night prayer meetings are normally places where the Lord works powerfully with many of the men present and this year was no exception. God was speaking clearly and calling directly to his sons.



[Antioch Community](#) football team (London, UK)

The Football Tournament continues to be a place of life, hope and joy amongst our brothers in Europe and long may it continue to be. I thoroughly look forward to joining in again in Bielsko Biala in May 2017.



[Community of Nazareth](#) football team (Dublin, Ireland)

Pete Coyle grew up in the [Community of the Risen Christ](#) in Glasgow. He is an affiliate with the [Servants of the Word](#) and currently lives in their household in London, UK. Pete also serves in [Koinonia](#), a Christian university student outreach in London and also with [Antioch Community](#) in London.

Photos by Mark Major, a member of [Bread of Life Community](#) in Olching, Germany.

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***“Take the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God – Pray at all times in the Spirit” –
Ephesians 6:17,18***

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“This is my Beloved Son, listen to Him” – Mark 9:7



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- Matthew 12:20,21 (NLT)



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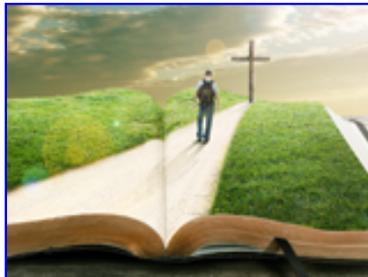


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“Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:50)



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“If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation – the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.” (2 Cor. 5:17)

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“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever” (Revelations 11:15)

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