Worship in Spirit and Truth

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him." – John 4:23

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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.
"Worship the Father In Spirit and Truth"

– John 4:23

Intro to this issue

"I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh" - Joel 2:28

When the Lord Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, he offered her the living water of the Holy Spirit (John 4:1-42) This water satisfies thirsty hearts and barren souls who long for God and the abundant life and fruit of his kingdom - everlasting peace, joy, happiness, and friendship with God who made us in love for love.

This Samaritan was shunned by her own people, and despised by the Jews who regarded all Samaritans as heretics who did not worship God properly as they did. Unworthy as she was, Jesus filled her with the overflowing love and mercy of God. He offered here a new life and she accepted it and went back to her village a changed person. Her testimony brought the whole village to the feet of Jesus and they believed because of the word he brought them from the Father in heaven.

Jesus came to reconcile sinners - Jews, Samaritans, and unbelievers - with an all merciful and righteous God. He came to fulfill what the prophets had foretold long ago, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh" (Joel 2:28). Today we witness a new Pentecost - a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all peoples, nations, and tribes.

When the charismatic renewal began 50 years ago, no one expected it to spread like wildfire through the mainstream churches and denominations around the world. And yet it did and continues to grow today. The Lord promised that he would restore much of what had been lost to his broken and divided people - the body
of Christ. Through the gift and outpouring of the Holy Spirit today we are witnessing a new work of ecumenism, spiritual renewal, healing and reconciliation between Christians who have been divided for centuries, and a new outpouring of spiritual gifts and evangelism. One of the principal fruits of this renewal is the restoration of charismatic worship - the kind of worship which Jesus promised to the Samaritan woman:

The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.” - John 4:23-26

**Worshiping God with reverence and awe**

How is the Holy Spirit bringing about a restoration of Spirit-filled (charismatic) worship today. This issue features some of the pioneers of charismatic renewal, Steve Clark, Jim Cavnar, Carlos Mantica, Mark Kinzer. They explain what it means to "worship in Spirit and Truth" and why this gift is needed today.

Carlos Mantica, one of the founding leaders of charismatic renewal in Latin America and the Sword of the Spirit, writes:

Whenever God invites his people to draw nearer to his presence, he also expects them to relate to him in a manner worthy of his glory and greatness. Even when he embraces us with his tender love and kindness, there is still something in his glory and majesty that compels us to give him adoration, and to approach him with awe and reverence. We cannot continue to relate to him simply as we might have done in the past - simply as a benefactor who gives us good things when we ask for his help.

Whenever we gather to worship God together with other Christians, and when we each seek him alone in our private prayer, he wants us to acknowledge him both as a tender and merciful Father and as the Lord and Ruler of the universe. That is why we must always love him with gratitude, reverence, and awe. This attitude of reverence is necessary if we want to enter more deeply into his presence and to experience his immediacy.

Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus makes it possible for us to grow in our knowledge of God, in our personal encounter with him through his life-giving word in the Scriptures, and through our personal and corporate worship together. May this issue inspire us to be men and women who seek to worship the Father in Spirit and Truth.

Sincerely in Christ,

Don Schwager
editor
Worship in Spirit and Truth

by Steve Clark

If we are spiritual people who want a charismatic spirituality, we will approach various areas of the Christian life in “a charismatic way”. Worship is one of them. To be sure, worship is only one area affected by being charismatic. We could also, for example, speak about evangelism and how it could work more effectively as a result of a charismatic orientation. However, worship is especially central to the charismatic experience, for reasons considered below.

Responding to the work of the Holy Spirit is only one aspect of our communion with God and our corporate and individual prayer life. Other things also go into relating well with God, like listening to or reading scripture. This chapter does not contain a full treatment of Christian worship and prayer. Nor is it a chapter on how to have a good prayer time or lead a good prayer meeting. Rather, it considers the foundation of good prayer — the work of the Holy Spirit in making it possible for us to worship well.
The Holy Spirit makes possible the new covenant relationship with God. His role is commonly designated in the scriptures by a phrase which can be translated “in the Holy Spirit” or “by the Holy Spirit”, depending on the context. There is a Greek word [en] in that phrase that can be translated “in” or “by”. Like our word “in”, it is used for indicating a spatial location, but it is also used for indicating agency and then can be translated “by”. Scripture tells us that many things happen in or by the Holy Spirit and that we are to do many things in or by the Holy Spirit. If, then, we understand the phrase better, we will understand better how to respond to the work of the Holy Spirit, including his work in Christian worship.

The role of the Holy Spirit in worship is spoken about in the passage in John 4 about Jesus and the woman at the well that we have already considered. As we have seen, Jesus first spoke to her about the gift of God, the fountain of living water that he would put inside those who turned to him. The conversation then in verse 19 turned to worship:

The woman said to him,
Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on [en] this mountain; and you say that in [en] Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus said to her,
Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in [en] spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

The woman said to him,
I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things.
Jesus said to her,
I who speak to you am he.

Note, first of all, that the same word is used in Greek for “in” and “on”. The three places it is used are on marked on the text above. The use of this word means that Mt. Gerizim, Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit [“spirit and truth”] are spoken about as parallel to one an-other, and so are being compared with one another.

The Samaritan woman spoke about this mountain, possibly pointing to Mt. Gerizim, which was right above the place where they were conversing. This mountain and in Jerusalem refer to places of worship, places where there were temples, although the temple on Mt. Gerizim was in ruins at the time. The temple on Mt. Gerizim was the Samaritan place of worship, and of course the temple at Jerusalem, built on Mt. Zion, was the Jewish place of worship. These were places where the respective groups believed God could be “met” or contacted, and where offerings would be accepted and prayer heard.

In an attempt to say that she did not have to be concerned with Jesus because she was Samaritan and Samaritan worship was different than his, the woman contrasted Mt. Gerizim and Jerusalem. Jesus, in response, replied that this was no longer a difference that had the same importance as previously, because both Mt. Gerizim and Jerusalem were even at that moment being replaced. He used an unusual phrase, the hour is coming and now is, to indicate that a change would be happening in the near future. He was speaking of the “hour” of his crucifixion and resurrection, as we now know. But even at the moment he was speaking to the Samaritan woman, that hour was starting, because the new covenant was beginning by his ministry and would be
definitively established shortly.

He then spoke about what would replace it. True worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. *Spirit and truth* may be interpreted as “the Spirit of truth” or “the Spirit and the truth [which Christ teaches and brings]”. Either way, the phrase includes a reference to the Holy Spirit, so Jesus is speaking of worship in/by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, then, is a “place” or means of contact with God. He has replaced the physical temple(s) central to old covenant worship. New covenant people do not need to go to a physical location to make contact with God and worship him in the way he wants. We can make contact with him by means of the Holy Spirit, the gift of God who is within us.

Likely, therefore, the Holy Spirit is understood to be something like a medium or means of communication, as a physical place can be the means of putting people into communication with one another or, in old covenant understanding, with God. To use an example, when we want to get across the Atlantic, we can go “by” air or water. Air and water are media that can enable us to make connection. We are in them and therefore move by them. In an analogous way, when we worship “in or by the Spirit”, the Holy Spirit makes a connection between the Father and us.

Or to use a different example, the Holy Spirit is like the airwaves that allow us to make radio contact with someone in a distant spot. In this case, he allows us to make contact with God, to come into the heavenly presence of God so that we can make connection with him in a way we could not have otherwise. Put in a more Trinitarian way, the Holy Spirit enters into us, dwells in us, and so enables us to come into the presence of God the Father, because he himself is one with the Father and always with him.

There are two other passages in the New Testament that speak about the role of the Holy Spirit in worship in way that develops what was said in John. The first is in Ephesians 2:17-18:

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

The second is in Revelation 4:1-2:

> After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this.” At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne!

*Access* in Ephesians 2:18 is a ceremonial word. It was used to speak of the way a priest could approach God’s presence in the holy of holies in the temple. Most Israelites could only come as far as the court of Israelites in front of the temple building. Priests, however, could enter the building itself when they were offering incense. The high priest could even enter the holy of holies itself once a year. These differences in ability to approach God were sometimes spoken about as degrees of “access” to God’s presence, with the high priest having the greatest access of all.

According to Ephesians 2:18 the blessing of the new covenant means that both Gentile Christians, those who were far off, and Jewish Christians, those who were near, can have direct *access to the Father*. We can come more immediately into his presence than old covenant people could. And we can do this *in one Spirit* because the Holy Spirit in us is a means of contact with the Father.

What Ephesians describes in theological terms, Revelation describes in narrative terms. John in chapter 4 was
receiving a vision. He saw an open door in the sky and a voice invited him to come to heaven, the place of God’s presence. He then was in the Spirit and as a result he found himself in heaven, having been given access to God’s throne. The Spirit, in other words, put him into the presence of God in heaven.

John saw in a vision what happens to all new covenant people, even though we cannot see it with our eyes. In the phrase in Ephesians, we can have access to the Father, that is, we can come into his presence. In his fifth sermon on the Nativity of the Lord, Leo the Great said, “If we are indeed the temple of God and if the Spirit of God lives in us, then what every believer has within himself is greater than what he admires in the skies.” C.S. Lewis, in the Chronicles of Narnia, gives a picture of this with a wardrobe, a piece of furniture for hanging up coats and similar pieces of clothing. The children in the story go into the wardrobe and find a world inside that is much greater than the wardrobe itself.

In a similar way, we can “enter into ourselves” and find there a world much greater than ourselves, heaven itself. We can “turn to the Lord” and find ourselves standing in his presence. We might describe this as heaven coming down into us or as our going up to heaven. Both descriptions are true at the same time, because we are talking about a change of relationship with God that changes our ability to make contact with him. That change is produced by the Holy Spirit coming to dwell in us.

This all raises a question. We know that God is everywhere, “omnipresent” to use the technical term. In what new way, then, does the Holy Spirit put us into God’s presence?

The answer to that question comes from what we have already said. God is always with us and always sees us, but he does not always make it possible for people to turn to him and make contact with him. Those who are “living in sin” are shut off from him and at best can send off an appeal to him, like sending a letter to a distant shore. Old covenant people could pray to him, but the fullness of interaction, “meeting God” could only happen in certain places, in fact, only one place once the temple in Jerusalem was built. New covenant people, however, can “come into his presence” when they wish to turn to him. The door is open, so to speak. As a result, new covenant people can turn to the Lord and enter his presence in prayer, confident of making contact with him.

There is something else that the Holy Spirit does when he comes to us that is also important to worship. This is described in Galatians 4:4-7:

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, he does not just put us into contact with God. He also changes us so that we can interact with God in a certain way once we are in his presence. He does this by giving us a new relationship to God, adoption as sons, a relationship with involves a new aptitude for relating to God. As a result, we can receive and know how to respond to the impulse or inspiration of the Holy Spirit that moves us to address God as Father.

If the work of the Holy Spirit is analogous to the way telephone wires or the electric impulses traveling through those telephone wires allow our computers to make contact with people far away, it is also like the installation of an internet access program. Without such a program, no matter how good the connection, we could not communicate. Something has to be changed on our side, in our computer. It needs to be programmed so it can receive certain communications. In an analogous way, we need to be changed inside so that we can
respond as sons and daughters of God once we come into God’s presence. This the Holy Spirit does.

The Holy Spirit, then, makes worship — new covenant worship, spiritual worship — possible. He does that by making a very fundamental change in how we can relate to God. In order to make such a change in an ongoing way, he has to dwell inside of us. His indwelling presence in us, then, makes new covenant worship possible.

Connection Between the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Worship

The connection between the presence of the Holy Spirit in us and new covenant worship can also be seen in the scriptural accounts of what happened when the Holy Spirit was given. There are three main passages in which the coming of the Holy Spirit on new Christians is described with enough fullness that we can see how people knew that someone had received the Holy Spirit.

The first we already considered in the first chapter of this book, Acts 2:3-4, the description of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost:

And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The second is in Acts 10:44-48, the description of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the first group of Gentile believers:

While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

The third is in Acts 19:1-7, the description of a group of disciples of John the Baptist who become disciples of Christ:

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism. And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve of them in all.

If we look at these passages, we will see that three things are mentioned: tongues, prophecy and extolling God. In other words, when the Holy Spirit came on people for the first time, they began to pray in tongues, prophesy or extol God. Those watching them saw a change happen and one sign of that change was they were inspired to praise God, since speaking in tongues, prophecy, and extolling God were probably all ways of praising God.

We can see the fact that when they spoke in tongues they were praying by the way Paul spoke about speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 14. He said, For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no
one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit (v. 2), and, For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful (v. 14). Moreover, in Acts 2:11, when the onlookers described what they were hearing when the first group of people baptized in the Spirit were speaking in tongues, they said, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God. Likely, this means they were praising God.

Prophecy can also be prayer, as we can see from Luke 1:67, where it says, And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who has visited and redeemed his people…That means that when the disciples at Ephesus were baptized in the Spirit, they probably were also praising God, since the prophesying that happened, like their speaking in tongues, was an initial response to the presence of the Holy Spirit in them and did not seem to be directed to Paul or anyone else who might have been with him. And, of course, extolling God is just another way of saying praising God.

The initial indication of the gift of the Spirit, then, seems to be “inspired praise”. Those who have been baptized in the Spirit begin to praise God. This is the “natural” (spiritually natural) response to being put into experiential contact with God. Worship and an ability and desire to worship, therefore, is a sign of being baptized in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, so to speak, installs “the worship program” into us so that we can worship in a way we could not before and, in addition, he begins to inspire (work in) us to use it. This is an indication that worship is central to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Corporate Worship in the Holy Spirit

The worship of God that the Holy Spirit brings about is not just individual worship, but corporate worship as well. We have already seen that the Holy Spirit does not just work in individuals separately, but also unites people into something corporate, one body. We already considered the section of Ephesians 2:21-22, where it speaks about …Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. The result of his unifying men and women in Christ includes unifying them in worship, because that is what we do in a holy temple.

We can also see that the Holy Spirit creates a unity in worshipping by putting together again a passage from Paul that speaks theologically with a passage in Revelation that presents the same truth in narrative form. The first is from Paul’s Letter to the Romans 15:5-6:

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second is from Revelation 14:1-3:

Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty–four thousand who had his name and his Father’s name written on their fore-heads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty–four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.
As Paul says, the Holy Spirit unites us so that we can worship God together with one voice. The same Spirit is in all of us, and he therefore gives us all the same orientation. When he makes us be in accord with Christ Jesus, in tune with him, we are in harmony with one another. The result is, or at least can be, unified worship.

Revelation provides a picture of this in operation. The Lamb is standing on Mt. Zion, the place of the temple, and the 144,000 are with him. These are the disciples of the Lord, those who belong to him. The number seems to indicate that they are the new covenant people of God. They worship God together, singing one new song. They are able to do that, because they can hear the worship in heaven, and what they hear there, they reproduce on earth.

I once had an experience that illustrated this. I was with someone driving in a car with the radio on. We stopped at a red light, and I looked over at the next car to see the driver beating time to some music. It was in perfect time with the music we were listening to. Then I realized that he must have been listening to the same radio program we were. Something similar should happen with a body of Christians. They should be like the disciples of the lamb, “listening to” the same heavenly music and joining in together on earth.

**Spiritual, Charismatic Worship**

If the work of the Holy Spirit produces worship in us, we then have the question of when our worship is spiritual, or spiritualized. What criterion can we use to tell when our worship is spiritual?

This is similar to the question, “When is our driving spiritual?” A caricature of a charismatic response might say, the sign of our driving being spiritual is that we find a parking place because we prayed for it. That is, however, not an adequate answer.

The first answer is provided in Romans 8:9. There the apostle Paul is talking about the difference the Holy Spirit makes in redeemed people, Christians, and says,

> But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Our driving or our worship or anything we do is spiritual, first of all, when the Holy Spirit dwells in us. But there is more to it.

We find a further answer in Galatians 5:16-23, the passage on the fruits of the Spirit. To summarize what was said in chapter 2, our driving is spiritual when we are spiritualized, that is, when the Holy Spirit is in us, but also when we drive in a spiritualized way. This means we have to drive in the fruit of the Spirit, keeping the commandments of God and manifesting the character of God when we drive. The same thing is true of our worship. We have to worship in the fruit of the Spirit, keeping the commandments of God.

The passage on the fruits of the Spirit teaches about the opposite of spiritual worship by specifically mentioning various “works of the flesh” that could keep our worship from being spiritualized: idolatry and sorcery (divination). We could add superstition, spiritual-ism, and other similar practices of worship condemned by the scripture. When these are present, our worship is not spiritualized.

Sometimes Christians think that any worship is good, because it shows an interest in God and spiritual things. That view, however, is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the scripture, which condemns false worship very strongly. Our worship is only spiritual when we are not idolaters, when we have true belief (including belief in the Incarnation and the Trinity), when we do not engage in spiritualism or divination, when we do not engage in human sacrifice, as some Pagans did, etc. — and when we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us so
Most formal Christian worship, then, is spiritual, because it is done by people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells and is done in a godly, orthodox way. The church service this week, formal as it may have been and lacking in vitality as it may have been, was probably spiritual. To be sure, this may not be true of some church services that are identified as Christian, which may be highly secularized or influenced by Eastern religions or new age thought, but it is true of a large number of them, including those that do not much impress us with their vitality.

A third answer can be found in First Corinthians 14. In verse 12 Paul says, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church, and in verse 40 he says all things should be done decently and in order. The third criterion, then, is that worship should be done in a way that builds up the body of Christ and so done decently and in order. This is actually an expression of the fruit of the Spirit, although it is helpful to mention it separately. Love leads us to seek the good of others and of the body. It also means at times giving up our preferences for the good of the body, including our spiritual preferences.

For those of us who would like to see our church services more spiritually vital, this means that when we attend church, we should enter into it as we find it. That does not mean that we cannot propose improvements when appropriate. But it does mean that we need to submit our proposals and also that we need to be able to enter into the service as it is, at least if it is orthodox and does not violate the commandments.

When is our worship charismatic?

This leads us to another question, namely, when is our worship “charismatic”? There are three answers that have been commonly given. The first is that our worship is charismatic when it is done in “charismatic style”. By that, people seem to mean the style characteristic of the charismatic movement.

Worship in the charismatic style tends to be “spontaneous” or “unstructured”, as distinguished from more formal worship which uses set words and set sequences. It also tends to have special practices, such as raising of hands and the “word of prayer” (everyone praying softly out loud at the same time). It usually has lively music, often accompanied by movement by the participants (moving in time to the beat). It almost always has active, expressive participation by those present, including chances for anyone to “share” or contribute, and several people involved in leadership. The charismatic style can be helpful, but it is not enough to make our worship charismatic.

The second answer commonly given is that worship is charismatic when it is open to spiritual gifts or inspirations for worship. There are several passages in the New Testament where we can see examples of such worship. The first is in 1 Corinthians 14:26-32, where Paul is instructing the Corinthians how to have a service that is orderly.

What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silence in church and speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints…

The second is in Colossians 3:16-17:
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The third is in Ephesians 5:18-19:

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

All three passages point to services where many people can contribute if they think they have something to offer. The first clearly speaks about the presence of spiritual gifts, and the other two likely do as well, because they are probably describing inspired contributions to worship.

Charismatic worship, then, is worship in which spiritual gifts give rise to various contributions, including tongues, prophecy and inspired prayers and songs. As the above passages indicate, there seems to be some connection between a worship service that has time open for everyone to contribute and one in which spiritual gifts are used. For fully charismatic worship there needs to be some space for active, informal participation.

Adding the word “fully” here is intended to avoid saying that non-Pentecostal, non-charismatic church services are not charismatic at all. Very often the preacher or homilist at a normal church service or a music leader contribute in ways that we can experience as having charismatic power. But the rest of the congregation has no opportunity (or, usually, inclination) to contribute, regardless of what God maybe doing in them.

Adding the phrase “some space” here is intended to avoid saying that everything has to be informal or open in order to have charismatic worship. Informal and formal worship can be combined and often are better than either by themselves. In fact, there is nothing so dead as a dead spontaneous prayer meeting. The formal patterns can foster active worship and can be especially helpful when those present do not seem to have much to con-tribute that is inspired. In fact, most Pentecostal and Charismatic groups, no matter how much emphasis they put on open, spontaneous meetings, seem to have a certain pattern to their worship and rely on singing that is led and prepared talks.

Nonetheless, for fully charismatic worship, there needs to be some open space. That is the reason why there seems to be some equation between informality or spontaneity and charismatic worship. The informality, however, is not the key factor. The presence of spiritual or charismatic gifts is.

The third answer to the question of when worship is charismatic is when the people present, or the core of them, have an experiential relationship with God. According to this answer, charismatic worship is worship by people who have been baptized in the Spirit. This is something that cannot easily be identified by external signs, but can often be “felt” intuitively. When a group of people has an experiential contact with the Lord, when they turn to him with expectant faith, some spiritual interaction seems to happen that is absent in many other situations. And the Lord seems to interact with such a group, both in regard to what he does for them individually and the way he leads them corporately.

It is the experiential relationship with the Lord that brings “the charismatic emphasis” of praise and worship. When people have experienced the Lord, know his greatness and majesty in a personal way, they desire to praise the Lord and to express worship to him. In addition they tend to pray in faith for the things they ask for,
since they have more conviction that he is there and that he answers prayer.

Again, we need to be careful in emphasizing the experiential nature of people’s relationship with God. Having an experiential relationship with him and expressing that in prayer is not the same as having “devotional feelings”. Many, in fact, focus on trying to stir up their feelings of devotion, or evaluate their prayer by how intensely or fervently they felt during it. When, however, God is real to us, someone we know, and our relationship with him is interactive, our worship is experiential, even if we are not experiencing much in the way of devotional feelings. This goes back to what we discussed in the second chapter about an experiential relationship with God.

Speaking in tongues provides us with an object lesson of how we can worship in a spiritual way without devotional feelings. It is often somewhat routine. Many times we even do not notice that we are praying in tongues. It can be like breathing in this respect. It most commonly is not exciting or moving. It is, however, usually prayer, and we know it is.

If we equate devotional feelings with an experiential relationship with God, we are often derailed by “dryness” in prayer. Sometimes the dryness comes because of sickness or other circumstances in life, usually trying ones. Sometimes it comes when we are entering a new stage of life or a new stage of the spiritual life. Periods of dryness can be helpful, because of the temptation to stop praying since it is no longer satisfying. They force us to choose God over a satisfying experience of prayer, with the result that they help purify our motivation, so that we pray because we want a good relationship with God, not because we want a good spiritual experience.

In addition, different people respond to the emotional or feeling aspect of life in different ways. Older people respond differently than younger people. Men respond differently than women. Personality types respond in various ways. Some of us find devotional feelings easier to have than others. Some find that they once experienced many and strong devotional feelings, but do so less now that they are older or their circumstances in life have changed. The variation in devotional feeling is not a reliable sign of whether our prayer life is good.

This leads us to still another question. Our worship is spiritual when we are spiritualized in the way we pray. Our worship is charismatic either when we are open to spiritual or charismatic gifts in worship or when we have an experiential relationship with God or both. But when is our worship good? Or to ask the question another way, what is the criterion for success in prayer and worship?

We have to begin by asking why we pray. The answer should not be: to have a good experience. The answer should not be: to benefit ourselves, to get something out of our relationship with God or to get him to help us — important as such things may be. The answer should be: to be in a good relationship with God and to relate to him well. We should relate to God for his own sake, out of love of him, not just for what we get out of it. Our prayer and worship, individually and corporately, then, should be an expression of our relationship with God and should be motivated by a desire to have a good relationship with him.

The most important things we need to do to relate to God well, of course, are to have faith in him and obey him, to love him with our whole mind, soul, heart and strength. But when we pray, we turn to him in a conscious, personal way. We address ourselves to him, while at the same time expressing our intention by posture, gesture, etc. We do that because our relationship with God is personal and therefore has to involve personal interaction. However, it has to involve a special kind of personal interaction, because he is God, our creator and Lord, the infinite, eternal source of all that we are and will be.

In order to relate to God as God well, we need to honor him or glorify him. We honor him especially by praise and worship. We need to express that he is God and do so in a way that acknowledges who he is and our
acceptance of that, our appreciation of that. We also need to thank him. We need to thank him not just for the things we are currently grateful for or happy about, but for everything he has done for us to create us and sustain us. We need to do so because he is the source of all good and because every moment of our existence we are benefiting from his goodness to us.

We also need to hear him, hear his word, hear what he has to say to us. We need to read his word in scripture and listen for it in prayer. We need to hear him, because his word is life, because we live by knowing the truth he teaches, and because doing his will is our delight. We need to repent for our sins as needed, confessing them, rejecting them, making up for the damage we have done when we can. We need to ask him for the things we need, both the things we need every day and the things we are immediately in need of.

In other words, in order to have a good relationship with God, we need to interact with him in a personal way. This is somewhat like the way we relate to other human beings, but also somewhat different — because he is God. If we do those things in prayer that we need to do to have a good relationship with him, our personal prayer life and our community worship are good.

We might add that there are charismatic emphases that can be present in good worship. Those who have had a charismatic experience will probably emphasize praise and worship more than others. They will also seek to have God speak, not just in the general way he speaks to those who read his word, but also in the sense that they seek him to speak to them in a way relevant to their current situation in life. They may also look for inspirations for their personal prayer time, as they do for prayer meetings.

Such charismatic emphases are helpful in worship, can improve prayer. But prayer and worship can be good without them as long as it is a means of expressing and maintaining a good relationship with God.

There can be more. We can have visions and revelations, be caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:1-3). We can have a special gift for prayer. We can immerse ourselves in scripture, gaining wisdom and understanding, counsel and strength, knowledge and fear of the Lord. (Isa. 11:2). We can continue in supplications and prayers day and night (1 Timothy 5:5). Nonetheless, our prayer life is good if we do the things we need to do to have a good relationship with God, so that we constantly feel that we are spiritually sub-par. Nor should we, as sometimes happens, neglect the basic things we need to do to have a good relationship with God out of spiritual ambition or spiritual desire for more spiritual experience. A life of prayer and worship that is pleasing to him is accessible to all of us, no matter how busy we may be or how weak we may be.

This gives us our fifth conclusion. To approach a particular area of the Christian life, like prayer/worship or evangelism, in a charismatic way, means to expect the Holy Spirit to make direct, experiential contact for us with God so that we might receive personal spiritual strengthening and added light and power, including gifts and graces, to act effectively in that area. It should not be confused with the style or approach of the charismatic movement, which commonly is helpful, but is simply a means.

**God’s Purpose for Charismatic Spirituality**

The Lord poured out his Spirit for a purpose, as we saw in the first two chapters. He had something he was aiming at, both for the human race as a whole and for individual human beings. His Spirit was given so that he might enter into the life of the Christian people as a whole, including each grouping of Christians, and into the life of individual Christians and bring them to the purpose God created the human race for. The New Testament, all good Christian teaching, tells us that we cannot live the new covenant life by ourselves, but that God needs to do it in us and through us. In fact, he equips [us] with everything good that [we] may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.
The purpose of having a charismatic spirituality, then, is not to create a special group of Christians, but to experience the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives the way God intended for all Christians when he poured out his Spirit on the day of Pentecost on Mt. Zion. Good charismatic spirituality, then, is achieved in our prayer life and in our life as a whole when we love God and neighbor by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a spirituality of renewal of the Christian basics, not a special spirituality, a special way only for those who might find it helpful.

Certainly there are many features of the charismatic movement in our day that constitute “a special way”, features that many have found helpful but that are not integral to full Christianity. But what we have talked about in this book as charismatic spirituality is for all. It can be had by faith in what Christian revelation teaches that God wishes to do for those who receive his Son in faith as their Lord and Savior.

Charismatic spirituality does involve some special emphases nowadays. There is a special emphasis on experience, although it should not make us experience-focused. There is a special emphasis on faith, although it should not make us neglect love of God and love of neighbor. These are special emphases that come from a call to renewal addressed to cultural Christians or traditional Christians who lack spiritual vitality. It is also a call addressed to good traditional Christians who have spiritual vitality but who lack the power of the Holy Spirit that could make them effective in advancing his kingdom.

These emphases may come from a special call to Christians in our age due to the transition of the Christian people from a Christendom situation to a diaspora situation, one in which they cannot rely on the societal supports but need more of a direct spiritual support from the Lord. Be that as it may, the special emphases in a charismatic spirituality for today are emphases of elements integral to Christianity. The work of the Holy Spirit is not an optional extra, much less a specialty item.

In order to be helpful, however, a charismatic spirituality needs to be a mature Christian spirituality. It needs to sustain a relational faithfulness to God and others. It needs to carry us through trials, dryness, routine, temptation, and aging. It needs to be a balanced spirituality, one that is not hyperspiritual, constantly leaving our humanity behind or ignoring it, rather than seeking to convert and transform it, to spiritualize it. It cannot just live by “charismatic novelties”, new waves, rediscovery of spiritual gifts and healings, new and deeper experiences, although such things can be helpful at times.

The basis of a mature, faithful, balanced charismatic spirituality is the conviction that we have the Holy Spirit—a spring of living water, a dynamo of spiritual power—inside. Such a conviction needs to be more than a notional conviction. It needs to be a confident faith that allows us to draw upon the Holy Spirit for our daily life Christian discipleship. The sign of its presence is the joy of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:6), manifested in the desire given by the Spirit, even in the midst of tribulation, to praise and thank God, to give him glory.


> See other articles by Steve Clark in Living Bulwark

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What Makes for Good Worship?

Why focusing on worship may not be the most direct route to improving it

by Mark Kinzer

The worship was excellent!

I have sometimes heard that comment after a church service or prayer meeting and wondered to myself, "What did he actually mean by that statement?" Was the person referring to the eloquence of the sermon, the performance of the choir, the selection of hymns? Or was he speaking of how inspired he was by the service as a whole?

What do we mean by "worship," and how do we think its "excellence" can be judged?

Such questions do not represent nit-picking conceptual analysis. If I as a pastoral leader want to see my congregation or community growing and deepening in worship, I must know what worship is and how to assess our progress in it.

GREEK ORIGINS

There are two Greek words in the New Testament that are often translated "worship." One of the words, *latreuo*, means literally "to serve" (Acts 24:14; Phil. 3:3; Rev. 7:15). The other, *proskuneo*, means "to bow in
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respect or submission” (Matt. 2:11; 4:9-10; John 4:20-24; Rev. 7:11). Both words are drawn from the ceremonial of royal courts, where they are used to describe the proper expressions of honor and respect shown to a human king.

This way of speaking is rooted in Old Testament usage. The priests and levites are the special attendants and ministers of the Lord, the king of glory (1 Chron. 23:2-22; Psalm 134:1), and they serve in his "temple," a word which in other contexts is translated "palace." They serve and honor the Lord by presenting him with gifts (sacrifices), proclaiming his praise, and doing his work. They respect and submit to the Lord by bowing, kneeling, and other such postures; by confessing sin and asking forgiveness; and by laying before him their various needs and requests.

As already indicated, neither of these words for worship was exclusively religious in ordinary use. For us, such terms as "worship," "minister to," and "kneel before" are only part of our religious vocabulary. But this was not so in biblical times. People knew what it meant to wait on someone in authority and to honor and fear him (1 Chron. 29:20). Our lack of familiarity in this regard makes it difficult for us to grasp fully the meaning of these biblical terms for worship.

ASPECTS OF WORSHIP
From this biblical background we can see two important features of worship that are often not fully appreciated: worship is both relational and expressive.

As a servant attends to his king, as a son honors his father, so we worship our king, who is the king of kings, our Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

Worship is directed toward Someone. We worship God because of who he is and what he has done for us. We worship him because of the relationship we now have with him in Christ. He loves us, saves us, forgives us, provides for us; we owe him our full loyalty and obedience, we owe him our very lives. In our worship we express the fact that we belong to him fully, that we offer our lives to him without reservation (Rom. 12:1).

This means that our worship is not primarily directed to meeting our needs, producing spiritual feelings, or conveying a particular experience. The right worship of God will affect us deeply, but this is neither its goal nor its orientation. In worship we focus on God rather than on ourselves.

The relational nature of worship has another implication: right worship is founded upon a right relationship with God. This sounds rather elementary. But I have often seen this truth ignored, at considerable loss.

I once visited a Christian institution run by men who genuinely sought to live a dedicated Christian life and who also sought to help others live such a life. In one corner of their building I found a little book shop. On the racks were some good Christian books. However, side by side with these books I noticed many volumes of dubious value—a mixture of Eastern religions, transcendental meditation, and self-help psychology. As I talked with the man who was minding the shop, it became clear to me that these Christian men thought that the key to helping others grow spiritually was instruction in proper spiritual techniques. The techniques they taught focused especially on producing a certain type of experience, a certain "state of consciousness." Thus, by disregarding the central issue of relationship to God, these men were in the regrettable position of marketing spiritual techniques for prayer that could lead people away from loyalty to Christ.

Of course, there is much to learn about Christian worship. There are many helpful practical tools and methods, and, as already mentioned, one of the fruits of their practice should be a heightened awareness of the presence of God. However, the first and most fundamental fact about Christian worship is that it is Christian - it is founded on a relationship with God available to us through our union with Christ in the Holy Spirit, a
relationship possible only because of Christ's incarnate life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection.

Our worship of God expresses our relationship with him. In order to know how to worship him, we need to understand our relationship with him. We must understand who he is—his holiness, his greatness, his glory, his steadfast love and compassion. We must understand how he has redeemed us in Christ, how he now lives in us corporately and individually through the Holy Spirit, making us a new temple for his praise. We need to understand the honor and love that are due to him as our God and savior, the reverence and humility with which we must approach him. Our worship of God flows from these realities.

Therefore the key to better worship in a congregation is not necessarily more teaching on worship but clearer proclamation of who God is and what he has done for us in Christ, and teaching about our response—conversion, repentance, faith, and a deepening of Christian commitment.

**EXPRESSIONS**

Many Christians think of worship as primarily a subjective experience, the goal of worship being to cultivate a certain spiritual or emotional state, to work up feelings of love, gratitude, and awe toward God. A time of worship is evaluated according to whether it succeeds in producing such a condition.

This is not the biblical view of worship. In scripture worship is something expressed, given, shown. Worship displays honor and devotion, respect and submission. The worship of God by his people expresses in words and actions the relationship they have with their king.

The scripture presents a wide range of expressions of worship. Sacrifices were offered, as a kind of material gift to God (Psalm 96:8). Prayer and praise were offered, as a kind of verbal gift to God (Psalm 141:2). There was vocal and instrumental music (Psalms 149, 150). There was shouting the acclamation (Psalm 47:1,5), a custom also found in the courts of Eastern kings.

We see various postures in worship: prostration (Neh. 8:6), kneeling (2 Chron. 6:13), lifting up hands (Psalm 134:2; 2 Chron. 6:12-13), clapping (Psalm 47:1), dancing (2 Sam. 6:14-16; Psalm 149:3). The most common posture was standing (Psalm 134:1), as a servant stood before his king.

The Bible takes pains to emphasize that worship must proceed from a heart that is humble and submitted to God. Mere external actions mean nothing if the underlying attitude and overall way of life are not right (Psalm 51:6-17; Isa. 58:1-12). The heart, however, does not refer to the seat of the emotions but to the basic decision making faculty, what we would call the mind or the will (Heb. 4:12). Worship is meant to express a mind and will that is yielded to God, seeking to serve, honor, and obey him.

Worship does involve a direct encounter with God that is to be experienced (2 Chron. 7:1-3; Acts 4:31; Heb. 6:4-5). Our awareness of God's presence and our attentiveness and responsiveness to his word should increase as our worship deepens. However, this does not mean that in order to worship God we must be experiencing him strongly at the time; not does it mean that worship consists essentially of such an experience. Worship is something we express to God, and though it must come from a rightly disposed heart, it need not always produce or be accompanied by a powerful experience.

**CULTURAL BLOCKS**

Because worship is by nature expressive, right worship requires appropriate, concrete human expressions. Unfortunately, modern Western societies, especially American society, suffer from an impoverishment in the dimensions of human relationships where building blocks for worship are normally found. We are poor in expressing love and honor, fear and respect, rejoicing and mourning.
When we have guests at our homes we lack a strong cultural instinct for honoring them with personal service in a way that would be second nature in a more traditional culture. Those present in a courtroom still rise at the entrance of a judge, but children and adults rarely rise when their parents, grandparents, or pastors enter the room.

Even when our intentions are good, we may find ourselves uncomfortable—or even inept. A friend of mine once told me how his coworkers honored him at his retirement party. Many of those present amused their hearers with narratives of incidents in which my friend had handled himself in a foolish or unconventional manner. To laugh at him was the only way they knew to express their affection and esteem for him.

Because worship is a human expression of our relationship with God, our cultural poverty in expressions of honor and respect restricts our ability to worship. Even Christians who appreciate the types of worship described in the Psalms or in the book of Revelation tend to treat those forms as special religious actions and have lost the sense of how they express a relationship. They may bow or kneel, but because such postures no longer play any role in our human relationships, they tend to think of them as pious acts rather than as natural expressions of relationship with God.

This leads to the conclusion that renewal of corporate worship in the Western world waits on a corresponding renewal of suitable cultural forms of expressing honor, love, hospitality, reverence, submission, rejoicing, and mourning in ordinary life, outside the actual context of worship. A recovery of the cultural language through which we speak in word and act to one another would enlarge our capacity to worship God.

**BIGGER PICTURE**

The fundamental issues in renewal of worship are thus not directly matters of worship. They concern spiritual renewal (proclamation, repentance, conversion, faith, deepening commitment) and an enrichment of our cultural language. Yet these priorities often escape those who are most concerned about worship. The tendency is to focus on worship as an activity in isolation from the participants individual and corporate Christian life.

But it is crucial to see worship as part of the bigger picture. Worship is only one part—albeit a crucial part—of our relationship with God and our life together as his people. No amount of tinkering with the activity of worship can substitute for renewal in these fundamental spiritual and cultural dimensions.

**DRAW FROM EXPERIENCE**

Although we must attend to the broader concerns of conversion, commitment, and cultural modes of expressing honor, we do also have to deal directly with worship itself. What approaches are helpful?

My main recommendation is simply that we should learn from Christian traditions of the past and from various spiritual renewal movements of our own day. Here are examples of the resources we may find:

1. **Jewish tradition.** The roots of Christian tradition extend back into the Jewish way of life practiced by Jesus and the apostles. The Jewish approach to worship had a shaping impact on New Testament teaching and church life.

One of the most prominent features of Jewish worship is its integration into all aspects of life. Sometimes in our concern for the renewal of worship we focus exclusively on weekly church services or prayer meetings. Though the solemn gathering of believers has special importance, our goal should be to build worship into every part of our life, rather than leaving it as an isolated religious act performed once a week.

For instance, many of the most important Jewish customs of worship occur in the home. The sabbath meal is an important spiritual event, complete with ceremonies and prayers. The Passover seder is one of the main
worship events of the year, yet it is conducted in the home rather than in the synagogue. The grace after meals and the lighting of the Chanukah candles are other examples of special family worship customs.

The Jewish approach to blessing (possibly alluded to by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:20), which encourages giving thanks to God throughout the day for his varied gifts, also makes worship a daily rather than a weekly affair. The ecumenical community to which I belong, The Sword of the Spirit, has tried to learn from these customs in order to promote a common way of worship that is integrated into the fabric of daily life.

2. **Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox tradition.** The ancient traditions of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches have much to contribute to the worship of all Christians. These traditions are especially rich in helpful human expressions of worship in solemn settings. A variety of postures are used—kneeling, standing, bowing, prostration—and a reverent bearing is maintained.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox—and Anglican/Episcopal and Lutheran—emphasis on the centrality of the Lord's Supper in worship also has great value for all Christians. This emphasis aptly expresses the fact that all Christian worship is founded on the redeeming work of Jesus and his continuing intercession in the heavenly sanctuary.

3. **Protestant tradition.** The evangelical stress on the public reading of scripture, preaching, and the singing of hymns is also important and has been of great influence on all Christians. Christian worship is a response to what God has done for us and in us, and the reading and proclamation of God's word presents us with that which we need to respond to. The Protestant introduction of hymn singing into the Christian worship service has done much to engage the entire congregation in the act of worship. Many traditional evangelical hymns are especially good models of expressing Christian realities and truths in musical form—for example, the great hymns of Charles Wesley. Like the emphasis on the Lord's Supper in other traditions, hymns and preaching serve to center evangelical worship on the person and work of Christ.

4. **Anabaptist tradition.** Anabaptists (perhaps an unfortunate title, but the most easily recognizable one) stress the intimate connection between worship and common life. The Mennonites, the Hutterites, and similar groupings, such as the Moravians, have always had a strong emphasis on community and on the imitation of Christ. Following Jesus' instruction that one's gift should be left on the altar if a relationship with a brother needs to be made right (Matt. 5:23-24), Anabaptist tradition views right relationships and the life of discipleship as a precondition for corporate worship, and in some ways as a type of worship in itself (see also Ephesians 5:1-2). This is a helpful corrective for many of our modern churches which seek proper worship without a common life and a common discipline.

5. **The Pentecostal-charismatic movement.** This 20th-century movement has much to contribute to the whole Christian church in the area of worship. Rejoicing and celebration characterizes much charismatic worship, and this has been a neglected aspect of worship in other traditions. In fact, expressiveness is one of the most marked features of Pentecostal piety—dancing, singing, jumping, clapping, lifting of hands, kneeling.

Though worship in this movement does not center on experience, it nonetheless presumes a living, experiential relationship with God in which worship is a crucial element. The Pentecostal-charismatic movement has helped many Christians appropriate in their experience what they already believed in their theology. This renewal of the experiential dimension of Christian life can also contribute to the renewal and strengthening of worship.

The charismatic renewal movement also stresses the immediate presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit in worship, and this can center worship on our union with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit—the basic reality that is the foundation of all Christian prayer.
TEACH, MODEL, INSPIRE
As in most other areas of church life, effective worship requires effective leadership. If we have pastoral responsibility for a group of Christians, then we also have responsibility for their common worship.

If we are to lead people into proper worship, then we must teach about worship. We must teach about who God is and how we should relate to him in worship—with honor and devotion, with reverence and submission. We must explain and demonstrate various worship postures, illustrating them from scripture and making clear their purposes.

One pastoral leader I know began leading his family into deeper worship by teaching them from the psalms. He especially focused on Psalm 95, which speaks of God as creator, savior, and shepherd and calls us to sing, make a joyful noise, bow down, and kneel to God. My friend demonstrated each of these expressions for his children. His family worship times improved dramatically as the members of the family understood what God expected of them and why.

As always, we must teach by actions as well as by word. We must model what we teach. Our brothers and sisters can learn how to worship expressively and reverently, with a focus on God himself rather than on themselves, if our own prayers and demeanor reflect what we are seeking to impart to them.

We can also lead people into worship by exhortation and encouragement: we can inspire them to worship. Many of the psalms begin with a fitting summons to worship, such as "O sing to the Lord a new song" (Psalms 96:1; 98:1; 149:1) or "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good" (Psalms 107:1; 118:1; 136:1). As leaders of God's people we should call them to sing to God, to give him thanks, to honor him in a right and fitting manner.

Sometimes correction is also fitting, either corporately or individually. Few pastors think that correction for irreverent behavior is either their responsibility or their right, since worship is viewed as a personal and subjective experience. However, once we understand worship as relational and expressive, a matter of proper honor and reverence, then correction for poorly expressed worship (for instance, hands in pockets, failure to sing, looking around distractedly) seems more evidently a matter of pastoral responsibility.

A prominent part of Christian leadership is to draw out the gifts of others and to enable them to use those gifts for the good of the whole body. Therefore, another way to lead people in worship is to discern and foster spiritual gifts.

In one weekly worship service in my own community, we have time for members to lead out in prayer and praise. Several months ago, those of us leading this service noticed that this participatory period of the service was not going well. We decided to contact those brothers and sisters in whom we discerned a special gift of leading out in prayer and praise, to urge them to take more initiative in using their gifts to inspire and strengthen the whole congregation. Over the following weeks these brothers and sisters exercised their gifts more, and the worship of the body was greatly enriched.

Our active role of leadership in worship should further corporate participation rather than stifle it. Worship services are not performances, pastors are not actors, music groups and choirs are not concert performers, and the worshipping body of Christ is not a band of spectators. Our leadership should have as a goal the calling forth of true and holy worship from the people of God.

SCHOOL OF PRAYER
As we seek to renew and strengthen Christian worship, we should not fail to utilize those inspired words of praise, thanksgiving, confession, and petition given to us in the book of Psalms. The Psalter is a school of
prayer. We can learn how to relate to God in worship by observing and imitating the ways that the psalmists relate to God.

The Psalter is also the Christian prayer book. It provides not only instruction in prayer but also the very words of our prayer. If we want to lead people into deeper worship, then we should lead them to the book of Psalms, teach them its ways, and sing and pray its prayers together.

Of course, we must also learn how to pray the Psalms as they are fulfilled in the Messiah. We are not pre-first-century Jews worshiping in the Jerusalem temple, nor should we be 20th-century antiquarians pretending in prayer to live in a world of the past. We are instead those who have been redeemed by Jesus, the Messiah who fulfilled the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms (Luke 24:44). We are praying in the temple of the Messiah's earthly body, and our worship ascends as a pleasing sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary.

REVERENCE AND AWE

As I stated at the beginning, the Hebrew and Greek words for worship refer to expressions of honor and reverence. New Testament faith proclaims that God has sanctified us in Christ, torn the veil preventing our entry into the Most Holy Place, and brought us as priests and as sons and daughters into his throne room. God is not inaccessible to us; we can now enter his presence with confidence (Heb. 10:19). Nevertheless, the one we stand before is still the creator of the universe, the Holy One of Israel, the Lord of hosts, and we are still exhorted to offer him "acceptable worship, with reverence and awe" (Heb. 12:28).

Reverence does not come naturally to those who have been born and raised in mid-20th-century America. We are most comfortable in casual and informal situations; if a relationship is supposed to be intimate, then we assume it is also relaxed and without rules of decorum. The father-son relationship in biblical times was intimate, but it was not lacking in reverence. Our relationship with God is intimate, but should we enter his throne room in our tattered blue jeans, pull up a chair for ourselves, greet him by his first name, and ask him how he's doing? Of course, we can worship and pray while we are doing anything; but we should not do just anything while we are worshiping and praying.

We need to recover expressed reverence for God. Such expressed reverence is at the very heart of worship. May God be patient with us as we seek to grow in offering him the worship that is worthy of his great honor and glory.
Cardinal Schonborn.
Worshiping Together in the Holy Spirit

by Jim Cavnar

"...We are gathered as a community in prayer. Let us respond to the Lord with joyful praise. Immediately there is a burst of spontaneous prayer from all sides. Nearly everyone is praying out loud."

It is difficult to adequately verbalize the experience of worshiping God, but it can be readily experienced in a prayer meeting. Worship means an explicit turning to God. Our prayer meetings must be God centered if they are to be worshipful; we must have that profound sense that we are gathered not just for ourselves, but for God. We must look to God, recall his nearness, and yield our hearts to his movement. If we allow our minds to wander, we will find it difficult to worship.

The prayer meeting is a time to put aside other concerns and to think of God himself; it gives us the chance to do something that we almost never do turning aside from other concerns, looking to God himself, and then expressing in word and song our appreciation of his greatness, power, love, and might.

Like many others, I had never been able to make much sense of the concept of worship. It was not that the idea was an unfamiliar one: as a child I had learned that Worship was the purpose of the services at church. When I first seriously committed my life to Jesus, I was told that worship and adoration were the most important forms of prayer. Yet Sunday services and my personal prayer seldom seemed to express worship.

Some told me that worship was accomplished by regular attendance at church, by faithfulness to meditative prayer, or charity in daily life, and was not a unique identifiable experience. Others felt that the notion of worship should be abandoned altogether.

When I was first baptized in the Spirit and began to experience prayer in tongues, I had a very distinct sense that the prayer, unintelligible to me, was an act of praise. It was the first time that I had experienced what it was like to worship God. Not very many weeks after I found myself reflecting, "Somehow I feel that for the
first time. I am doing what I was created to do. I feel like the round peg that just got placed in the round hole." I do not imagine that anyone could previously have explained to me the centrality of worship. But when I experienced it, almost no explanation was needed. As the Scriptures say, we indeed have been formed to "live for the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1: 12).

When the leader of a prayer meeting says "Let's worship the Lord," we know that he is speaking about something very definite, something different from the dozens of other activities that make up our Christian life. He is talking about a conscious turning to God and expressing in word and song a heartfelt awe, reverence, thanksgiving, and praise a love of God for his own sake.

Worship during a prayer meeting should be predominant. We are so unused to worship that many cannot continue it for more than a few minutes without feeling "Okay, now let's do something." But worship is something. It ought to be seen as the purpose of the prayer meeting, and not a preliminary exercise to get started. it is a concrete way that we can respond to the words of Jesus: "This is the first and greatest commandment: "that you shall love the Lord your God with all your mind and all your heart and all your strength." Psalm 150 says:

"Praise the Lord
Praise God in his sanctuary.
Praise him for his mighty deeds...
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord."

We should always be aware that this, the joyous praise of the Lord, is at the heart of the prayer meeting. But, in addition to hearts that are turned to the Lord, there are several other elements that are involved in this worship. Without losing sight of the central purpose of the prayer meeting, I would like to elaborate on the various elements that contribute to worship and praise.

Word of Prayer

I suppose I shall never forget the evening that the first group from Notre Dame to be baptized in the Spirit met in the home of Ray Bullard, the president of the local chapter of The Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship. Ray had gathered about twenty men from the area to meet with the new group of Catholic Pentecostals that had called and asked to pray together with him and a few friends.

We unsuspectingly entered Ray's basement and found ourselves surrounded. Once we were all comfortably settled Ray said, "Well, let's begin with a word of prayer." What a shock to us when suddenly everyone in the room simultaneously burst into loud and enthusiastic prayer. I was accustomed to spontaneous prayer but nothing like this. I was about ready to say, "Wait a minute, I can't tell what you're saying," So strange did this kind of prayer seem to us (along with the many other strange things we were to hear that night) that one of those present later remarked, "If this charismatic renewal were merely a human fiction, or even a form of religiosity created out of the wills of men, I really believe it would have crumbled to dust that evening." Far from crumbling to dust, God's Spirit taught us many things about prayer. That evening we began to learn how to join in a "word of prayer."

The word of prayer, unusual as it may seem, has become a hallmark of the charismatic prayer meeting for good reason. This kind of prayer enables a group to pray together in an active, participative way that builds a spirit of unity and praise. If in our meetings we were to pray only silently when we pray as a group, or only used recited prayers, we would be greatly impoverished. When the leader says, "Let's all pray together," how natural it seems that we should do so vocally, in a way that demonstrates the reality of our prayer.
In the word of prayer the object is not to share a prayer with others so that they can understand our prayer and join with it in their minds. Rather, the word of prayer allows for a form of group personal prayer. Each of us prays individually to God in our own words or in tongues, praying aloud in a moderate tone of voice (generally), so that others can hear that we are praying and be built up and encouraged to pray more fervently themselves. In this form of prayer no single voice is supposed to dominate. Rather, the voices ought to blend together in volume so that one’s individual prayer becomes part of the whole prayer of the community.

The word of prayer should not be allowed to become mechanical. Each one ought to sincerely intend the prayer that he makes. One must bear in mind that the measure of the sincerity of our prayer is not emotion or feeling, it is intention. Even on occasions when one finds it difficult to pray or finds himself unenthusiastic about praying he can pray sincerely, meaning the words of the prayer, and keeping before his eyes the purpose of worship it is for God, not for us.

**Shared Prayer**

Shared prayer, as the name implies, is the prayer of one person made aloud while others listen and join themselves to the prayer. A priest offering the collect at Mass or a minister speaking out a prayer at the Sunday service, is offering a shared prayer. In meetings, shared prayer is usually spontaneous. The Holy Spirit frequently inspires shared prayer, and it can have a powerful effect upon the whole meeting. A psalm when read sincerely as a prayer can effectively build the worship of the meeting, too. The Holy Spirit provides appropriate occasions for shared prayer. A period of silence or quiet prayer together is usually the most opportune time. When everyone is praying together at any volume, trying to shout over the word of prayer does not contribute to the peace or sense of order in the meeting. We can wait, for the Spirit will give the opening.

In our meetings in the last year there has developed a form of shared prayer that has been especially effective as an instrument of worship. Frequently people will begin to praise the Lord in a series of short acclamations. "You are the creator," one will say. "We praise you, the Lord of glory," another will pray. And then another, "Jesus, you are the good shepherd." Sometimes these acclamations of praise will come one after another for several minutes, resulting in a beautiful litany of praise.

**Silent Prayer**

There are times too in a prayer meeting when silence is indeed a way of worship. Often, after a period of vigorous praise and song, there will suddenly be a strong silence in which one feels the presence and holiness of God. Such a silence is alive, so different from the dead silence of lifeless worship. At such moments, silence is the expression of our awe and reverence for God's holiness and is as filled with the presence of the Spirit as singing in tongues. There will be such special moments in a prayer meeting and we should not be afraid of them, but silence does not seem to be the primary mode of participation in the prayer meeting. The prayer meeting is not really for group meditation in silence nor for personal prayer. The prayer meeting’s genius is precisely in its participative and expressive character.

**Singing**

Singing is one Of the most effective means of expressing community worship. Our meetings invariably begin with song, and for good reason: music and song immediately unite us in prayer, lifting our spirits and opening us to the working of God.

Many of us have experienced moments in our prayer meetings when the singing was unified as one voice and
the Spirit of the Lord was so powerfully present that we were overwhelmed. We have experienced it perhaps with a song or during a time of singing in tongues. But when we have worshiped the Lord with unity of Spirit and oneness of voice, something has happened and the Holy Spirit has worked deep within us.

Singing with one spirit means yielding to the Holy Spirit in our singing of a song. The main emphasis is on turning to the Lord in song rather than on producing musical excellence. If the Holy Spirit is to form us as he works in each particular song, we must be sensitive to the spirit of the song. Some songs are quiet and worshipful; others are lively and exciting. We should yield to the Spirit of joy, peace, worship, or praise which is appropriate to that song.

Singing can be so much fun that we sometimes get carried away with it. Music can get in the way of what the Lord is doing. Often, a song intrudes on the period of quiet reflection after a prophecy, teaching or exhortation. We sometimes tend to become uncomfortable with any lull in the prayer meeting. We should be wary of this tendency, for moments of silence are frequently from the Lord.

Singing with one Spirit also means singing in a spirit of love for our brothers. St. Paul says in Romans 15:1-2:

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him.

This ought to be true in our singing too. Many people, especially those with good voices, often sing as loud as they can to hear themselves. But singing in unity means our voices should be united to the one voice of the body. Our voice should blend with the voices of our brothers. Our ear should be attuned, not to our own voice to see how we are doing, but to the one voice which the Lord is forming among our brothers and sisters. If you are singing so loud that you can hear yourself, you are probably singing too loud. Remember that we are not singing to please ourselves.

On the other hand, singing in unity may mean that some people should sing louder. Many people are afraid to sing at all because they feel that they do not have a good voice or are afraid that they might not be on pitch. For those afraid to sing, love means dying to our fears and lifting our voice in song. If we are attuned to the one voice the Lord is forming in the group, the Lord will join our poor voice to it. I have met many people who thought they could not sing until they began to sing to the Lord in their prayer meetings. Many of these people not only sing, but even start songs. Some people I know say they still cannot sing at all except at a prayer meeting. Then, something happens. The Lord gives them the ability to sing far beyond their natural talent.

The music of a prayer group or community begins to be formed in the proper selection of the songs. When we first heard some of the traditional Pentecostal choruses, we could not imagine ourselves singing such songs. But we have since discovered what a valuable help such choruses are. Their simplicity seems especially suited to the periods of worship in a prayer meeting. Anyone can start them, and everyone can learn them. To this repertoire of choruses, most groups have added many other songs of worship, usually putting together a song sheet so that everyone can sing. If the song sheet is to be used mainly at prayer meetings, only songs appropriate for prayer meetings, especially songs of worship or praise, should be included.

One frequent problem, however, with the music of the pentecostal movement is sentimentality. Sentimental songs, those which express excessive or even false emotion, do not support an emotionally healthy relationship with the Lord. They also frequently "turn off" new people who come to a prayer meeting, especially men. Sentimentality often depends on the manner of singing. Some groups sing a song in a healthy, genuine way while another group will distort the song so that it emerges as excessively sentimental. To avoid sentimentality, remain faithful to the spirit of the song.
Other songs are simply weak or empty from a spiritual point of view. Many songs commonly sung in religious settings have trite or meaningless lyrics. Others have confused and unsingable melodies. Some songs are not explicitly Christian. Such songs simply do not support the prayer of the community; they leave the community feeling distracted or aimless. We can thank the Lord for bringing so much strong and expressive music in the charismatic renewal. We can continue to expect him to provide the kind of songs we need.

**Singing in the Spirit**

Singing in the Spirit is one of the most beautiful ways of worshiping the Lord. In this kind of prayer each person sings to the Lord in tongues (or English) and in a free melody as the Holy Spirit leads him. The many songs blend together in beautiful harmony. Sometimes the singing in the Spirit can be very soft and peaceful, but at other times very loud and powerful. Singing in the Spirit should be begun when we feel the Lord leading us, rather than just when we feel inclined to. Because it is part of the worship of the meeting, we can count on the Holy Spirit to lead us to begin at the appropriate times.

When the singing in the Spirit begins, each one should hesitate a moment before joining in. Each should look to the Lord and yield his own spirit to the one Holy Spirit to lead him into the song. Each voice should blend with the other voices. (It happens naturally when each one is looking to the Lord and listening to the song which the Spirit is forming.) We can begin to sing softly, letting the Spirit blend us with the song of the community. But we must also step out in faith when singing in the Spirit, having the courage to trust that God will help us, and begin to sing with the expectation that God will form our song. Singing in the Spirit is a high point of expressive worship. It brings us all together to respond actively to the Lord in a way that unites us. In fact, it is something of a barometer of the unity in a prayer meeting the greater the unity, the more harmonious and unified the singing in the Spirit.

Whether in silence or singing, praying aloud or singing in tongues, the most important thing we should remember is that we are worshiping the Lord. We are keeping our minds and hearts on him. He is worthy of our praise!

"Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his exceeding greatness!
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!" (Psalm 150)
Worshiping God with Reverence and Awe
by Carlos Mantica

A man or woman will usually relate to God according to the vision he or she has of God. Those of us who have met God through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, our eldest Brother, have learned to see him as a close, friendly God, a personal God who has united himself with our humanity. We have learned to hold familiar conversation in a brother-to-brother intimacy with Christ who is both God and man. Coming to know God in a personal way was a necessary step for many of us who previously had the vision of an impersonal God who was very distant from us. But this new understanding of a personal relationship with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ is just the first step in understanding how God wants to bring this relationship to a deeper level.

Jesus Christ is Lord
The Lord Jesus Christ is truly our brother and friend, but he is also much more. When the Spirit of God came upon us, in what we have called being "baptized in the Holy Spirit," he showed us that Jesus who suffered and died for us, and was buried and raised from the dead, has now been glorified by the Father and established as Lord of heaven and earth. Through the gift of the Spirit we know and experience the glorified and risen Christ as our Lord. We now experience what the Apostle Paul wrote to the early Christians, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Christ is the Lord who is worthy of all glory, and in whose presence every knee should bow in heaven and on earth (Philippians 2:10-11). We don't need anyone one to tell us this truth, since the Holy Spirit witnesses with
our spirit the reality of the glorified Christ who reigns over all and who now lives in us. So, now, through the working of the Holy Spirit within us, our natural impulse is to proclaim out loud the glory and praise of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now in our relationship with Christ we can naturally proceed from conversation with Christ to adoration, from trust to reverence, from love to respect. One does not hinder the other. Christ continues to be everything he had already been for us before we were "baptized in the Spirit" - our Savior, brother, and friend, but now we recognize that he is much more as well.

**Encountering God's glory and majesty**

Several years ago, during a time of worship at an international conference, the Lord gave me a vision of his glory. (Those of you who think these things are reserved to saints may now laugh.) In the vision I saw an immense crowd with their arms lifted in praise and worship towards a place located on the left side of my visual field. Then I turned my eyes to the place the crowd were looking at, and I saw the Hall of the Heavenly Throne. Behind the Throne was a company of angels - unlike anything I had ever seen before. I once had seen some enormous bronze angels which guarded the entrance to a monument in Spain. But now those gigantic statues looked very tiny, like Christmas ornaments in the shape of little angels, in comparison with the power, glory, and beauty of the living angels I saws standing before the Throne of God. Their whole being radiated strength, dignity, and manly braveness that only contrasted the transparency and peace in their eyes.
On the throne, naked as in his Resurrection, sat Jesus Christ with an iron scepter in his right hand. His majesty was indescribable.

I was then able to grasp a little of what Paul says in 2 Corinthians:

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

I know that this vision then made its mark on my way of relating to Jesus Christ.

More or less at the end of 1974 or the beginning of 1975, in our charismatic prayer groups, we began to experience the presence of God the Father. In all of those groups, with no exception, those who were praying would fall to the ground and prostrate themselves, their faces on the ground, without being able to explain how or at what moment this had happened. All we know is that the presence of the Father is awesome.

This is what God told Moses from the burning bush:

“Do not come near, put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” ...And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:5-6)

When Moses implored God, “Show me your face”, God replied:

I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name ‘The
At Sinai, the sole presence of God filled the whole people of Israel with terror, while they stayed at a distance.

To Elijah, God said:

“Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle. (1 Kings 19:11-13)

This is Isaiah’s description of his encounter with the Lord:

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!’” (Isaiah 6:1-5)

Ezekiel recalls it this way:

I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking. (Ezekiel 1:27-28)

None of these prophets saw God. These were merely glimpses of his glory; yet these simple servants of God were not able to resist his presence. I invite you to read the Book of Job once again. He who thought he had no sin and dared to appear before God as a righteous man, was finally able to understand his own smallness and his place before God, when God brought him face to face with his greatness and majesty.

In Revelation we see how the saints and angels relate to God. They, too, are overwhelmed by his glory, and they do not cease to proclaim his holiness, and to sing praises to God. That is our call as well - to worship and glorify God, not only now in this present life, but also for all ages without end.
Worshiping God with reverence and awe

Whenever God invites his people to draw nearer to his presence, he also expects them to relate to him in a manner worthy of his glory and greatness. Even when he embraces us with his tender love and kindness, there is still something in his glory and majesty that compels us to give him adoration, and to approach him with awe and reverence. We cannot continue to relate to him simply as we might have done in the past - simply as a benefactor who gives us good things when we ask for his help.

Whenever we gather to worship God together with other Christians, and when we each seek him alone in our private prayer, he wants us to acknowledge him both as a tender and merciful Father and as the Lord and Ruler of the universe. That is why we must always love him with gratitude, reverence, and awe. This attitude of reverence is necessary if we want to enter more deeply into his presence and to experience his immediacy.

Perhaps we might envy those who have seen God in a vision or who have experienced his presence and power the way Moses and the prophets experienced it. However, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us something of much greater significance that ought to change our attitude towards God and lead us to an understanding of our dignity in Christ and the great thing he is doing among us as his people.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews contrasts the experience of Moses and the Israelites with the experience God wants us to know and understand now, because of what Christ has accomplished for us:

For you have not come [as the Israelites did] to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, ‘If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.’ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood... (Hebrews 12:18-24)
In Christ we have direct access to God's throne in heaven

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we do not yet have a clear notion of what takes place when we gather to worship the Lord together. We who have been enrolled in heaven as God’s children (that is, we who have a “birth certificate” in the files of heaven, since the day we were born again from on high) join the triumphant Church of those who went before us in the joy of seeing Christ face to face, that is, we join our departed brothers and sisters, our parents, the saints, and myriad’s of angels, in order to appear together in the presence of God and to praise him.

If we fail to worship God with reverence and awe, or worship in an irreverant way, then we fail to recognize whose presence we are in - the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth. That is why the author of the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us of the experience of the Israelites when they came to the mountain of God in the wilderness. God did not allow them to come near the mountain because they could not endure his presence and live. But now that Christ has come and has redeemed us with his blood, and has torn open the veil of the Holy of Holies that separated the people from God's presence, we have free access through Christ to draw near the throne of grace and to enter God's presence with confidence.

This new reality of how Christ has made it possible for us to enter into God's presence will not make any sense for those who do not yet know God or who do not understand the fullness of his identity. But for those who do understand what Christ has done for us and how he wants us to approach the throne of mercy in heaven, let us examine what the Scriptures teach us about relating to God is a more mature way as his sons and daughters.

How, then, does Scripture describe what our relationship to God should be like? First, it should be a personal relationship, because God is a personal being and not a cosmic force; and that personal being also regards us as persons, with that personal love with which we regard each of our children, and not the way one can look at the sand of the sea, even if that sand had emerged from our hands. Yet it is not properly a “man-to-man” relationship, a relationship between equals, even though Christ is a man and that man is our brother. In fact, he is infinitely greater than my brother the President, or my brother the Pope, or my brother the Emperor – people whom we would not treat as equals anyway.

Four images - types of relationships

When God, in Scripture, instructs on the way he wants us to relate to him, he normally uses one of the following four images. He wants our relationship to him to be similar to:

1. That of a son to his father.
2. That of a soldier to his officer.
3. That of a servant to his master.
4. That of a subject to his king.

Personally, I think it ought to be similar to all of those at once. It’s like the relationship I would have to my father if he were at once my king, my officer and my master, because God is all of those things at once, and I don’t know how we could separate them.

He is my Father but he is also my Master and my Lord. And this is where our joy resides – in having a Master and being servants of a Lord who, nevertheless, regards us and cares for us with the love of a Father, and who is also the King of all that exists; in being aware that God is a personal being, who has dreamed of me from eternity, who loves me and therefore wants by happiness, and who is omnipotent.
I also believe that it is when we go alternatively from one of these images to another, so that one day we only look at God one way and the next day only in that other way, that we lose our right relationship to him. That is, when we are dirty and come to our King, or we are defeated and come to our Officer, but we forget that at that time he regards us with the love and understanding of a Father. Or when we come, like spoiled children, to the Father who forbids or commands us to do something, forgetting that he is also our Officer. Or when he asks us something or asks us everything, and we start whining, because we forget that we belong to him and that he is the Master and Lord of all of that is ours and of ourselves.

I know it’s difficult to grasp all of these images because he transcends all of them. It is difficult to explain how to relate to him because there is no other relationship in the world that will actually be the same. But there is one thing I know we must understand: God is not our comrade or partner, our buddy, our sidekick or accomplice. He and his ways, his power, his authority and his glory, his commands, his essence, his goodness, his tenderness, his justice and his holiness are as far above me as heaven is above the earth. It was he who came to man, it was he who came to me in order to save me, and it was he who established a covenant and a relationship with me. And this covenant is the covenant between omnipotence and impotence, between grace and sin, not a covenant or a relationship between equals.

In order to understand at least a little better the images God uses for explaining his relationship to us, I would like to take a look into each of them individually. We are going to begin with the father-son relationship.

Paul says in Romans 8:14:

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ...When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness...”

For a Jew in the times of Jesus, a son is not the same as a young child. In modern society, sons and daughters par excellence are young children. When we approach the age of 18, we feel we are ceasing to be sons or daughters, and the thing we most long for is for our parents to stop being parents or acting as such. But in Jesus’ time, a son par excellence was an adult son, who was able to occupy his father’s position. The father-son relationship was, in this sense, a relationship between two adults.

A stanza of Psalm 127 illustrates this kind of relationship:

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:4-5)

This is not the image of Daddy playing Indians and cowboys with his kids in the backyard. Rather, this is the image of a father-chief, surrounded by manly sons who defend him and who are willing to fight for him and for his interests. These sons the father regards as a blessing, in contrast to a modern father who thinks it’s stupid to spend time forming his children, and who can’t wait to see them leave the home.

For the Jewish mentality, sons are a continuation and an extension of their father: in his reputation, which they must protect as much as their own; in his authority, which they must be able to use in representing him; in his character, being themselves just like their father, having his own way of being, of feeling, of acting; in his responsibility, caring for their father’s business (at twelve years old, the young Jesus who was lost in the temple was already aware of this responsibility); and in his mission, by carrying out and completing their
father’s work.

A father lives and is perpetuated in his sons. Since we are God’s sons, we say that a Christian is a man who has been chosen by Christ, in order to be like Christ, and incorporated and enabled by Christ in order to complete Christ’s mission in the world, which is the mission that his Father entrusted him with.

This continuation of the Father is not merely biological but of character. We are supposed to be like him. Jesus said to the Jews, in so many words: “You think you are sons of Abraham, but in fact you are sons of Satan” (cf. John 8:39-44). He tells them this because they no longer reflect the faith of their father Abraham; they do not look like him at all.

All of this is what we are supposed to be for our Father, and it is thus that the Father wants us to relate to him. Not like young children who will hide or curl up in their daddy’s knees, but like adult sons, brave, responsible, respectful, obedient, who by their own way of being are looking to their father’s business, representing him and making use of his authority.

**Officer-soldier relationship**

Let’s now examine the officer-soldier relationship. We read in Ephesians 6:10-11: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” And then he goes on to describe the armor. To Timothy he says: “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3).

We are supposed to be Christ’s soldiers, but some of our number are so irresponsible that they haven’t even realized that we are at war, in a war that began in heaven before the creation of the world, but which has been moved to earth. We are involved in that war even if we don’t want, and not wanting to fight will not only not protect you from anything, but will make your defeat absolutely certain. Only those who fight under Christ’s banner will survive the devil’s attacks.

But our condition as soldiers must also reflect itself in our daily lives. When you are drafted by the army, your life changes radically. You are now subject to certain rules and to an authority. You are under military discipline. Your personal preferences are subordinated to the army’s needs. Sometimes you won’t be able to take a nap or go where you would have liked to go, or do what you would liked to do, but you will do what your officer says and go where you are sent or where your officer needs you. It’s not the right time to say, “Daddy, I’m tired, let me curl up in your arms,” as you used to do when you were a young kid. It’s time to say: “Heavenly Headquarters, give your orders.”

When you are at war, the safest place to be is with your officer in the battlefield, and well armed. Your safety resides in obeying him. If an army does not obey its commander, having been trained very well will be no use. If you desert, your penalty will be court-martial and dishonor.

It may be that all of this sounds too drastic to you. But that’s only because you are not aware that we Christians, by the very fact that we are Christians, are engaged in total war against the forces of evil, and that the commander of those forces does not sleep, but prowls around like a roaring lion. If we are in a war and if we have been recruited by Christ, we must be willing to live as soldiers. This means we will do whatever he commands us to do, and not those things which are of our personal liking.
But it also means that we will always try to act as a body and to remain together with our battalion. A lonely soldier is a dead man, and that is a well-known fact for those of us who once attempted to live our Christianity by ourselves or to engage in combat as snipers.

But a lonely soldier is not just an idiot, he’s a dangerous fellow for those of his own side. He’s the one others will need to go rescuing. He’s the most likely to be captured. He’s the one who, because he acts outside all orders or plans, can spoil everything. If you are isolated, you are already in danger, and you are a danger for everyone else.

**Master-servant relationship**

Let’s now refer to the master-servant relationship. In Romans 6:17-23 St. Paul reminds us that we have been freed from slavery to sin, but we have merely shifted masters, since we now belong to Christ. He says in verse 19: “For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.”

In order to fully understand certain things in Scripture, it is often necessary to first understand how things worked in the times when the Bible was written. In the times of Jesus, you were either a slave or a free man. And any person could become a slave at any time, for various reasons – because your country was attacked and defeated and the people were led to slavery, but also for more daily reasons such as not being able to pay a debt, as in the case of that man in the parable who owed ten thousand talents. Thus, a person could be sold with his whole family until the debt was paid for.

We are well aware that we have a debt to Christ which we cannot pay. We also know that the word “redemption” is merely a commercial term, meaning “ransom”. Thus, Christ redeemed us with his blood, the same way you redeem a pledge at a pawnshop. Christ paid our debt with his blood, he bought our IOU’s – but not in order for us to be absolutely free, but, as Paul says, that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for him who died and was raised for us (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:15). That’s why he is our Lord, our Master.

Nevertheless, a slave or servant would not go around bearing chains all the time, nor would he spend the whole day cutting rocks the way we see it in motion pictures. A servant would often have a position of confidence, and sometimes could be a tutor for a prince, or even a minister of Pharaoh, as in the case of Joseph. I think this is our situation, since God has placed enormous responsibilities in our hands.

A servant’s fortune came from and depended on his owner’s wealth. So you could be very rich and still be a servant. That’s what Paul says about us: “All things are yours... and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 Corinthians 3:21-22).

But above all these things, and whatever the particular situation or position of a servant could be, all servants had one thing in common: they had to do always and first of all – even above the work commended to them – the will of their master. That’s why I always say that the important thing is not doing much or little, doing big or small things – the important thing is always doing God’s will. If Pharaoh says, “Joseph, go and do this errand for me,” Joseph will not reply, “I’m sorry, Mr. Pharaoh, but I’m very busy working as your Prime Minister.” Joseph must go, because before being the Prime Minister he is Pharaoh’s servant.

Joseph was a great man under Pharaoh. And we are greater than Joseph under the King of the Universe. Jesus goes to the point of saying about us that even the smallest one in his Kingdom is greater than John the Baptist,
whom he called the greatest born of a woman. But our greatness comes from being servants of the King in the Kingdom of God.

That is why, like the humblest of his servants, we owe the Lord honor, respect and obedience, and we renounce ourselves and any personal preference in order to do always and above all the will of God.

**Subjects of the king**

Let us now see what it meant to be subjects of a king. David, who was a king, says in Psalm 99:1-3:

> The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise thy great and terrible name! Holy is he!

For us it is difficult to understand what a king is, because the few kings that remain today are very unlike the concept of a king in the Bible. A king today is a far-away individual, occupied in his own things and separated from his people, and he will only appear in great solemn events. The one who actually governs is the Prime Minister.

But in Scripture, the model of a king is that of someone who served his people, and he did this in two very concrete ways.

First, he waged war against the enemies of his people, and he would lead his army himself. As we know, in the time of the Judges there was no king in Israel. Yahweh, the Lord of Hosts, was their only King, and he was the one who personally waged war on behalf of his people. That is the constant line in the whole Old Testament – the witness of a King who fights for his people. Samuel grudgingly anointed Saul, who was the first king of Israel.

The second function of the king was to do justice. He would solve conflicts, give sentence to condemn the wicked and to clear the innocent, and keep order in the midst of his people.

The people, in turn, corresponded to their king by showing him honor and respect, obeying his laws and serving him. Subjects would offer themselves in his service for a given time.

The Lord is our King, and he knows his office. David, who was also a king and who knew his duties, then dares to say to his King in Psalm 35:

> Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me! Take hold of shield and buckler, and rise for my help! Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers! Say to my soul, ‘I am your deliverance!’

Joshua does likewise when he enters the promised land in order to conquer it. He expects the Lord to wage war against his enemies. That’s the same thing we ought to expect.

Christians today often trust too much in their own strength, neglecting the fact that our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the hosts of the enemy, and that the enemy’s power is much stronger than ours. We can conquer only if God is with us, heading and leading the battle, and if we fight with his weapons.
I often insist that it’s not a matter of us fighting with God’s help, which would amount to making God our assistant, but of helping God in his warfare. Our slogan is, Christ and me are the overwhelming majority. If we place ourselves first, me and Christ, we are like a zero on the left of the number, which is worth nothing. But if we place ourselves after him, at his right hand, the more zeros we write, our worth will increase.

Because he is the King, he deserves all our honor and respect, and all our obedience. Because he is the King, the Lord judges us. “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God,” as Paul reminds us in Romans 14:10. As a judge he is slow to anger, but he will not leave the guilty unpunished. We must expect his judgment, remembering that judgment does not just mean punishment of the guilty, but also acquittal of the innocent.

And, once again, we must remember that in our four-fold relationship to him, as servants, subjects and soldiers, we are also sons and daughters of him who will judge us, and therefore we can also trust in his infinite justice and mercy.

> See other Living Bulwark articles by Carlos Mantica

This article is adapted from the book, *From Egghead to Birdhood (hatch or rot as a Christian)*, (c) copyright 2001 Carlos Mantica.

Carlos Mantica is a founder of The City of God community (La Cuidad de Dios) in Managua, Nicaragua, and a founding leader of the Sword of the Spirit. He served as president of the Sword of the Spirit between 1991 and 1995.
I grew up with lots of labels; there were racial, religious, political, geographic and all kinds of labels and stereotypes. It has taken me awhile to grow past trusting labels that have led to a lot of stereotypes. Early on, I even labeled myself as not only Christian, but pre-millennial dispensational Southern Baptist from Alabama. Almost every word in that sentence is a label and stereotype!

Something happened to me in 1964; I received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and that put me in another group, “Charismatics.” That too has become a label and is often stereotyped. But that grouping led me to meet people who did not fit my previous labels. Over the years, I have realized that people neither fit all of their labels nor do they like them. People want to be known for who they really are and so do I. Most of us have worn some uncomfortable labels and found them inadequate. We are more than whatever group with which we identify.

Labels and categories may be useful at times but they are often inaccurate and even dangerous. They can blind us to the truth about a person, create conflict … they have even created violence and wars. “Don’t call me a __________!" That is the response to some labels or “That is not what or who I am!” Categories can and do create barriers.

It is my opinion that while labels are still prevalent, they are losing their value. Knowing someone personally or knowing for ourselves is becoming more and more the accepted norm. We have much more access to information and people than we did just a few years ago. Society is going through some amazing changes that
seem to be producing a measure of chaos; some of it is dangerous if we do not know our own foundation.

**Cultural changes and digitalization**
I attribute much of the changes that are taking place in our culture to digitalization. Advances in technology always affect society. The printing press is a prime example as is the revolution in transportation. Each change seems to produce more information, interaction, speed, and flexibility.

The digital revolution has accelerated all of the above. I am not an expert on this, but I use it all the time—so do you. “Digital” is the new way to store and communicate data and information; it is highly mobile and flexible. Digits are numbers. For instance a clock tells us the time by numbers rather than with hour or minute hands (analog). Cameras are now digital rather than the old method of capturing an image on film.

The digital method has become the motor for all kinds of information and communication. Because it is capable of storing so much data and transmitting it more rapidly and clearly, it has changed how almost everything works from our phone to our car. I can use my cell phone to access any information or contact any person. My library is now sadly almost obsolete.

Digitalization has done something else. It has empowered the individual in unimaginable ways, for good or bad. Along with our technology, we become more mobile, able to collaborate, able to move rapidly, and be more informed. “Empowered” is the word. But to do what? Never before has it been more important to know the truth; to know our own core character, beliefs, and purpose in life. Because we have access to so much that may be true or false, the ability to discern the difference is critical!

**Truth**
Have you ever heard of someone who took a medicine and later it was pulled from the market because someone or numerous people died? Have you known of someone who received bad advice and got a bad result? Many more people die from bad ideas than any other reason. Yet, bad medicine, bad advice, and evil ideas are still out there to be consumed. Knowing the truth is a precious ability.

Truth has been the quest of theologians, philosophers, scientists, economists, and other seekers for millennia. “What is truth?” That was the question that Pontius Pilate asked Jesus as Jesus stood before him on trial.

Jesus had just said that He had come into the world to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37-38). Jesus had said a lot about the truth—that He is the truth; that knowing the truth would set us free (John 14:6; John 8:31-32). He said that His truth (Gospel) would go into all the world (Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus’ mission was to create a new race of people who would be born of Spirit and truth (John 3:1-8; John 4:21-24). Knowing Him in the Spirit would set us free from destructive error.

**How can we know the truth?**
So how can we know truth? Truth is not a subjective feeling. Often people feel good about a lie. Truth exists outside of us. We can see it in creation, it is tangible; it is objective. Truth can be verified as fact. Our legal system is based on facts. Theologically, we believe that Jesus rose again after crucifixion. The apostle Paul did not “feel” that it was true; he said that over 500 people saw Jesus at one time (see 1 Corinthians 15:6).

If something is true, the results can be replicated. It works no matter who says it or uses it. For instance, two plus two equals four. That is an objective fact which can be demonstrated and replicated by anyone, anywhere. No one owns it. Gravity is not the province of a particular group of people. It belongs to no nation or denomination. It works for everyone everywhere and penetrates cultures.
I believe that the Gospel of Jesus is true; it can be verified, demonstrated, and replicated anywhere in the world. Wherever, and by whomever it has been received, it produces morality and liberty. It is for everyone to accept or reject. When rejected, bad things happen. There is plenty of history to demonstrate that. For instance, Pilate and Jewish leaders rejected the truth that day when Jesus was on trial. They chose Barabbas, a thief, to be released. On the way to the Cross, Jesus said, “Don’t weep for me, weep for your children.” History amply demonstrates the truth of what He said. The Romans made a choice to crucify Him. It was a terrible choice.

The Jewish leaders were locked into a category: “We are Abraham’s descendants, we have never been slaves of anyone.” Reality was that they even at that moment were enslaved by Rome. The labels that everyone carried blinded and destroyed them. They are certainly not alone in their ultimate sorrow. Think about the fruit of atheism in Russia or Nazism in Germany. Freedom comes through the Gospel; tyranny and slavery come through lies and deception.

**So what is the problem?**

It should be simple: just seek, find, and believe the truth; then we can be free. But there is a problem; truth is expensive! Jesus was crucified, the apostles were martyred. All of our freedoms have been secured by blood and treasure.

Remember that word “witness.” Jesus stated that He came to be witness to the truth. He told the apostles that they would be witnesses unto Him in all the world. The word for witness comes from the same word that is translated “martyr.” Over and over, Jesus warned of persecution and all manner of evil would be said against them (see Matthew 5:11, Matthew 10:22; John 15:21; John 16:1-4). History proved Him right. What Jesus’ Cross and the subsequent persecution of believers tells us is that truth is both very costly and very precious. Those who secure it are penalized long before they are idealized.

I grew up hearing the names of the apostles, as well as Justin Martyr, Polycarp, William Tyndale, John Wycliffe, and many others. Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Jim Elliot are more recent additions to the list. Why were so many persecuted or martyred for the Gospel? It is because there is an evil enemy and he hates truth; he is the deceiver. When we become casual about truth, we become unworthy of it, unworthy of the Lord, and of the apostles.

**The apostolic task**

I often go into our backyard to look at the plants. It is surprising how unwanted weeds or vines grow right up in a wanted shrub. The alien plant often imitates the desired one in the way it presents itself. Left alone, the good plant can be choked out by the alien deceiver. I hate weeds!

The apostles were sent forth with the Gospel to plant churches in truth and tend them in order to preserve the truth of Christ. Lately, I have been reading the three letters from John the apostle and the letter of Jude. These letters give us a glimpse of how vigilant the apostles were to preserve the truth and how hostile they were to deception. The Church was to be a citadel of truth and a light in the cultures of darkness. Jude says, “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary for you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints for certain men have crept in unnoticed who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 3 and 4; see also Galatians 1:1-24).
I believe John and Jude are typical of how seriously all of the apostles took the Gospel and truth itself. The gospel is not a “one note piano”; it is “all that Jesus began both to do and to teach” (see Acts 1:1). That was how they viewed their task without regard for their lives; they loved the truth.

**Our task**

We have received the greatest legacy of all the legacies ever left to generations. We have received the Gospel of Jesus Christ purchased by His blood and faithfully transmitted by martyrs. Those who translated the Gospel were often killed. Those who smuggled copies of the Bible were jailed, beaten, and threatened. We have inherited liberty from those imprisoned; received it freely from those who found it costly.

We need to grow some backbone. Our culture, like others, is being destroyed by lies that have never worked. Thorns have grown in untended gardens, children, churches, schools, and most institutions. But we cannot win with truth alone, we must speak it in love. Truth without love can only condemn. Remember, Jesus wept over Jerusalem. In spite of it all, He loved and loves it. In fact, John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” He came not to condemn but save. The Cross was, and is, the beginning of breaking down of all cultural categories. He broke the barrier between God and us, between us and others.

We have the truth; we have amazing tools to tell it. The question is, what will we do with it? Shall we embrace it with our lives and tell it through our lives? Shall we confront the deception that grows in our fallen world? Will we sit passively and soon weep for our children? That day has arrived already for too many. I pray that we will not put truth on trial as it actually is trying us. *Seek it, find it, believe it, live it, tell it.* If we have failed the truth as we all have—repent of that. We can be grateful for amazing grace. True gratitude is to tell someone else what truth and freedom mean to us.

In Him,

Charles Simpson

Rediscovering the Truth and Living By It

by Servais Pincaers

Rediscovering the Truth

A challenging task faces us today: to get in touch with our natural desire for truth and to restore to the word "truth" its pristine force. Under the influence of nominalism, truth in philosophy has become abstract and conceptual; in the sciences, depersonalized and constricted. We have confused it with the ideas, formulas, and words we use to express it, and which we think encapsulate it. We are left with mere reflections and imitations.

This is extremely regrettable, especially in ethics. Since it is ordered to action, ethics cannot exist or function if it brackets the human subject, the person who acts. The human dimension of moral truth must therefore be retrieved.

Through personal experience we once more see the principal intellectual virtues as human qualities needed for our grasp and enjoyment of truth. Such are wisdom, the capacity for universal, synthetic judgment; understanding, the ability to penetrate to the heart of things; and knowledge, the power of comprehension and discovery in the various fields of study.

The ethicist, and everyone else as well, will have a special interest in the virtue of prudence, which cries out for rediscovery perhaps more than any other. Prudence is a quality, a perfection of the practical reason and the will together; it combines a penetrating discernment, sharpened by active experience, with the decisiveness of the courageous, disciplined person.

When faith intervenes, these virtues receive a new dimension, something like an instinct for divine truth,
enhanced by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which perfects the intellectual gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel.

**Rights and Duties in Regard to Truth**

The inclination to truth lays the natural foundation for our right to receive all we need in developing our minds - instruction, provided by our family or society. Corresponding to this right is our basic responsibility to seek the truth and to cultivate our minds, particularly in the realm of ethics, which concerns people more directly. The obligation to seek the truth is an interior one. It is one aspect of our desire for truth and shows its claim on us. Part of the necessary "discipline" needed if the virtues culminating in prudence are to be formed within us, it requires us to learn moral precepts, to consider carefully the circumstances of our actions, and to maintain our understanding and love of truth. We might wonder whether, over recent centuries, the development of a love for truth and knowledge has been neglected. Perhaps we have been satisfied with mere information on the text and tenor of the law.

As we saw with regard to our sense of the good, our inclination to truth carries us beyond the question of rights and responsibilities to a steady progress in our knowledge of the truth, particularly at the moral and spiritual level. Concern for this should be stronger than ever among Christians and in theology, under the impulse of faith, which seeks to comprehend the object of its love. The Augustinian formula "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quaerens intellectum*) is at the origin of sacred science. This progress does not consist so much in the accumulation of learning and information as in the deepening of fundamental truths and in the enrichment and maturation of the mind, which give it its power and breadth.

**The Question of Truth Today**

The question of truth is not merely philosophic or scientific. It has a history and has assumed new forms, which affect ordinary people as well as scholars.

Paradoxically, the development of modern sciences, which has extended human knowledge beyond all imagination, has boomeranged in a general relativism in all areas of learning and even in the perception of truth. The temptation to determinism in regard to scientific truth has been followed by the temptation to relativity in all branches of science and truth. Truth has become dependent on the thinker. It is bound up with his history, milieu, culture, interests, and social or political pressures. We say, therefore, "To each his truth," which amounts to a frank admission that there is no truth any more.

The issue is intensified and becomes dramatic when we see a political regime based on an ideology identifying truth with political or economic expediency, imposing upon an entire people a network of lies, which enmeshes their lives and all their activities. Russian dissidents understood this clearly when they proposed as a first rule in their struggle for freedom never to lie to themselves and never to become part of the logic of the system by consenting to its lies, even in trifling matters.¹⁰

The problem of truth is not restricted to Eastern regimes. We find it in sometimes more insidious forms in the West, in the measure in which our society allows itself to be dominated by considerations of utility and technology, in the fascination with production, in consumerism. Again, there is the pressure of public opinion and popular thought patterns, as Solzhenitsin mentioned in his lecture at Harvard.¹¹

Even Catholic ethicists have sometimes yielded too far to the utilitarian and technological mentality of our age. It seems to me this is the case with so-called "proportionalism" or "consequentialism." The moral quality of an action is evaluated on the basis of the comparison or proportion of its "pre-moral" advantages and disadvantages and its good or evil consequences, immediate or ultimate. Obviously such a comparison must be made in the evaluation of an action, but it remains external. It does not penetrate to the moral level, the interior
of the human person, where the demands of truth and goodness prevail with their universal dimension. Such a concept of morality runs the risk of reducing the good to what is calculated as most useful. We are on the downward slope, heading for the diminution of our sense of truth. Losing this, we shall lose the essence of human integrity and morality. 12

**Love of Truth for Its Own Sake, and Objectivity**

The fact that love of truth carries us beyond the realm of the useful or of material interests such as pleasure is decisive. Truth insists on being loved, sought and served for its own sake, to the point of setting aside self-interest, even risking life itself if need be.13 Its nature is therefore disinterested; yet it interests us in the highest degree and attracts us powerfully, for there is no true good without it. Love of truth is an integral part of the human personality and assures its dignity. As persons we are beings-for-the-truth; if the spirit of lying takes possession of us, we suffer an interior wound. We are no longer free if in our hearts we do not love and seek the truth. Inevitably, we become the slaves of causes, passions, or ideas which lead us to deceitfulness. Without love of truth, we lose our last foothold, the foundation on which to build a personal life.

Love of truth goes hand in hand with a sense of objectivity. Not the cold, impersonal objectivity of the positivist sciences, but the human sense of the reality of persons and things, which opens the door of their interiority to us. Once we accept their difference from ourselves, objectivity lays the foundation for the love of friendship. Through this profound objectivity, truth reveals itself to love.

Love and truth are thus naturally linked in the most personal action and encounter each other at the heart of freedom. Education in freedom will be at the same time education in truth and love. Thus all the moral values and virtues will be illumined and penetrated by our love of truth.

**Contemplative Dimension and Universality**

The truth understood in this way is by its very nature contemplative which in no way prevents it from being strongly active and practical. This is why theology, which is the work of truth, will be chiefly contemplative, according to St. Thomas. Yet this contemplation contains within itself all the force of love, which it feeds by showing it its chief Object. Love is strengthened by knowledge of the beloved and therefore seeks to know it better. So theology is oriented to the vision of God, in which perfect happiness is found, according to revelation. St. Thomas indicates this succinctly when he refers to "the natural inclination to the truth about God." Here the desire for truth coincides with the desire for God, who is the source and end of all truth.

The natural inclination to truth has therefore a universal bearing on morality, as it has in all areas of knowledge. We could even say that it forms the very sense of the universal in us. Thus all truth, even the humblest, possesses as it were a halo, a radiation of universality. The universality of moral laws is based precisely on their truth, in conformity with human nature, which, in respect to its understanding, was created for truth. In this connection, it is indispensable to restore to morality its contemplative dimension.

**Notes**

10. See further, in testimony of Soljenitzyn's truth and justice, Vaclaw Havel's book, *Il potere dei senza potere* (CSE) 1979), extolling "life in the truth" as opposed to "postcapitalist" dictatorship. He shows that the simple act of advertising propaganda in a store front leads to "a life of lies."

11. "In the West there is no censorship, but there is a sly selectiveness at work, separating ideas which are 'in' from those which are not. Although the latter are not directly quashed, they can find no authentic medium of expression in the press, in books, or in university courses. Legally, the spirit of your research is indeed free, but it is restricted on all sides by popular opinion" (Le déclin du courage (Seuil, 1978), 30).

13. Here again we can quote Cicero: "And those [the Epicureans] who claim that intellectual pleasure is the motive for the pursuit of the studies I have mentioned [philosophy], do not understand that what makes this kind of study desirable is the fact that no utilitarian advantages are mixed with the joy accruing to the mind and that it is the sheer knowledge itself which delights, even though disagreements may have their place" (De finibus bonorum et malorum, 5.19).

And further on: "From these observations of mine (and I did not develop them at length as I might have, for they are obvious), from these observations, I say, it is quite clear that all the virtues, including 'honestas' (moral excellence) which springs from them and belongs to them, should be sought for their own sake." -"et virtutes omnes et honestum illud quod ex iis oritur et in iis haeret per se esse expetendum" (ibid., 5.23).

This article is excerpted from The Sources of Christian Ethics, by Servais Pincaers, English translation by Sr. Mary Noble, O.P, (c) The Catholic University of America Pess, 1995. It was originally published as Les sources de la morale chretienne, (c) University Press Fribourg, 1985, 1990, 1993.

Servais Pincaers (1925-2008), from Liege, Belgium, was a Dominican priest and professor of moral theology at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. His most well-known work in English is The Sources of Christian Ethics (1995), which has been well received by a surprisingly varied cross-section of Christians in America and in English-speaking countries. He writes in a tone that is reconciliatory rather than polemical and he returns Christian morality (ethics) to its sources - the Gospel and the Holy Spirit. One of his more popular books, The Pursuit of Happiness: Living the Beatitudes (1998) emphasizes the gifts, virtues, and evangelical beatitudes as the heart of the Christian moral life. Stanley Hauerwas, an American Protestant theologian and ethicist, praised Pincaers work as "essential for the renewal of moral theology" and "is as important for Protestant theological ethics as it is for Catholic moral theology."

illustration of Bible and maze by (c) Kevin Carden

Return to Table of Contents or Archives • (c) copyright 2018 The Sword of the Spirit
A Hole-y and Leaky Christian

by Tom Caballes

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day."
- 2 Corinthians 4:16 ESV

One indisputable fact we face as disciples of Christ is that we spiritually “leak” – it is as if our spiritual life is naturally full of holes. We forget our promises to God; we neglect and overlook things we have learned in the past about discipleship and the Word of God, and we cannot easily be faithful to what God has called us to do and to be. The world challenges us constantly about our commitments, and our weakened human nature always wants us to return to our old way of living. Our physical health and memory fail as we get older. Our emotions can at times run amok within us. Even though we are God’s new creation [2 Corinthians 5:17], we need to continually “top up” our faith so that we can continue to run our race to the end. Our inner-self is to be renewed day by day, as 2 Corinthians 4:16 indicates. Instead of being naturally holy, we are inherently hole-y! If we do not “refill” our faith frequently, we might run out at the end, and not finish the race!

So How Do We Become a “Filled” Christian Thoroughly Inside and Out, and Stop the Spiritual “Leak?”

1. We always need to be connected to the vine – see John 15:1 to 11. Jesus is the source of our spiritual
life; we will wither spiritually once that link is lost [John 15:6]. Prayer is the key to being renewed daily.

2. Form holy habits like daily prayer and Scripture reading. We are creatures of habits, and we need to adapt to a new method of living that conforms to God’s ways. Our minds and bodies would eventually adjust to the new way of living in Christ. Be faithful in reading the Bible, even if you have read it many times before.

3. Form holy attitudes like initiative, positivity, and generosity. Serving others helps us to have a servant-like attitude. God’s word should form our outlook on life and attitude, so we need always to be refreshed by the Word of God. We are like a GPS needing to connect to a satellite so that it can find its bearing again.

4. Weed out patterns of sin and temptation in your life. Know your weaknesses and shut down opportunities for sin. By avoiding temptations to sin and committing sin, we retain our faith values and thinking; but once we compromise, we open an opportunity for the enemy to come into our life to rob us of Godliness. ... and give no opportunity to the devil (Ephesians 4:27 ESV). Ask the Holy Spirit to change your stubborn and sinful ways.

5. Be humble and teachable; try to learn from something you have heard a few times in the past; God can give you new insight or understanding if you are teachable and humble, but not when you are arrogant and proud. Be humble and know you need to reinforce what you have learned in the past.

6. Renew your mind and spirit by spending time with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Experiencing Godly fellowship helps us renew our faith and tops up our zeal for God. When challenges come, it is good that we have more mature brothers and sisters in Christ to help us move along in our journey, especially if we feel we are “stuck” in life. When challenges in life come, brothers and sisters help us face the adversity well.

7. Take time to rest and renew your life and faith in God. Take time as a family, a couple and as individuals to refresh your weary souls by having some personal or family retreats, holidays, and vacations. The journey is a spiritual marathon, not a sprint. Make sure you finish the race well because that is what truly matters.

Other Scripture passages:

1. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14 ESV)

2. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2 ESV)


For personal reflection or group sharing

- In what ways are you a “hole-y” and “leaky” Christian?
- What long-term plans can you make so you will never run out of spiritual energy and finish the race?
Tom Caballes is the National Senior Administrator and a National Coordinator of the Lamb of God, a community of the Sword of the Spirit with 7 branches located throughout New Zealand. Tom also leads Kairos New Zealand, an outreach program for high school, university, and post-university aged people.

Tom and his wife Mhel and their two daughters live in Wellington, New Zealand.
In the situation where you are in - your family, neighborhood, school, or at the workplace, how much difference do you make? Does your presence in situations, both big and small, matter? God has placed us in different circumstances at different points in time to make a splash, a bang, a noise - for a purpose. God desires us to be men and women of grace - specifically, of God's grace. God wants His grace to overflow on us and towards all the people we meet. We are God's agents of grace on the face of the earth, and He wants us to make a difference in big and small ways. Are you ready to live a grace-bestowing life?

So How Do You Become a Man or Woman of Grace?

1. Be friendly. Aim to make new friends – show genuine interest with people. Reach out to the lonely and those with no friends. Make the most out of your God-given relationships. Be outwardly-driven rather than be self-absorbed or gadget focused. Build bridges of relationships rather than center on tasks and activities.

2. Be positive when you are with people. Philippians 4:8 says we should dwell on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praise-worthy. Show people hope instead of despair.
Help people to seek courage rather than give in to fear. Avoid negativity, slander, and gossip. Be a light to other people rather than be part of the darkness. Be encouraging. Be the positive influence of the people around you. Lead or direct conversations that are wholesome and up-building as best possible as you can. As importantly as knowing what to say and when to say things, bite your tongue if you have nothing good to say. Your tongue can be a powerful tool in the building up – or destroying – God’s Kingdom. See Colossians 4:6 and James 3:1-12.

3. Romans 12:10 encourages us to outdo one another in showing honour. We tend to take people around us for granted, especially those close to us. Show gratitude for big and small things people do for you. Honour the people for the way they mean to you, even if it is not their birthdays. Be sincere when you honour people – do not flatter or do a lip service; they will know if you are faking it. Be creative in honouring others.

4. Being a man or woman of grace means having the character of Christ. If you love, forgive, think, act and behave as Jesus would have in your situation, God’s grace would be transparent in you, and people will get attracted to the way you live your life. You will make a difference. So, grow in becoming like Jesus in all things.

5. Be open to sharing your life with Christ in a way that attracts them to Christ. Be transparent so others can see the light of Christ in you. Use discretion in all situations, but do not also be closed about sharing to others about your relationship with God. Giving people a small peak of your life with God can make them curious.

6. Our lives here on earth are just like a momentary blip in the night sky or a small ripple in the sea of eternity. What we do in that short time can make a huge difference to others, who also live short lives, as to where they will spend eternity. If we choose to become radically loving, people-focused, and grace-giving people, others around us would be blessed tremendously by our temporary presence here on earth. And at the end, you help them in your own little way for them to get closer to having eternal life with God. In a way, it’s all that matters.

Other Scripture passages:

1. *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.* [Colossians 4:5-6 ESV]

2. *But as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you - see that you excel in this act of grace also.* [2 Corinthians 8:7 ESV]

3. *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* [2 Peter 3:18A ESV]

4. Other References: John 1:16; Ephesians 1: 3-14; Ephesians 2:8-9; and Hebrews 12:15.

For personal reflection or group sharing

What changes do you need to make so you can be a more radically loving, people-focused, and grace-giving person?
Tom Caballes is the National Senior Administrator and a National Coordinator of the Lamb of God, a community of the Sword of the Spirit with 7 branches located throughout New Zealand. Tom also leads Kairos New Zealand, an outreach program for high school, university, and post-university aged people.

Tom and his wife Mhel and their two daughters live in Wellington, New Zealand.
What A Fool I Was!

by Sam Williamson

Shortly after graduating from university, I took a trip with my new boss to a conference. He was about to give an important presentation, but over dinner he remarked that he hadn’t had a haircut for a long time. He wished he looked more presentable. I offered to cut his hair for him. He asked how good I was. I replied, “I’ve never had a complaint.”

I had never had a complaint because I had never cut anybody’s hair. Not even once. But I had worked in a barbershop as a kid, and I watched thousands of haircuts. I thought I knew enough. And I did. My boss loved the haircut, and I continued to cut his hair the next couple of years.

Twenty years later, though, I looked back on that decision, and I thought, “What a fool I was.” I should have at least let my boss make an informed decision.

While I could see the foolishness in me of twenty years before, I was now forty, and I felt pretty confident about my ability to wisely balance co-owning a software company with a wholesome family life and a healthy spiritual life.

Today I look back on my misplaced confidence—thinking I could manage a company, family, and spiritual life—and I think, “What a fool I was.” I made more (and bigger) mistakes in that “successful” season of life than I ever had before.
And I wonder: Twenty years from now, what kind of fool will I see I am today?

Admitting Our Foolishness

Last week, I read the story of King Jehoshaphat. He is one of the “good” kings. Scripture says, “The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the ways of David (2 Chron. 17:3). He was also a powerful king, and for most of his reign, neighboring kingdoms paid him tribute.

In his later years, though, three enemy kingdoms formed a coalition to destroy him. He is told that a “multitude is coming against you.” And he turns to the Lord. Jehoshaphat is at the pinnacle of his career: he is stronger than he’s ever been; his kingdom is at it richest under his rule; and his wisdom is just peaking. He prays:

Lord … we do not know what to do. (2 Chronicles 20:12)

I wonder if the epitome of wisdom—the meaning of my gray hair—is to admit, “Lord, in all my wisdom, I finally realize, I do not know what to do. And I probably never did.”

The Battle Belongs to the Lord

I have a friend who I believe is making a mistake in his life. I think my discernment may actually be from the Lord. I wanted to tell my friend what he’s doing wrong. But a couple weeks ago I read this quote from Oswald Chambers:

Beware of getting ahead of God by your very desire to do His will. We run ahead of Him in a thousand and one activities, becoming so burdened with people and problems that we don’t worship God, and we fail to intercede.

God is calling me simply to pray for my friend. It feels weird. As though prayer isn’t enough, as though my friend needs my wise words more than God. Which is stupid of me. Foolish even.

When King Jehoshaphat seeks God’s word for this upcoming battle, God speaks: “Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s.”

As I get older, and hopefully wiser, and as my hair turns gray, I am coming to realize that all the battles are the Lord’s, not mine. There are times God may ask me to raise a sword, but even then, the battle belongs to the Lord, not me.

God is saying to this graybeard, “Get off of my throne!” (And step away from the barber stool.)

Sam

P. S. Sometimes in the middle of our lives we wonder, “Is this all there is?” It isn’t. God wants more riches for us in our lives.

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Sam Williamson has published numerous articles and has written two books. He has a blog site, www.beliefsoftheheart.com, and can be reached at Sam@BeliefsoftheHeart.com.

I Was Ashamed of Myself

by Sam Williamson

I was small for my age. When I graduated from high school, I was 5 feet 7 inches and 120 pounds. (I added 2 inches and 25 pounds in the first two years of college.) In middle school, I was even smaller. When I was twelve, my younger (but taller) sister and a friend of hers began to chant, “Sam is short, shorty-pants, skinny-pants, dinky Sam!” And I sluged her.

My dad witnessed it. He never moved quicker in his life. He hustled me to his office as fast as a speeding bullet and sat me on a sofa. And then time slowed down. With surprising gentleness, he whispered, “Are you ashamed of yourself? You should be.”

And I was ashamed. Ever-so-much. He asked me what my shame felt like, and I said:

- I’m embarrassed that I’m so short and skinny;
- I’m mortified that I erupted in anger, and horrified that I hit someone younger than me;
- I’m humiliated that my sister’s friend saw me do it, and I’m scared because you did too;
- I feel stupid, weak, dirty, and ashamed.
My dad began to weep. I did too. My dad then told me that when Jesus was on the cross, he not only took our punishment, he took our shame. He said that the only way to rid ourselves of the sense of shame is to see Jesus absorbing into himself all the disgrace we’ve ever felt.

He asked me to pray each point of shame to God, and give it to him, as in, “Jesus, I’m embarrassed that I’m so small; did you take that on the cross? I feel stupid and dirty; did you absorb that too? I’m ashamed that I hit my sister; did you also receive that for me?”

It was the first time in my life I ever deeply worshiped God.

**Agnostic Advice Will Fail Us**

Shame is one of the more debilitating traumas experienced by humans. Over the last thirty years, the book industry has exploded with solutions to combat its self-destructive spiral.

And yet the epidemic of shame is exploding even faster. Ask any group of westerners if they feel much guilt in their lives, and you’ll see few raised hands. Ask them if they feel shame, and every hand will shoot skyward. Except those too ashamed to admit it.

Secular writers prescribe solutions to our shame: be self-compassionate, grab hold of self-esteem, practice positive thinking, and recast the stories we tell about ourselves.

Despite the rising tide of books and advice, we remain awash in shame. Why? It’s because these answers are agnostic—not anti-God but devoid of God—and shame is deeply spiritual.

**Worship**

Dan Allender said, “Shame is an excellent path to exposing … where we believe life can be found. It unearths the strategies we use to deal with a world that is not under our control.”

When I was twelve, I thought “life could be found” by being taller or stronger. After hitting my sister, I thought “life could be found” by being more self-controlled. In the absence of those life givers, I felt shame. Worship is what we ascribe ultimate value to; anything we turn to find life is the object of our worship.

In other words, I slogged my way into a swampland of shame through worship, and the only way out of my shame was to change my worship. Thomas Chalmers said it like this, “The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one.”

Agnostic therapists advise, “Reject shame, just banish it, and practice self-compassion.” But that counsel doesn’t work. And it never will. Shame is essentially spiritual and so is its solution.

My dad advised, “Pray your shame to God, every sliver, each shard, and see Jesus absorb into his being all your humiliation, rejection, and inadequacy. See him soak up your shame until it’s gone.” Jesus prayed the psalms every day. He would have prayed this verse a thousand times:

> Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope! (Psalm 119:116)

But Jesus was put to shame, even though he alone deserved none. He publicly infused our dishonor and nakedness, that we need never fear disgrace again. On the cross he cried to the Father, “Give to them that
promise of Psalm 119, and give to me their shame.”

Sam

P. S. Many victims of trauma (especially sexual assault) feel shame for their past. But just as guilt can be true or false, so too shame can be true or false. Scripture is clear: we are not held responsible when we are sinned against. For some of us, it is enough to know we are not guilty for those assaults. But for others, we still feel their shame, and secular answers have failed.

Even in false shame, worship can be our greatest ally. Jesus took on himself our real shame (by absorbing into himself all our sense of dirtiness) but he also took our false shame (he was horribly mistreated by the very authorities who were supposed to protect people). He was lynched for his love for us.

Sam Williamson has published numerous articles and has written two books. He has a blog site, www.beliefsoftheheart.com, and can be reached at Sam@BeliefsoftheHeart.com.

Rising from the ashes we proclaim that
"God alone is our only Hope"

Update on “Emmanuel” in Aleppo
Easter 2018

by Andre J Codouni

In March and April 2018, the prayerful church services and liturgies of the Lenten season, holy week and Easter definitely helped Aleppo’s Christians to start remembering what “normal” life was like before their world was turned upside down during the six years of political turmoil and trauma of war.

Yet, deep down in their hearts, people who survived the conflict of war, know and feel that nothing can ever be the same again. The last few years have impacted everyone and everything in Aleppo. The children of the early years of the conflict now are teens, and those who were teens have now matured (probably too early) and have gone on to face life self-reliantly.

Our brothers and sisters in Emmanuel community have been very busy in reaching out to others and sharing the Gospel message of hope, peace, and abundant new life which Christ offers to those who turn away from sin and believe in him, the only true Savior of the world who suffered, died, and rose on the third day never to die again. Their witness and sharing of the Gospel has not gone unanswered. Many are now believing in Christ and turning their lives around in response. But there is now much more work to do to help people grow in faith and Christian maturity. The community is seriously undertaking the task of providing teaching and training to
raise up mature disciples who can serve in mission to advance the kingdom of Christ.

Here are a few recent testimonies from brothers and sisters in Emmanuel. I hope their sharings will inspire you and others to boldly and generously share the good news of Christ to those around you.

“Leave everything and come follow me”.
A young teen who came to Emmanuel’s meetings had a hard time at first hearing the call of Christ in the Gospel, “Leave everything and come follow me”. For her, it meant changing how she imagined living out her youth in a fulfilled manner and becoming a mature adult disciple of Christ.

Here is how she spoke about her experience. “With time, and with the help of the teachings I heard in Emmanuel, I understood that Christ is calling me and He will make sure that I live my life abundantly as promised in the gospel of St John”. She goes on to explain how she clearly perceived that her main role in her Christian journey was to make sure that she preserves and protects this “newborn” spiritual life growing in her. “I needed the support of those teachings and the help of my friends in order to be able to avoid the temptations that eventually, would undermine that life.”

“The community has become a family to me”
A member in Emmanuel who is in the process of preparing for marriage beamed with excitement and shared: “The community has become a family to us (referring to the young people).” “With awesome love they have taught us so much. The leaders and the brothers and sisters embraced me and loved me as I was, and I have learned how to live as a radical disciple of Christ”.

Then goes on: “I have grown so much. I have taken on many good habits and given up old ones that usually led me to sin. Prayer, sacrificing for God, fasting, come easier to me now. A new approach to how I live my life helps my faith to grow”.

“As I prepare for our wedding day, I hope to bring into this new union all that I have learned!”

Enjoying Christian fellowship with members of other communities
A young student speaks of the relationships she has developed over the years not only within the community but also with members of the People of God community centered in neighboring Beirut, Lebanon. “With their help I have matured, I have grown in appreciation that as a young teen, I could trust Christ to lead me in the way of discipleship…Those older and more experienced than me, helped me in a way I would not have been able to by myself. Since joining with others I have accepted to follow Christ, knowing that it would fulfill my life, even as a youth”. With a radiant smile she continues: “This was so liberating. I was free to see more clearly and have experienced fulfillment more than ever. After I tasted the sweetness of the Lord, many material things no longer mean the same to me.”

And, sounding sensible beyond her years: “We are His ambassadors, we proclaim His good news. We are leaven for our city, Aleppo. I personally feel responsible to tell everyone around me about God and His love. I usually start by telling others about the change that has occurred in my life and I also witness by the way I act and by example everywhere I go. I thank God and all those who have helped me become an active member within Emmanuel”.

“I kept hearing that from my sorrows, God was going to bring out the fruit of joy!”
Another example of this Easter hope is lived out by a sister who is very active in reaching out socially through the NGO she works under. “I had a complete turnaround in my life, following a major personal tragedy, which left me a widow. God sovereignly visited me as I gave my life to Him”.

With resolute courage she continued: “I have learned how to face life on my own without my late husband and how to take care of my family. I kept hearing that from my sorrows, God was going to bring out the fruit of joy.”

She goes on: “Like the blind man of Jericho, my eyes were opened and I began to see. That spiritual light enabled me to bring solace to others. I started visiting the needy to find out from them what their needs are, and I found great fulfillment in doing that.”

“Through giving I was enriched; As I grew in my serving others, I was able to see beyond their immediate needs and started providing to them what was principally needed in terms of moral and psychological support.”

She explains that the NGO she worked for eventually sent her to nearby Lebanon for further training where, she said: “I learned from counseling professionals to understand the psychological aspects involved in my work helping others. I received the training and the tools I needed. I loved to get to know and to understand better how I can help”.

“As I brought solace to others, God’s hand carried me through the challenges of handling my responsibilities of taking care of my own family and the requirements of my work. I consider this a great delight and a privilege”.

This Easter, may we all experience the full and abundant blessings of the season, as our brothers and sisters in Emmanuel are doing despite the great challenges they encounter every day. “Just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance, ...see that you abound in this gracious work”. (NAB 2 Corinthians 8:7); And may we all continue to support Emmanuel prayerfully.

Andre J Codouni is a member of the People of God Community in Beirut, Lebanon.

Photo from the original article published on Facebook the 7th of May of 2018.
Update on Kairos 2018 Events in Europe

For the World: A Kairos Conference this August

by Jack Noun

“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.” John 17:14,17-19

We are familiar with Chapter 17 of the Gospel of John being spoken of in the context of Jesus’s prayer for Christian unity. But Jesus does more than that in this chapter: He calls, commissions and consecrates his then and future disciples. We believe that is what God wishes to do with us this summer at the “For the World” conference.

What's Happening
The “For the World” conference is the first Kairos European Zonal Conference. Happening in Belfast in August 2018, it is a conference in three parts. The first part is a 5-day mission training school for student leaders (‘ACTS Week’). The second part is the weekend conference where 17-25 year olds involved with Kairos outreaches will look into being released for mission in their local situations and communities (‘For the World: The Conference’). In the middle of this latter conference, we have invited friends and partners in the gospel to join with us in organising and planning an open day entitled ‘Commissioned’ (the “third part” of the conference).

Having moved to Belfast this year to live with the Servants of the Word, I have had the privilege of being part of the team planning and organizing all of that!
The team meets weekly over skype. Having kicked off preparations in September, we are now in entering the final stages of recruitment of all the young people and student leaders who will be joining us in Belfast to worship the Lord and listen to what he has to say to us.

**Blessings**

There have been lots of blessings to working on the team, not least of which is getting the chance to meet and work with God-fearing individuals from many different places. However, the best part for me in all of that is the opportunity I’m getting to help prepare the stage for God to work in people’s lives. Having been at similar conferences as a participant and student leader in the past where I experienced the Lord powerfully and heard him speak to me, I am thrilled to be able to help build for this special moment in other people’s lives – the moment when each of our eyes are opened to see and understand what God really thinks of us and what he wants to do in and through us.

One very interesting aspect of the “For the World” conference is the open-day conference taking place on the second day of the weekend conference. This conference is a first in that regard. We have invited friends and partners in the gospel to join with us in organising and planning this open day entitled ‘Commissioned’. We are working with University chaplaincies – both Catholic and Protestant of varied denominations – as well as parachurch organisations 24-7 prayer, YWAM, Campus Crusade and others to prepare this day. I believe this can prove to be a very special day. I can imagine a great number of young people who are not originally connected to the Sword of the Spirit joining us in coming before the Lord in pleasing worship and being built up in the Lord. Only time can tell how good of a venture this was. I believe this will be confirmed if/when the Lord reveals himself to all of us gathered there and speaks to us all together.

**Challenges**

Naturally, the preparations for the conference and my involvement in the team wasn’t without challenges. By definition, planning a conference day with partners and friends of the Sword of the Spirit involves starting from less established common grounds. On a more personal note, I have had to deal with cultural differences related to teamwork dynamics and approach to certain things, such as the way to formulate my opinions. This was sometimes uncomfortable.

In conclusion, I would simply reiterate my belief in how powerfully the Lord works when a group of people set a time to “retreat” together in order to meet him.

**Pray**

Meanwhile, may I ask for the reader’s prayers for the “For the World” team & the community in Belfast, for Kairos friends & partners working on the one-day “Commissioned” conference, and for the Lord to be preparing the hearts of all who are coming.

Jacques Noun is currently living in Belfast where he serves with UCO Belfast and Kairos EME. He originally grew up in Lebanon as part of the People of God community.

For more information about the Conference, please visit [www.fortheworld2018.co.uk](http://www.fortheworld2018.co.uk)

To learn more about Kairos in Europe and the Middle East visit their [website](http://www.fortheworld2018.co.uk) and Facebook page.
Update on Kairos 2018 Events in Europe

Legacy Europe Conference: This is my Tribe

The legacy conference brought together over 35 young professionals from around Europe including friends from across the continents who have been living in Europe.

Together as one, we sought the Lord, presented ourselves in service to Him and one another and left the weekend inspired, equipped and emboldened for mission in our families, friendships and workplaces. Inspired by the wisdom of PM Graham, Andy Pettman, MT Jackson and John Coyle we unpacked how to be a witness in the workplace with integrity and confidence. We embarked on a journey of learning about apologetics, how to live well as a witness to Christ and how to step into new and strengthened gifts from the Lord.

I believe we all sensed the powerful movings of the Holy Spirit, uniting us as disciples across our local networks, inspiring and calling on one another for the glory of God. Shoulder to shoulder we encouraged and called one another on in the battle and the joy we live out on a daily basis. We are not alone in this. The entire weekend could be summed up in this sentence, spoken by one of our own at the weekend, "this is my tribe".

Laura Whinnery
Charis Community, Belfast
Answering the Call

This was the first Legacy Conference I went to but had heard great things about the first one last year. The initial thing that struck and inspired me was how the whole weekend was run by those of us who are working full time jobs. From the practical, set up, worship and other services it was people who out of their busy schedules decided there was a need for a place for YPO people and they answered that call. Throughout the weekend there was such a sense that this is the root of a great mission in our YPO areas and I came away so encouraged by others and by hearing how other YPOS were doing.

The scripture we were given at the beginning of the weekend was Matthew 7: 7-8 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you”. This scripture propelled us into our time of worship together and the Lord answered. I saw the Lord work in us; freeing us, equipping us with gifts of the Holy Spirit and answering prayer. I really enjoyed building relationship with these people throughout a chilled weekend and I am very excited to see what’s to come.

Ellen Mahony
Community of Nazareth - Dublin

What is the Legacy Conference?

The Legacy Europe Conference is an annual conference for people who are at a stage of life beyond our University Outreach groups (UCO). It is based on the Legacy Conference that has run in the North American region for several years. We have many young people in Europe at this stage of life and Legacy provides an environment for them to continue to be formed by and hear from the Lord while also giving space for networking and socialising amongst like-minded peers.

The conference has run successfully the last two years looking at themes around mission and the Lord seems to be encouraging us to look at and move in that area in our own cities. This has coincided with some new YPO groups being started in our European region and the Legacy conference will hopefully continue to be a support for these local groups and the work that they are doing.

Kevin Coyle
Legacy Europe Conference Director
Community of the Risen Christ - Glasgow

Legacy Europe Conference was hosted and organised by Community of the Risen Christ.
Witnesses of the Lord’s Work
In 2014, the Viña del Señor community in El Mochito, Honduras was going through difficult times. The community had been initially formed by families with small children but these children had grown and there was no youth group for them. That year, a group of young people from other communities of the zone arrived to Viña del Señor as a part of the Summer in Mission.

The group of missionaries organized a Life in the Spirit Seminar and laid the foundations for a University Outreach. During the next two years this group continued to grow until, in 2016, two of its members took part in the Summer in Mission. With the experience learnt there, they returned to El Mochito to liven up the outreach. In four years, the youth group of Viña del Señor went from having no members to sixty two!

Stories like this one show the imprint left by the Summer in Mission in the Central Zone of the Ibero-American Region of the Sword of the Spirit. There are countless conversion testimonies during the events of Summer in Mission, especially in smaller communities Fuente de Vida in Costa Rica, Pequeña Israel in Nicaragua and Viña del Señor in Honduras. It is no surprise that in the last four years the number of participants in the Summer in Mission has increased from 84 in 2014 to 99 this year.
What is the Summer in Mission?

Summer in Mission is a Kairos program in the Ibero-American region of the Sword of the Spirit. It gather young people from the communities of the zone for training and formation for two weeks and then send them in teams (called squadrons) to the different communities of the region to serve for another three weeks.

Summer in Mission has various objectives: give the young people an opportunity to grow in service, let the communities from the region know each other and consolidate que community culture of the Sword of the Spirit. However, the main objective of the Summer in Mission is to provide a comprehensive formation to the youth of the Sword of the Spirit by focusing on spiritual, human, physical and emotional learning.

During the first weeks of training, participants have to wake up at six o’clock to exercise for 90 minutes.

They also receive teaching on service and leadership, that they put into practice by doing the dishes, cleaning, leader prayer times and other activities.

Service formation is complemented with intellectual formation through readings and talks. This year’s Summer in Mission innovated by giving a course called “Foundations of a Solid Mind” that seeks to challenge young people to strengthen their mind in the Revealed Truth and, thus, resist the secular attack of these days.

In the end, the main strength of Summer in Mission is the spiritual formation of the missionaries. During the whole program they are encouraged to pray, read the bible and meditate. The idea is that young people finish the program with a deeper and stronger relationship with the Lord.
Once the training is over, the squadrons leave the retreat center and leave to the communities. During the three mission weeks each host community assigns them the activities to fulfill. It is common for squadrons to organize children’s events, young people’s events, conversion retreats for university students and social service. However, the most important mission of the squadrons is to get to know the families and share with people; in other words: to live Sword of the Spirit community.

God has no limits
I had the opportunity to participate in Summer in Mission 2018 and I can witness to the conversion stories, the fruit of this program in the Central-American zone, the comprehensive formation and of the community life in the Sword of the Spirit. It was in this Summer in Mission that I saw God’s hand in the young people’s passion, the guidance by the Servants of the Word, in faith and hospitality of our host community, but most of all in me. The Summer in Mission was the event the Lord used to show me that his power has no limits, that he is capable of taking a group from zero to sixty two and he can do it all in me, if I let him.

Irene Campos is a member of the Árbol de Vida community in San José, Costa Rica and one of the participants at Summer in Mission 2018 of the Central Zone of Kairós Iberoamérica. Photos taken from the Kairós Zona Centro Facebook page.
Finally, Whatever Is Lovely…Think About These Things

A reflection by Clara Schwartz

Maybe you’ve heard the term “guarding your hearts,” but what about guarding your thoughts? Proverbs 4:23 says, “More than anything you guard, protect your mind, for life flows from it.” This has been so true in my life! The things I dwell on and allow to enter my mind become my reality. It is what I strive for whether I like it or not. For that reason, how important it is to intentionally protect and fill one’s mind with thoughts that are honoring and pleasing to the Lord.

I first began to realize this in university. I made a decision in my freshmen year not to date until I graduated. Well, that was great and all, but it sure didn’t stop me from thinking about guys as if I could date them. I made no effort to guard my thoughts. I still watched the chick flicks, the TV shows, and read the romance novels that all flourished my desires of romantic relationships. I can guarantee you that they did not leave me with a stronger desire to know the Lord. Nor inspire me to become more Christ like. And they sure didn’t leave me in awe of the Creator.
It was my older sister who challenged me with this verse:

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.” ~ Philippians 4:8

I could clearly see that I was not living out this verse. I had made a decision not to date in order to seek the Lord and grow in my relationship with Him; however I lacked intentionality in creating space in my mind to do so. As I began to replace the time I spent on various media and daydreaming with more Scripture and constructive activities, it became much more natural to dwell on things of the Lord.

This is why I want to challenge you to begin filling your mind with pure things, noble things, and lovely things!

Here are some areas where you can start:

- Dwell on the Love of the Lord: make a list of ways you recall experiencing the Lord’s love or seeing it in the lives of others.
- Dwell on the Beauty of God: what in creation attracts you to the Lord?
- Memorize one of these scriptures to remind you to keep a pure mind:
  - Proverbs 4:23
  - Galatians 5:1
  - Colossians 3:2-3
  - Psalm 101:3
  - Romans 12:2
  - Philippians 4:8
- Think about the Lord’s awesome power
- Write an encouraging letter to a friend
- Work on a skill/gift the Lord has given you (paint, play an instrument, play a sport, write)

Let us invite the Lord of Love into our minds – Come, Lord Jesus, may You reign in my mind. May You clean out of my mind all that distracts me from You and Your love, and may You fill my mind with wisdom, truth, and goodness. Amen.

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Clara Schwartz is a graduate from Grand Valley State University, where she studied accounting. Currently, she serves as a women’s mission leader at University Christian Outreach in East Lansing, Michigan USA. Clara finds joy in going on walks, reading, budgeting, playing ultimate frisbee, and jamming on the djembe.

This article first appeared in The Lovely Commission, a 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.
Eternity's Bright Vision

poem and reflection on the transfiguration of Christ

by Jeanne Kun

And he was transfigured before them,
and his face shone like the sun,
and his garments became white as light.

My frail and fragile frame cannot contain you yet, O Lord.
Seeing but your shadow takes away my breath
and a glimpse of your splendor overwhelms me,
your burning beauty engulfing me like fire.

More of you I cannot bear to see,
though my heart longs for that day
when I shall gaze upon you face to face.

And so I ask you:
Prepare me for eternity's bright vision.

Purify my eyes
that I might behold your unveiled glory.

Cleanse me of my sin
that I might stand upon your holy mountain.

And fortify my soul
that I might endure the full force of your radiance
and wholly satisfy the claims you make on me.

Flashes of Glory
Jesus’ mysterious transfiguration took place shortly after Peter’s profession of faith and Jesus’ first prophecy of his death. Jesus went up to a high mountain to pray and took his three closest friends with him. (Luke 9:18-36)

Did Jesus allow Peter, James, and John to glimpse his glory so that they would be able to bear the adversities and dark times to come with greater fortitude? “The great reason for this transfiguration,” St. Leo the Great suggested, “was to remove the scandal of the cross from the hearts of his disciples, and to prevent the humiliation of his voluntary suffering from disturbing the faith of those who had witnessed the surpassing glory that lay concealed” (Sermon 51).

Surely the memory of those moments with Jesus on the mountain must have comforted the bewildered apostles as they grieved after Jesus’ death – and later strengthened them as they passed through other difficult moments in their lives. Years afterward, Peter still vividly recalled this profound experience, writing to his fellow Christians, “We were eyewitnesses of his majesty …for we were with him on the holy mountain” (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Peter, James, and John were weary after the long ascent up the mountain. In spite of their fatigue, they “kept awake” as Jesus prayed – and were blessed to see his transfiguration (Luke 9:32). We too must struggle against falling spiritually “asleep” so we don’t miss those “flashes of God’s glory,” as author Louise Perrotta calls them, which shine “into our ordinary surroundings.” While they may not be as spectacular as Jesus’ radiance on the mountain, they are “little transfigurations that God offers to anyone who is ‘fully awake’ to their transforming potential” (2004: A Book of Grace-Filled Days, Loyala Press).

Jeanne Kun is a noted author and a senior woman leader in the Word of Life Community, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. This poem and reflection are excerpted from Jeanne’s book, God’s Promises Fulfilled, 2006, published by The Word Among Us Press. Copyright (c) 2006 by Jeanne Kun. Used with permission.

> See other articles by Jeanne Kun in Living Bulwark
We Worship Him - Behold Such Beauty

lyrics and audio recording of the song, Join with Us,

by Ed Conlin

Join with us, and let us go to his dwelling place,
Beyond the veil where we see his face,
Where we are lifted in holy praise.
We worship him, behold such beauty and worship him;
The gates of heaven resound within
For we were made for this glorious grace!

Every heart cries holy, every knee bends low.
Always steadfast, ever faithful, how your love endures!
Face to face with glory that no eye has seen.
We become like him whom we behold;
Beholding you!

We sing to you, our lives surrendered as offerings,
Our faith in you as the gift we bring,
The veil is lifted before your throne.
We come to you, conformed to you in your lowliness,
Transformed by you in your holiness.
We rise from glory to glory, Lord!

Every heart cries holy, every knee bends low.
Always steadfast, ever faithful, how your love endures!
Face to face with glory that no eye has seen.
We become like him whom we behold;
Beholding you!
Ed Conlin is a member of the Servants of the Word, a missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord. He lives in community in the inner city of Detroit, Michigan, USA, and works as a licensed substance abuse counselor and chaplain with the Capuchin Franciscan Ministries in Detroit.

**Sixteen scriptural based songs marked by reverence and joy, that will inspire worship in Spirit and truth**

In an effort to encourage song writers in the Sword of the Spirit to use their talents for the Lord's work, a music CD was produced with 16 songs, all written by members of the Sword of the Spirit in the North American communities, and performed by talented musicians of the various university outreaches (many of whom wrote songs for the project as well). To learn more about "in Spirit and Truth" visit their website at: http://www.inspiritandtruth.ucoweb.org/index.html

To listen to a short mp3 audio sample of the songs, visit:
Pray by Day: Meeting the Challenge of Personal Prayer

A New Prayer App based on the iPray App

Prayer can revolutionize your life. It gives strength to the weak, wisdom to the fool, joy to the sorrowful, and comfort to the oppressed. Most importantly, it gives us a living relationship with God.

Unfortunately, most youth and many adults struggle to have consistent and effective personal prayer. We know we should pray but we regularly fail to do it. Not knowing how, we never start. Sometimes we struggle because we are distracted by other things.

Although we set apart 15 minutes to pray, we spend it mostly flitting from one thought to another. We set apart the time - but we just don't pray much. Sometimes we are just bored by doing the same thing over and over, so we quit before we begin!

What is Pray by Day?

Pray by Day helps you Start, Strengthen and Sustain a daily prayer habit.

Watch a video about Pray by Day on Facebook or below:

Where can you download it?

Get the app here:

- iOS (iPhone/iPad)
- Android (virtually all other smart phones)

Why a prayer app?

We in the Sword of the Sword of the Spirit have rich music culture, and a focus on daily personal prayer and scripture reading. What if there was a way to easily offer that to the wider Christian people? What if we could get our music and teaching "out there"?

That's what Pray by Day can do. It takes you through a 15 min prayer time complete with a reflection on scripture, music, and time to give thanks and intercede. It's also customizable so people can add their own intercessions or switch out the songs and best of all, it's free!

Who might like this?

- People who are trying to start a habit of personal prayer
Living Bulwark

- People who have one, but are looking to strengthen and sustain it
- And it's just worth saying, this app could work really well for commuters
- People who like our music - we keep adding more songs (for example, John Hughes' songs) and there will be more coming
- Eventually, we want people to 'graduate' from using the app. We hope it will give them a pattern of prayer that they can continue using even after they're done with the app!

**How can you help?**

Here's three ways you can help:

1) Tell your friends about this awesome app!

2) Help us gain an online presence
   
   a) Like us on [Facebook](#).
   
   b) Re-share the videos we post, especially [this video](#).
   
   c) Leave a review for the app ([iOS](#), [Android](#))

3) Pray for the success of the project. It's only fitting to pray for the success of a prayer app!

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