

Integrity

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INTEGRITY, a journal published bimonthly by an independent nonprofit corporation, is intended to be a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers. These believers, united in faith, but divergent in opinions, seek to accurately reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as He is one. Accordingly, it should not be assumed that the views expressed by individual authors necessarily represent the opinions of either the editors or the Board as a whole.

Integrity

Readers' Response

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I was quite disappointed in a recent issue which had an article highly critical of F. LaGard Smith. The author certainly left a "bad taste in my (emotional) mouth" with the personal attack on an outstanding quality lecturer and author. He has a right to his opinion on the "issues," but it is contrary to *Integrity's* usual pattern of "personal integrity" to belittle another. Personally, I agree with LaGard.

William M. Bryant
Nashville, TN

Your last issue was timely and great. Ann Ihms evidently used her engineering training for accurate thinking. She clearly nailed the current predicament we face. Keep on keeping on.

G. H. Roux

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Think On These Things

It happens every time. My mind becomes pre-occupied with a Scripture verse or two, then soon afterwards something happens that reinforces its meaning. This time the verse was Matthew 25:40: "And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'"

The "reinforcing" incident came just two or three days later when I went to church and noticed the young woman sitting across the aisle. I had already had some "run-ins" with her. She was a chronic liar, a skilled people manipulator, someone who chose to stir up trouble for attention, a mother whose little children seemed very stressed out and emotionally upset most of the time. I braved my encounters with her as constructively as I could, but today was different.

Her face was swollen and blue--it looked beaten! That surprise was followed by another, because immediately after I saw her, this thought occurred to me: "I can see Jesus in her face!" My own thought startled me. But I couldn't quit staring at her face, couldn't quit seeing him there, too, with his face swollen and bloody from the thorn crown and the beatings.

Right after the service I felt compelled to hurry over to the young woman and offer that Jesus in her a cup of cold water, so to speak. I gave her sympathy as she described the alleged mugging (later we discovered it had been a case of spouse abuse). And I began to spend more time with her, along the way asking God to show me what he loved about this young woman. A sisterly affection grew inside me for her, and God provided me several opportunities to encourage her before she decided to "move on."

The last time I saw the young woman she seemed to be managing her life a little better. The biggest transformation was in me, of course. God used this relationship to begin training me to *look for his imprint* in people I find quite "unlovable" at first. I've attempted to develop such a habit ever since.

Paul broadens the concept of looking for God's imprint when he teaches:

...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...put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you [portions from Philippians 4:8-9].

(Continued on page 5)

Tradition**AMOS PONDER**

In Mark 7:1-15, we read of the scribes and Pharisees complaining to Jesus about the fact that he and his disciples did not follow the Jews' traditional ceremony of washing their hands before eating. The Pharisees were very strict in following this tradition, along with washing cups and utensils. They asked Jesus why his disciples did not observe this tradition. Jesus answered that Isaiah prophesied of them, saying that their cleansings were only superficial and that their hearts were not right. Their worship was useless because it consisted of men's rules. Jesus said that, in their observance of tradition, they set aside the commands of God. In other words, their traditions superseded the word of God.

In Colossians 2:8 Paul, warns the Colossians about being deceived by a philosophy which is based on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. It might appear from reading these verses that all tradition is bad and that we should avoid all tradition. However, we get a different idea about tradition when we look at II Thessalonians 2:15 where Paul tells the church to stand firm and hold to the traditions he passed on to them whether by word of mouth or by letter. Also, in II Thessalonians 3:6, he tells them to avoid anyone who did not live according to the tradition they had received.

Different Kinds Of Tradition

Three different kinds of tradition are discussed in the passages of Scripture mentioned above. In Mark, the tradition of the Jews was based upon the word of God. Jesus was not condemning tradition per se but condemned the elevation of tradition. The Jews had used tradition to set aside and supersede the word of God. In Colossians the tradition was based upon human philosophy and principles.

It was outside of, and opposed to, the word of God. In Thessalonians, the tradition discussed is the word of God--the Gospel and instruction delivered by Paul and others by word of mouth and by letter, which became the New Testament Scriptures.

Tradition is defined as a giving over or handing down which is done by word of mouth, writing, by example or by precept (pattern of thought). Tradition can be either good, bad or indifferent, depending upon its source and upon our use of it.

In the musical "Fiddler On The Roof," Tevye's opening song is about the Jews' tradition. He stops and says, "Where does our tradition come from, you may ask; I'll tell you." After a moment's pause he says, "I don't know." It is a sad state of affairs when we do not know where our tradition comes from but even worse when we believe that we do not follow any traditions. All my life I have heard and accepted that our church does not use tradition but follows the "Bible only" in our beliefs and practices. Consequently, it has been very difficult to separate what the Bible really says from what is actually our tradition.

Necessary Tradition

Although tradition can be bad, we must realize that tradition is also necessary. Tradition comes about when we take the word of God and apply its principles and values in our society. Someone has said that it is the fabric which holds any community together. I like to look at it as a spoked wheel. The spokes are the connecting links (our traditions) between God's Word and our society. If the spokes in a wheel become defective, we cannot just knock them out and go on or the whole wheel would collapse. We either repair or replace the spokes so that the wheel remains useful.

The same is true with Christianity. When we have elevated traditions or they have become outdated, we need to replace or revise them. Reexamining traditions insures that we don't practice something that could inhibit our efforts to conform to God's will or to be useful.

This suggests that in order for tradition to be helpful it must be flexible. A tradition that becomes frozen in time only becomes a hindrance. It must be relevant to the time and place in which we live. Traditions of the first century will not necessarily work in our day and time. Usually tradition changes gradually and sometimes almost imperceptibly, but traditions having to do with thought patterns are more stubborn. For example, the idea that "we have the truth" leads us to think that there is no need for further development.

Almost daily we hear people saying that we have lost our family values. When children are brought up without these values, they seem to have no regard for laws, for other people or for their own lives. The value of family traditions is probably easier to see than in any other area. The lack of tradition in supporting family values is why we have a breakdown in so many areas of our society today. The same results will be seen if we do not maintain good traditions in Christianity.

Tradition In Music

Our church music provides examples of both good and bad tradition. Just about everything we do in music is a matter of tradition. In I Corinthians 14, we read instructions given on how to conduct our public assembly. Everything was to be done in an orderly fashion, such as only one person talking at a time. This also seems to be the case with singing. The purpose of it all was to

instruct, encourage, strengthen, and to praise God. About all I can see in this chapter is that singing is okay and that one should sing at a time. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 do not indicate anything different where they say to speak to one another and admonish one another by speaking or singing psalms, etc. Our tradition today is the opposite of this.

Many in the church claim that the only scriptural singing is congregational singing, not allowing solos or small group singing. Yet, as we trace the history of church music, we find that for several centuries there was no such thing as congregational singing. Tertullian, in about 200 A.D., wrote a description of what the Christians do when they assemble. He says that they pray, read sacred writings, exhort and rebuke, collect monthly contributions, celebrate the agape feast and at the end "each is asked to stand and sing, as he can, a hymn to God, either one from the Holy Scriptures or one of his own composing..." (The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co. Grand Rapids, Mi. 1985, Vol. III, pg. 46, 47).

Chanting and the use of antiphon in the worship developed later. Four-part harmony and congregational singing was not part of early worship because it had not yet been invented. "Few persons who speak or write on the subject of the present system of music express the least doubt of counterpoint (different parts of harmony) having been invented by Guido [c. 990-1050], a monk of Arezzo, in Tuscany, about the year 1022." (A General History of Music, Charles Burney, Dover edition, 1957, Dover Publishers, Inc., N.Y., N.Y., pg. 458. [first published in 1978]). Most church leaders rejected harmony in music and forbade its use. "The fourteenth century seems the area

when music in parts...came into general favor." (Burney, pg. 615).

It was in the fifteenth century when songs were first composed in four-part harmony. Church leaders in general still opposed using four-part harmony and most forbade congregational singing. Most students of church music consider Martin Luther the father of congregational singing. He composed many songs and promoted congregational singing. At the same time, Zwingli and Calvin opposed it at first but later seemed to change their minds.

This is a very sketchy survey of church musical history (and doesn't even include instrumental music). But I think that this quick overview shows that development and changes have been very gradual and that what we do in music today is a matter of tradition, not scriptural mandate. Congregational singing as done today only dates back about 450 years.

We need to heed Jesus' warning about elevating tradition above God's

(Continued from page 2)

Editorial

Some might protest that Paul is being unrealistic and a little too "Pollyanna-ish" here. But I find that when I look for the good in people or in difficult situations or in "issues" or even in politics (all of which are discussed in this issue), my thought life is much healthier than when I dwell on the negative. I tend to hold a more God-oriented hopefulness.

Word. In order to do this, we must distinguish between our tradition and his Word. Other areas of tradition that we might look at is how we appoint elders and deacons, their term of office, the "worship service," and many of our doctrines that are peculiar to only our movement. We also need to ask questions (and seek answers) concerning how our traditions help us in: understanding God's word, corporate worship, Christian works, and in putting off the sins of the flesh. Perhaps there are those among *Integrity* readers who can write articles addressing these and other aspects of tradition.

Amos Ponder is vice president of the *Integrity* Board of Directors and an original Board member. Besides serving as an elder at the Fenton Church of Christ-Christian Church, Amos has also preached and helped start new congregations in Michigan. He retired from General Motors and presently resides in Flint, Michigan with his wife Janet.

When I think back on the change in my own heart and actions once I noticed the resemblance of Jesus in this young woman's face, it makes me wonder: what would change if all of us believers spent less energy noting what's wrong with people and "the world" and, instead, made earnest efforts to look for the imprints of God?

Diane G. H. Kilmer
Co-Editor

All Things To All People

J. BRUCE KILMER

"It does seem at times like the loonies in left field get more bizarre with every passing year" -- James Dobson in "Focus on the Family" newsletter, November 1994, p.4.

The October 17, 1994 issue of "Focus on the Family Citizen," said that Christians were "joining the cause." However, a reading of the magazine left the identification of "the cause" unclear. One cause featured in the magazine was "Fighting the Legal Left." This issue of the magazine also included Rush Limbaugh's sarcastic "14 Commandments of the Religious Left" under the heading "Allies." In the same issue, on a page containing several different miscellaneous current events items, the following were included:

- quotes from Jim Smith, the director of the Southern Baptist Convention, speaking disparagingly about President Clinton's references to Clinton's boyhood meeting with John F. Kennedy, because Smith felt Clinton did not reach out personally enough when he met with a group of teen participants in an abstinence rally;
- a cartoon making fun of the Clinton health plan;
- quotes from an unidentified woman shouting at the actor who plays an adulterous police officer on NYPD Blue, "Go back to your wife, ya bum!;" and
- Barbara Bush saying that George was always anti-abortion.

What Is the Cause?

After reading the articles in the magazine I was left wondering, what is the cause? Is it a political agenda or winning souls to Christ? Does calling people "loonies" help the cause? Does a relentless attack on the current administration help the cause? It depends on what the cause is. Tune in to

your local religious radio or television station or read a recent issue of an evangelical publication, and you are likely to hear more about saving "our country" than reaching the lost with the gospel.

Many of these publications and programs seem to be saying that in order to "save America," Christians should line up against abortion, homosexuality, taxes, crime, welfare, and most recently, health care. According to those in the cause to save America, the country must repent, allow officially directed Christian prayer in schools, and adopt a balanced budget amendment. Rarely do those persons intent on leading our nation to repentance say anything about poverty, racism, or sexism. Rarely do they urge Christians to advocate for health care, a safe environment, or food and shelter for the homeless. In this last decade of the 20th century, why have so many Christians become preoccupied with protecting their own financial status and with legally enforcing a very limited number of moral values? Why has much of what we hear and read from conservative evangelicals become so negative, fearful, and politically partisan? Why are evangelicals so interested in saving "America," or so interested in preserving their own particular way of life? Here are a few possible reasons:

1. Trying to save America can lead to the saving of individual souls.
2. Many conservative Christians are patriotic.
3. The political issues in these causes help some organizations raise lots of money.
4. Fear -- fear of change, fear of crime, fear of losing a certain life style.
5. Belief that America, democracy, and capitalism are the hope of the world.
6. It is easier to rail against groups of enemies than to take the good news to individuals.

Elements of all these reasons and many others may be involved in this phenomenon. The answer is obviously more complex than any one reason. However, the point of this article is not to discuss the reasons for this conservative evangelical emphasis. Rather, I am concerned with the effect of this emphasis on the mission of the church. Our mission is to be Christ's ambassadors in all the world. Does saving America promote that mission? Is negative partisan politics a good medium for the gospel?

Making the Most of Our Time

The time spent by many Christians fighting against health care could have been better spent ministering to others. Doing things for people will more likely result in their finding Christ than speeches, articles and conversations bemoaning our current situation. America has lead the world for a few decades in the millenniums of history. Long after America is gone, people will be in need of the gospel. Laying up treasures on earth doesn't always involve money, it can be putting our emphasis on anything that does not have roots in the eternal. This includes liberal as well as conservative agendas.

All have sinned, and all will keep on sinning. We should expect this, if not accept it. Legislation, presidents, and police will not save our souls, nor even our country. Neither will they be able to stop homosexuality, abortions, or crime. That doesn't mean that laws should not be passed, that whom we vote for doesn't matter, or that we shouldn't hire police. But the ultimate inefficacy of all of these should give us pause as we consider how to spend our time. More crimes and more abortions will be stopped by changed people than by passing laws or by blocking clinics. And in the end, stopping crime, even stopping abortions, is not the primary goal of Christians. Our ultimate endeavor is bringing souls to Christ.

What kind of congregations can accomplish this goal?

Unity in Diversity

We must have churches that reach all and exclude none. This does not mean that we condone any sin. But it does mean that we do not exclude certain sinners, while overlooking our own "more acceptable" sins.

Why do many of our congregations attract only those like us in race, nationality, income, politics, and life styles? With all the emphasis in Christian circles on politics these days, how will we ever have unity with those who hold diametrically opposed political views? Think of the sermons, conversations, bulletin announcements and articles of your congregation, just before and after the last election. If a person with a different political persuasion than the majority of your congregation had visited around that time, would he or she have felt comfortable enough to come again?

There is a world of people with liberal and even moderate political leanings, or with no political leanings at all, that many evangelical churches are not reaching. When you go to church this Sunday, listen carefully, look around you, and imagine how you would feel if you didn't agree with the political views being expressed. Persons in liberal as well as conservative churches should do this. However, since most of our readers come from conservative churches, I'll concentrate on looking at them and the predominant views and positions coming from those in these churches.

As I began writing this article just before the last national election, in my mail I received numerous bulletins, postcards, newsletters, and political propaganda that assumed that, if Christians were not all voting the same way, at least we were concerned about the same limited number of issues. For example, the card I received from the '94 Christian Coalition listed the Michigan

candidates for senator and for the representatives for my district and their views on these issues: "raising federal income taxes," "balanced budget amendment," "taxpayer funding of abortion," "parental choice in education (vouchers)," "homosexuals in the military," and "banning the ownership of legal firearms." The card purported not to be an endorsement of any candidate or political party. Nothing was said about the candidates' votes or positions regarding food or medical care for the needy, child abuse, the many wars currently going on, racial equality, or nuclear disarmament. Only one of the issues (abortion), with which the Christian Coalition was concerned, had to do with directly helping the neighbors Jesus told us to love as ourselves. To the world, conservative Christians look like selfish preservers of the status quo, concerned mainly about our own pocketbooks, keeping our semi-automatic weapons, and a few moral areas, such as homosexuality and abortion. Obviously, the secular media plays this up. But we give them so much to work with.

What Are We Signaling to Others?

Again, think about your local congregation. What conclusions might a visitor with different political views, with a different nationality, with a different life style, or different economic status draw from your church's statements, conversations, and emphasis? For example, if these or other things like them are present in your church, try to imagine how someone from a very different perspective might respond, at least on a first visit. What does an American flag displayed in our church say to a visitor from another country about our unity in Christ transcending nationality? What does a parking lot full of cars with the bumper sticker: "Don't Blame Me I Voted for Bush," say to a visitor that voted for Clinton? What does the continual

emphasis on one issue, abortion, say to a visitor about our concern for other wrongs? What does it say to a visitor who has had an abortion? What do male-only worship leaders, servers, ushers, pronouns in songs and Scripture say to a woman visitor who is accustomed to being treated not only equal, but as capable of leading or teaching in her every day life. Maybe these aren't the issues for your church, but ask yourself about the effect *your* issues might have on outsiders.

I am not saying that political issues should never be discussed or that abortion should not be opposed. I am not even saying that these issues should not be discussed "at church." But what I am questioning is how we discuss these issues, what we assume when we speak about these issues, and how much time and emphasis we give to them. In I Corinthians 9:22, Paul said that "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (NRSV). What does this passage say to Christians today about the issues we have been discussing?

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings (I Corinthians 9:19-23) (NRSV).

When we resort to the type of name calling and stereotyping that would fit

better on the Rush Limbaugh show ("femi-Nazis," "environmental wackos," "welfare cheats"), or even if we are not calling names, but just assuming everyone agrees with "our position," we are not following Paul's example of being all things to all people.

Persons who have the pulpits in our churches and those who teach classes must take special care in presenting their views. We do not have to refuse to discuss controversial topics, but we should constantly be sensitive to those in the audience who may not share our views. There are times when we should preface our remarks about certain topics with an acknowledgement that there are in all likelihood conscientious people present with differing views. And of course, all of our discussions must be in an atmosphere where it is clear that those with differing views are still loved and respected.

For example, in teaching against abortion, we could acknowledge that there are likely people present with differing views. Some who believe abortion should never be allowed; some who would allow for exceptions, such as to save the life of the mother, or in cases of incest and rape; some who believe that there may be times when abortion is the lesser of two evils; some who believe that abortion can never be stopped by laws; etc. And whatever we say should be compassionate toward those in our midst who have had abortions. They must know that they are loved unconditionally.

I am not saying that we cannot give our view on abortion, or any other topic for that matter. And we should speak with conviction about our convictions. There are times when we should speak about many topics with firmness, resolution, conviction, and passion.

And I am not saying that every time we speak that we have to cover every view on every topic. But the atmosphere of love and acceptance should be established, so that the "all" of I Corinthians 9:22 can be reached with the

gospel of Christ. If we are not sensitive in these ways, we will soon not have to worry about taking this special care, because many of the seekers and non-believers will not be present more than once, and finally only those who are almost exactly like us will remain.

"All Things to All People"

What does it mean for us to be "all things to all people?" I think it begins with love. That love must be expressed. It must be sensitive, as well as "tough." It must have compassion and empathy, as well as conviction. To Americans, we must become as an American. To the non-Americans, we must become as a non-American. To the Democrats, we must become as a Democrat. To the Republicans, we must become as a Republican. We do this so that by all means we may save some.

By being the same to someone ("to the Jews I became as a Jew," "to those under the law I became as one under the law" etc.), I mean that we find areas of common ground, while realizing that it is our common needs and sins that put us in the same predicament, and that Jesus is the answer that we must seek together. This does not mean that we have to be dishonest or pretend to be something we are not. We should emphasize the things we have in common with those with whom we differ. We should give them room for their views. We should show them respect and acceptance even when we disagree strongly with their conclusions. And of course we should always show love. Paul reasoned this way in I Corinthians 10:31-11:1:

Well, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you are doing, do all for the honour of God: give no offense to Jews, or Greeks, or to the church of God. For my part I always try to meet everyone half-way, regarding not my own good but the good of the many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example as I follow Christ's. (NEB)

In the 21st century our world, no doubt, will face more problems, more struggles and more crises. However, our message need not be one of doom and gloom nor one of false hope. The world is lost. But can America save it? Can the Republicans or Democrats? Can Newt Gingrich or Bill Clinton? Can "Right to Life" or "People for Choice?" Can family values? Can New Ageism? No, only Jesus Christ can save. Taking that good news to the world in the coming century is *our* cause. May we say with Paul:

It is him who we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me (Col. 1:28-29).

Bruce Kilmer grew up in the Churches of Christ (a cappella) and has served in the Church of Christ/Christian Church (independent). He has degrees from Abilene Christian University and Wayne State University Law School.

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God Intends Us To Suffer (But Not Too Much)

FRANCES WILLIAMS

Our heart aches, our brain is frozen, we feel torn apart, empty, or numb. Painful emotions are always experienced within our bodies, but they begin in our spirit and mind.

I have found it helpful, in dealing with my own personal struggles, to distinguish between the suffering that God intends for our good, and the suffering that God abhors. Not all suffering is evil, or the result of wrong-doing. Some forms of suffering are God-intended, and essential to our development and growth as human beings.

Whether we regard the Creation account of Genesis 3 as historical fact, or

metaphor, we find suffering from the very beginning. Even before wrong-doing entered the world, there were at least four human conditions which must inevitably result in pain. (I first encountered this approach in *God and Human Suffering*, by John Douglas Hall.)

1. Loneliness. God acknowledged Adam's loneliness by creating Eve. Without the ability to feel lonely we could not know the joy and comfort of human fellowship. Low would not be a word in our vocabulary. Nor could we delight in a relationship with God.

Of course, God did not intend that we should cultivate loneliness, as if that

would somehow make us more godly. "It is not good for [humankind] to be alone." Rather, as we become aware of our loneliness, we must use it as God intended, to reach out and establish relationships with others and with God. In this way, we may also receive some comfort in times of loss.

2. Limitations. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the same way, we experience the frustrating limits of our humanity. We are not infinitely wise, nor all-powerful. We are not gods, but created beings. We neither know, nor can we control, what the future will bring. Even so, it is the conscious awareness of our limitations which allows us to receive God's bountiful gifts with wonder and gratitude.

There is a fine line between using our God-given talents to stretch our personal limits, and supposing we can become like God ourselves. By accepting our human limitations we can experience life more fully, instead of wasting our energy trying to become what we never can be.

3. Temptation. Adam and Eve were created with the ability to be tempted. Right and wrong, good and evil are meaningless without the freedom to choose between them. The pain of temptation makes possible the development of some of the finest qualities of humanity--responsibility, decision, sacrifice and restraint.

I am not suggesting that we put ourselves in the way of temptation. On the contrary we should do our utmost to avoid it. Nevertheless, there will be many times and many ways in which we are tempted. For example, it's so much easier to be angry with someone, than to confront them in love. It's so much easier to defend our own interests, than to consider the good of all people involved. We must use our temptations as God intended, to recognize more clearly our own self-centeredness and to ask God to lead us to do what is right.

4. Anxiety. Just as Adam and Eve in

the Garden, we suffer the anxiety of ignorance and the anxiety of dependency. We chafe against our God-given limitations. We want to be in control. How do we know that God is working on our behalf, and not just following his own selfish purposes by keeping us ignorant and limited? Yet this ability to feel anxiety also allows us to look outside of ourselves, learn to trust in God, and to receive God's comfort.

All four of these human conditions--loneliness, limitations, temptation, and anxiety--are intended to cause suffering. Our growth and development as human beings depend upon these life struggles. We can turn to God for help in our struggles, or we can turn away from God and choose a living death.

Suffering That Is Not Intended

So far, I have been writing of suffering that is intended. God asks us to open ourselves to the pain and struggle necessary for human growth. But there is another kind of suffering that God did not intend: suffering that leads us to despair, and deprives us of any hope for the fullness of life.

For examples, God never intended that terrible inner loneliness that some people suffer as feelings of abandonment. It has been well-documented that infants deprived of cuddling and attention (though well-fed and physically cared for) fail to thrive, and often die. Abusive or neglectful caretaking of children has similar effects. There are many people who feel unwanted, and some even attempt to annihilate themselves.

Some limitations are imposed, not by God, but by other human beings. There are those who are virtually enslaved, as their labors contribute to the wealth of the ruling class. Often refugees from poverty are denied access to jobs and hope.

God never intended some temptations. No child should have to choose between starvation and prostitution. No one should have to

choose between participating in a violent political gang or being killed as an enemy. Sometimes anxiety goes far beyond what God intended. Violence, severe childhood trauma, or abusive relationships may leave a person emotionally paralyzed or subject to panic attacks.

Where Does Evil Come From?

Since God did not intend the kind of emotional suffering that leads to hopelessness and despair, where does it come from?

Returning to the Creation account, Adam and Eve tried to escape their anxiety of ignorance and their anxiety of dependency by reaching for the glory that is God's alone. Of course, the Serpent had told them only a partial truth. Eating the fruit made Adam and Eve "like God" in a very limited sense. They did not know, nor could they control, what the future would bring. Instead of embracing the pain of anxiety, they tried to escape it, and suffering that God did not intend entered the world.

Consider, for example, the immediate results of their choice. Adam and Eve now felt it necessary to hide from God. Adam blamed Eve for tempting him, and implied it was God's fault for creating her. The harmony and trust of these newly-formed relationships were broken, perhaps never to be restored.

In the same way, each one of us is faced with our own ignorance and dependency. We choose how to deal with our anxieties, not once for all

times, but day by day, and moment by moment. To the extent that we refuse to acknowledge our God-given anxieties (or our loneliness, temptations, and human limitations), we make a choice for the suffering that God never intended. Jesus encourages us to embrace our pain, promising comfort to those who mourn.

Recognizing the difference between God-intended suffering, and the suffering caused by human wrongdoing, doesn't take away the pain. Loneliness still hurts, whatever its cause. Anxiety can still cripple us. But recognizing the difference has been helpful to me. Now I know when to use emotional pain for personal growth, and when to stand against the causes of such pain. I am learning to be kinder to myself, and, I hope, more compassionate toward others.

Of course, there are times when I have neither the strength nor the courage to do anything about my pain at all. At moments like that, I realize I have received the greatest blessing of all. For now I am convinced that God never intended emotional suffering as a punishment for wrongdoing, but intended only that suffering which is necessary for human growth. I know I am loved by God even in times of weakness and in the midst of all my pain.

Frances Williams is a bookkeeper by trade. Currently, she home schools her children and also serves as a trained volunteer for Stephen Ministries, an interdenominational organization which ministers to people in crisis.

Gomer

BRANT LEE DOTY

How do you explain a man like that? I've known all kinds, believe me. Most of them are alike: give them some good food, a little wine, and a friendly woman, and they're lambs. Deny what they want, and they're savage lions.

But this man...how long do you have to be married to a man to really understand him?

The first time I saw him, I'd gone to the bazaar for some fruit. He was bargaining at one of the booths for a few plums and green almonds. I bought a coconut, some pomegranates, almonds, and figs. I guess my market bag was a little shoddy. As I left, it split open and everything fell rolling around in the street. Quickly he was down on hands and knees, crawling around in the dust, picking up my fruit as he dodged carts, legs, donkeys and people. Didn't get up till he'd found the very last almond.

I was speechless; but it wouldn't have mattered. He just saw that I had it all safely in my shawl, turned, and walked away without a word. Hardly looked at me--me with the prettiest face in the city. He didn't seem to notice I wore no veil, unlike the decent women in town. I think he would have done the same for any woman.

Saw him again, a month later. He came to our place of business to deliver a pair of sandals he'd mended for one of our girls. If he recognized me, he gave no sign. He wasn't the usual customer--no wild-eyed, drooling, lust-driven leer on his face. Just put down the sandals, collected his coins and walked out without a word. He certainly knew where he was, what kind of house it was; but he'd never been there before, and didn't come again for a long time.

Four months had passed before I glanced up one quiet afternoon into that calm, earnest face. He was looking directly at me, motionless. Who knows

how long he'd been there? I opened my mouth to give him my customary line to come in and have a little fun; but something about him stilled my lips.

His face was calm, his mood tranquil, and a mysterious wisp of a smile curled the corners of his mouth up a trifle. His eyes sparkled; but he wasn't laughing. Walking directly up to me, he didn't even say "hello!"; he asked me to marry him! Right there in front of the other girls. They were as stunned as I was. Then some of them tittered; if he heard, he gave no sign.

That was the zaniest approach of all. I didn't even know his name. Somewhere he had learned mine. "Gomer," he began, "I come to you in the name of the Lord God of Israel to take you as my wife, according to the word of the Lord himself."

The girls really jumped on that. Huldah danced out from behind the curtains, less than half-clothed, flaunting her obvious charms as she bounced around him, inviting him to "enjoy the pleasures of marriage with her, without the responsibilities." If he saw her, he didn't let on. Can you believe it? He was on a mission from the Lord; and he asked me again to be his wife.

Of course, I said "No!" He just turned and walked away without another word.

I've had proposals from others, and there is always a temptation to give up this business. Some people think a prostitute's life is thrilling. The truth is that the filthy, contemptible sequence you have to endure again and again, and the humiliating way you have to give yourself totally to all comers as an object of their uncontrolled passions is just the start. They have bought you, they own you, and they can do whatever they wish with you; then they toss you aside like some filthy rag, with a tell-tale smirk. They may be brutal, demanding, clumsy, stinking. They

The *Integrity* Board offers our sincere thanks to all of you who help the *Integrity* ministry financially! Many readers make an annual contribution during our fall fundraiser, but others make a donation at other times of the year. We welcome all of your help and use it conscientiously!

come upon you like dogs and treat you like an animal. Some spit on you if you hesitate in any kind of repulsive process. Believe, me, you don't get in this business for the pleasure! I was simply desperate for money to live on; and I get little enough; my pimp gobbles up most of it.

Hosea—I learned his name from one of the girls who lived near him—came back a couple of days later, to my complete surprise.

He surely hadn't meant what he'd said, but deep within myself I sort of hoped he had. Now, here he was again. The original scene was repeated almost word for word. I turned him down again. Then I had to listen to some really snide remarks and callous torments from the girls. On reflection, I concluded that they were actually jealous.

Still, I turned him down again for the third time. But the fourth visit convinced me absolutely that I would be a fool to refuse him; so I left the brothel and became his wife.

Now, everything was new, different. Drastic changes came in my strangely wonderful life. No man could have been more tender and understanding. My affections centered on one man only, and he gave me every reason to love him. Never a mention of the past; no accusations, no subtle, asinine remarks. He never made me feel guilty or ashamed, only loved. For the first time ever, I knew true love as he held me close; and I yielded myself to him. He stirred emotions in me which I thought were dead, or had never existed.

Did I love him? I'm not really sure. I thought so. We shared so much of our lives, our secret thoughts and dreams and our bonds grew stronger each day. But love? I had never really known love, and some of the progress came all too slowly. Maybe it was my own residual guilt. How could I be good enough for this pure man, who was totally unstained by my common sins?

I suppose his total commitment to the Lord was the most difficult factor in my

adjustment. The reason for his proposal, I learned, was typical. Everything centered about God. Now and then I was awakened at night as he started upright, listening: God was speaking directly to him, he said. The next day he would stride into the king's court, or stalk into the Temple area before the priests, always with a bold message. It was eerie, believe me. But I have no doubt he was doing just what he knew he had to do—speak for God.

My pregnancy was great news. I wanted so very much to bear a child to Hosea. He never knew about the abortions I had had, or the unwanted children,...never asked. The kids were sold to caravan masters, I was told, and brought a pretty penny from the Egyptians. Didn't bother me then, but now it's a haunting nightmare...

Our little boy came, healthy and perfect, just like his father. I was the proudest woman in Israel. I couldn't even object when Hosea called him "Jezreel." To me it seemed inappropriate; but Hosea said the Lord had given the name.

A year later, it was little Lo-ruhamah; and Lo-ammi followed. Strange names, but Hosea said God has his purposes. "She has no mercy" didn't fit that happy little girl, just as "Not my people" was an obvious misnomer for a boy who looked and acted just like his Dad. Now God's reasons are obvious to me. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Maybe I was restless, or immature. Perhaps it's that I didn't fully appreciate Hosea. I simply had an overpowering urge to go back to my old life. Oh, I knew it was wrong, and I knew how it would hurt Hosea and the children; but the compulsion was so strong that I yielded. Back I went.

There had been quite a turnover at the brothel, as always: some left with a customer, some just ran away, and several contracted hideous diseases and died miserable deaths or wandered around in a senseless stupor, repeatedly victimized in the streets.

But here I was again, like a moth driven to a flaming candle. If I expected my old customers to show some joy at my return, I was badly mistaken. They avoided me like the plague, nearly always choosing the younger girls. I didn't realize that I had changed. No longer could I give myself to any of them fully; my thoughts fled to Hosea and his tender, loving ways. He had made me feel new and beloved.

The few customers I got simply paid and left. They never came back to me, and I was alone again with my memories. That's when I took to the streets, letting my hair fall free and wearing a gown a bit too tight, too revealing. I met some of my former customers now and then, but they shied away and took care to duck into the bazaar or down a side street when they saw me coming. When they couldn't avoid a meeting, they looked away or stuttered some unintelligible words in a derogatory tone. I got the message.

Life was hard as my income plummeted. I couldn't buy those beautiful, enticing but expensive gowns. Gone were the sweet wines and the rich foods. It became hard to buy any food at all.

I soon learned that I didn't have any true friends. It's a dog eat dog life. That's why I was surprised one day when one of the girls who knew me from the house looked me up and gave me a beautiful silk gown. She was evasive about where it came from, but she insisted that I take it. It improved my morale, if not my business.

Then I began to find things here and there at my house, things that showed up during my absence. A cruse of oil I hadn't bought. A measure of meal. A bunch of figs. Without them it would have been rough; and they just kept coming mysteriously. Customers were a different matter; I wasn't keeping myself in rice!

Yes, I did think about going back to Hosea. I thought about it, but who would want an old, worn-out hag like me now?

Least of all a man I'd left. He had every reason to hate me, and I couldn't blame him. Surely any love he had had for me was dead.

I must admit it warmed me a bit just remembering his considerate, understanding ways. He had never alluded to my character, my past; never embarrassed me in any way. But that was behind. I had chosen my course, and I deserved any suffering from the choice I had made.

Then one hot afternoon I was walking my territory down by the fruit vendors when I spotted a man who looked interested in me. I gave him my pitch, and he was willing. We turned down Gate Street toward my hut. In the distance, approaching us, were three children; but I was too concerned with my customer to pay any attention to them until they were directly in front of me. Then I recognized *my own three children!*

What were they doing in this part of the city? I'd never have allowed it, here among the bums, drunks, and other human derelicts. What a place to find their mother! I turned to run from them, but they swarmed all over me, hugging, kissing, smiling sweetly at me, and saying things like "Mamma, mamma! We miss you! We love you!"

Believe me, I was speechless for a moment, then the words burst out, "Lo-ruhamah, what are you doing here?"

"My name is Ruhamah now," she answered. "Daddy said God told him to change it as a message to all Israel."

"And my name is Ammi," chipped in her little brother. "That means we can all be God's people if we will love him the way he loves us, and live like his people."

"That's all fine. But what are you doing here?"

"Daddy sent us." Jezreel sounded for all the world like his Dad. "He said we'd find you here, and we are to give you a message. He loves you. Very much."

I couldn't believe them. Oh, God, how much I wanted it to be so; but I knew

better. Hiding my tears, I sent them home and asked them never to come again.

Later that afternoon, there was Hosea. He was talking to my landlord. They seemed to agree on something, and Hosea took a handful of silver shekels from his purse, counted out fifteen of them, thrusting them into the greasy palm of the man I owed for several months' rent and some miscellaneous expenses. The landlord never looked at me, although he seemed to know I was there, watching. He just walked away.

Hosea looked at me then, and came slowly toward me. His face startled me at first. The look? Nothing but that same pure, undisguised, total love. My heart melted.

"Gomer," he said softly. He didn't need to say any more. I knew I would be his forever.

Bit by bit I learned the rest. He had

"bought" me, paying all my debts throughout the bazaar. The gowns, food, and all other mysterious gifts had been from him.

You can't possibly understand it. Neither can I. All I can say is that he loves me, and I am happy. I have learned the meaning of true, unqualified, everlasting love.

How do you explain a man like that? As much as he loves me, he is only sharing the love of One much greater-- One whose love is illimitable!

Dr. Brant Lee Doty's specialty is Middle English. He currently holds the position of Chancellor of Great Lakes Christian College, often fills pulpits and serves as an interim minister, when needed. Dr. Doty has actively served on the *Integrity* Board for more than ten years. He and his wife Ruth live in Lansing, Michigan.

Readers' Response

As a Christian adult single man who has wrestled with homosexual feelings for the better part of my teenage and adult life, I feel a need to comment on F. LaGard Smith's response in the Nov./Dec. issue.

What I hear bleeding over in his argument against "unwarranted doctrinal accommodation" is the need so many in the religious world feel to keep their theology simple. In the 1970s we feared ("we" being non-instrumental brethren) to admit that anyone baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" is a Christian. If we admitted that, we had to deal with the idea that many people outside the Church of Christ are very much a part of the church of Jesus Christ. So instead, we thought: let's keep it simple. If you're not baptized within the confines of, or under the

auspices of the Church of Christ, it's highly unlikely you're really saved. That made it simple. We could guard the gate, keep out the undesirables who might not march in lock step, doctrinally, and keep our membership pure.

It was wrong, but it was simple.

Then came the issue of divorce and remarriage. And so often, writings on the subject shied away from how we can bring healing and God's love to these broken and grieving people. Instead, the theme was exclusion. The message to many divorced and remarried Christians was that the cost of repentance was more than most of them would be willing to pay--i.e. severing their unscriptural marriage and living a celibate, single existence. So, these Christians were told in so many words, "You just stay in your unscriptural marriage and keep away from

us Godly people, and it will be simpler for all of us."

Now comes the issue of homosexuality. Smith laments that "the Lutherans' grace-based 'accommodation' approach to evangelism" has forced them to face "a struggle over the legitimacy of homosexual relations." Heaven forbid they should have to deal with a complicated issue.

They could have kept it simple. When an impressionable youth confesses his first glimmerings of homosexuality, tell him to read Romans 1:18ff. Tell him (or her) that he obviously has already "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator..." Tell him that unlike other youth who have committed "socially acceptable" sins which God will happily forgive, God has given *him* up to "a base mind and improper conduct."

And maybe then, he'll leave. And we won't have to deal with the complicated question of how a seemingly upright, decent young man could have such vile thoughts. If he leaves, we can ignore the fact he grew up in a loving, caring Christian home, with a supportive mother and father. If he leaves, we can be free to draw our own conclusions as to how he was "lured" into this "lifestyle."

Surprise! I didn't leave. Somehow, with God's help, and against seemingly unbeatable odds, I never succumbed to the temptations, the vile thoughts, the lust.

My story is not neat and tidy. The counseling sessions did not "cure" me. My own stubborn attempts to suppress my urges have been frustrating and heartbreaking. And while I have never engaged in homosexual sex, I have failed in other ways, in the company I have kept, in places I have gone.

The struggle continues for me. Some would say that the fact I continue to struggle means that my faith is weak. But I am fearful of the state I will have reached if I ever feel that my struggle against sin is over.

It would be so simple if I could wake up tomorrow with no sin and no temptation. I feel a kinship with Paul when he speaks of his "thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan" (II. Cor. 12:7ff).

God said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Paul says, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

Name Withheld

Enclosed is a book I authored entitled "Christian, You Were Baptized In Water And Spirit"...it is for the person from Louisiana whose letter was published in the Nov./Dec. 1994 issue who stated that they want to learn more about the Holy Spirit.

Many sections of the book are new material to many of our people of the Restoration Movement. It should not be new: Moses Lard "hit upon" a new find or discovery and put it forth tentatively in his *Quarterly* in March, 1864. It should have been our teaching ever since. But he was a big-enough man to allow McGarvey to write a rebuttal which was published in the next quarter's issue. McGarvey's reasoning is (unusual for him, I think) more sophistry than an attempt to really see if this might not, indeed, be a new and important point of "restoration." Turns out, I discovered, that McGarvey had published a Commentary on Acts just a few months before Lard's article in which he, McGarvey, took the position that only the Twelve and those at Cornelius' house got the baptism in the Spirit. As I say in the book, McGarvey was indeed one of our great men, but apparently it was too much to expect him to admit Lard's view when he had just published a different view. One can only assume that his ego got in his way, just as our own so often gets in our way.

Imagine what a loss, and how much comfort the enemy has had because we

have not taught truly on the Holy Spirit, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and things connected. No wonder the person in Louisiana wanted to learn more on the subject.

If you would be so magnanimous as to wish to help get this viewpoint out to the public, I would send the first 50 books free if they send \$2 for postage and shipping sack; after that \$5 post paid. This is a ministry of my wife and myself, as we knew it would not likely be a profit-making venture!

Even if you don't happen to agree with Lard's viewpoint, that is OK also; just keep on giving us help to see and understand Jesus and to follow him.

Robert Leon Gibson
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Editors' Note: To the Louisiana reader whose anonymous *Integrity* survey message was published in the Nov./Dec. 1994 Readers' Response section: You have a book waiting for you at the *Integrity* address! To all our readers: Brother Gibson's book is a very thorough study of how we receive the Holy Spirit and includes very important statements on the subject by scholars such as Robert Milligan, Robert Richardson, Leroy Garrett, and Thomas Langford--whose quote was taken from a letter Tom sent to *Integrity* which was published in 1975!

-DGHK

Regarding Pete Ragus' essay on mixing Christianity and politics (Nov./Dec. 1994): exactly what is a secular moral issue anyway? With this phrase I understand him to mean a moral issue that has socio-political implications. But I can't recall very many moral issues that don't have at least some socio-political implications. Ragus says that mixing Christianity and politics is okay so long as it is done fairly and in love. But then there are further problems. What does it mean to discuss these issues in fairness and in love?

How should a church discuss crime and punishment, homosexuality, education reform, teenage pregnancy, welfare reform, capital punishment, war, abortion, civil disobedience and radical feminism in fairness and in love?

Not many issues are cut and dried. We run into the ethical problem of conflicting absolutes. On the one hand Christ wants his church to be united in love. This is a never changing absolute. On the other hand, we should stand for moral truth and plead the cause of the oppressed (Psalms 81; Matthew 25:31ff). Ragus must offer an explanation as to why Christian unity should always be placed above moral truth.

Christianity is a religion that offers ethical guidance here and now in the political arena. While politics isn't everything, Christianity affirms that if our faith doesn't lead to political action, our faith is useless (James 2:17). It teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:39), and there is no hint that this command doesn't apply to our political community as a whole.

For Ragus to claim that Jesus was non-political misses the whole impact of his claim to be the Messiah, the King of the universe. For Jesus was challenging the whole religious-political structure. He claimed that a different God actually rules. It was this belief which caused the early Christians to be executed for their faith. Let it never be forgotten that Jesus was killed because of his political beliefs, teachings and claims. In his day there was simply no sharp distinction between political and religious thought.

John W. Loftus
Indiana

I would like to add some remembrances to your 25-year review of the role of women in the church. *Integrity* may have been the first voice heard in the church in this century when it published my article "Set Our Women Free" in the sixties. I know the magazine was

swamped with requests for that issue, resulting in three reprints of the whole issue and then putting out a pamphlet under that title by Hoy (Ledbetter) and me. Thousands of copies went out; one California church ordered 1,000 copies. I was swamped with letters, a number from males correcting me and a large number from women in solid agreement.

The storm led Abilene Christian University to invite me to read a paper on their annual Preachers and Elders Workshop. The audience consisted of 800 males and one senior girl who broke the rules and appeared alone in the balcony in 1973.

A bunch of papers were read but apparently ignored. Everybody wanted to discuss the woman issue. I agreed to appear before three different called meetings, including one packed audience of ACU students which gave me a standing ovation. I also met for 40 minutes with a group of supportive youth ministers who wanted to use girls in speaking roles. There was one meeting I could not attend because of conflict, but one of its leaders told his church the following Sunday that his Abilene visit was great except for the fact that one gray-head from Tennessee wanted to turn the church over to the women. *Integrity* printed my paper in a 40 page pamphlet titled "The Role Of Women In The Church" and kept it in circulation up to recent days. My original paper "Set Our Women Free" is still in circulation by *Ensign*.

Many Church of Christ preachers know the truth on this subject, but will not dare rock the boat. Our gross sectarianism has alienated a lot of able women.

One courageous preacher and former president of Columbia Christian College in Oregon who also served earlier as elder and preacher for one of our largest churches and as administrator at Oklahoma Christian University has published a courageous book "I Permit Not A Woman To Remain Shackled." He

is Robert H. Rowland and he can be reached at Lighthouse Publishing Company, 525 N.W. 57th Street, Newport, Oregon 97365. He brilliantly analyzes I Corinthians to rout the "silence" school.

Norman L. Parks
Murfreesboro, TN

Enclosed is [a poem] written by a young friend of ours, Mrs. Daniel M. (Gretchen) Crane, of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. The Crane's are a fine family with four active children. The poem "Hope of Glory" is in honor of her grandparents, who are buried in Canehill, Arkansas. Her grandfather Charley Britton died about twenty years ago, and grandmother Marge died last May, just a month short of her 96th birthday. I was impressed with this poem and would like to share it with others. Gretchen gave me permission to do so.

Ray L. Felts
Tulsa, Oklahoma

The Hope Of Glory

High upon a lovely hill

Two graves are lying, straight and still.
One is weathered by the years.

The other fresh and moist with tears.

For twenty years the one did wait
Upon its precious earthly mate.

As now the pair rest side by side,
They speak of love that never died.

The aged bodies lying there
Are free from pain and life's despair
Because the Savior, bright and fair,
Has taken them into his care.

Their eyes behold his wondrous face,
While we must lean upon his grace
To ease our longing hearts, and trace
Our sorrows to his healing place.

Oh blessed joy to know that they
Are safe within his arms today!
We tell an ancient happy story,
Christ in us, the Hope of Glory.