

Integrity

INTEGRITY, a journal published by an independent nonprofit corporation, is intended to be a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers who seek accurately to reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as He is one.

The Potter's Wheel

They milled aimlessly about the market place, glancing occasionally toward the sky as the Judean sun, now in its eleventh hour, sank toward the horizons. Their hopes were sinking with it, for they had been waiting in vain throughout the day, as the landlords came hiring laborers from among them. With the appearance of each, their hopes were raised, only to be dashed when others were chosen, and they were left. No chance for a full day's wage now; just a fleeting hope that perhaps they might yet earn enough to buy meal for one loaf of bread.

"Why do you stand here idle all day?"

"Because no one has hired us," they replied, perhaps startled by the late, but welcomed invitation.

"You go into the vineyard, too."

So they hurried off to redeem that one

precious hour. But when the day was over, and they were called to receive their wages, the landlord graciously summoned them first, and rewarded each with a full day's wage.

How often, as we face the responsibilities before us, do we gauge our resources and feel the eleventh hour upon us. Time and opportunities slipping away; the realization that tasks were not started soon enough; energies ebbing and frustrations rising. But we can still, like those laborers, rise up and redeem the hour. For the Master's invitation is always extended. And in His grace He may yet reward us, not according to how much we have produced, but according to our willingness to do our best with what we have.

-Gene Cowie

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The Potter's Wheel

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New Beginnings: To God Be The Glory

As we neared the end of this calendar year our board of directors felt that the focus of this issue should be not just on endings, but beginnings — new beginnings. For indeed our God is a creator of newness, from that first creation when He looked upon His handiwork and “saw that it was good,” to the resurrection of His Son out of death, to final resurrection from the power of death and the grave. The final word with God is not ending but beginning. “Behold, I make all things new!”

While each of the writers has brought his/her own unique perspective and experience to a particular article, and the articles understandably differ in their material, one unifying theme ties them all solidly together into a grand affirmation: that the coming of Jesus Christ into the world of human beings radically alters our total experience of life. For with Him the final word is not endings but beginnings; not death but life; not failure but forgiveness; not tears but celebration; not fear but boldness; not disappointment and despair but hope and victory! To God be the glory, great things He has done.

Focusing upon the apostle Paul’s affirmation that “The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind,” Laquita Higgs has written poignantly of the benefits which the “Son of righteousness” has brought with “healing in His wings;” and draws the conclusion of Tertullian that He became a son of man that the sons of men might become sons of God. Few Christians have grasped more clearly the notion of the Christian life being genuine celebration for God’s matchless goodness than has Diane Kilmer in her radiant article, “Free to Celebrate;” and she has ably extended her original assignment relevant to Christians celebrating Christmas to the whole of the believer’s life as being celebration. But only when one grasps this freedom in Christ will he be truly free to celebrate his relationship with the God of all grace.

I have known Janis Van Horn for almost two decades, and have followed the pilgrimage of her life through the last years

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Dawning

LAQUITA M. HIGGS

Dearborn, Michigan

Remember the feeling of being in love for the first time? The popular songwriters have described it as having “wings on your heels” and “stars in your eyes.”

Some of the most joyous times in our lives have come with new experiences such as falling in love. Perhaps you remember the joy of a wedding. We had one at our house this summer. Much preparation and some tensions and disagreements preceded the wedding, but the wedding itself was an occasion for great celebration and rejoicing, for it signaled a new beginning.

Or perhaps you remember the joy of a new life in your family. Terry and Valerie, married for many years, childless, and approaching the age of forty, had a baby girl last year, and they often write to us of the great joy which little Lois has brought into their lives.

It is good to remember those times of unspeakable joy, for they all too soon disappear. Loves fade away or die. That new home created by the wedding ceremony means that another home has lost its children. Even little baby Lois, that beautiful gift from God, will grow up, leave home, and die someday. Our newness and our joys are tainted with decay and sadness.

We despair sometimes. We just received a letter from England which began, “I’m afraid I have bad news. Hana got much worse just a little while after you phoned, and she died on 1st September.” Hana was the love of Tom’s life. She left three young children.

Hope Out of Despair

We have all despaired sometime because of this human condition of death and decay, but that is not the end of the story. We can hope and rejoice, for there is good news: “The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind!”¹

Think about the dawn. Every morning, whether believers or not, we encounter the grace of God, for as each new day dawns, we have again the newness and freshness of another beginning. Every new day is a promise that there is hope in this physical world. How appropriate, then, that Paul used the image of the dawn to proclaim the coming of the Son of God. And what a promise — healing for all mankind!

This tells us something about God. Though he can be described as “the same yesterday, today, and for ever,” newness is also a part of his nature. There is darkness in this world, but he provides for the light of new days. There is winter, but he provides the spring. There is death, but he provides birth. Though he is our enduring and unchanging rock, transforming change emanates from him. Though his unwavering truth abides forever, he is ever fresh and new. He told the children of Israel: “Cease to dwell on days gone by and to brood over past history. Here and now I will do a new thing; this moment it will break from the bud. Can you not perceive it? I will make a way even through the wilderness and paths in the barren desert;...for I will provide water in the wilderness and rivers in the barren desert, where my chosen people may drink.”

Notice, too, how God provided the “healing for all mankind.” He might have sent his son, Jesus, in kingly robes or in the ethereal splendor of a cloud of glory. He might have sent him on the back of a mighty elephant. Maybe in a flash of lightning, accompanied by a great earthquake. Or in today’s terms, maybe in a flying saucer, or with the sonic boom of a Concorde jet. But no, he sent his son, Jesus, in the form of a new little baby. He was a tiny bundle dependent on his earthly mother and father. A tiny bundle which could be carried around in one arm by his mother as she worked. A tiny bundle which had to learn how to

talk and how to walk. The Prince of Princes shed all his glory to become helpless and completely vulnerable. God had made man in his image in the beginning; now God had been formed in man's image. The normal order was reversed. What a risk God was taking, and all for us!

But God is like that. His call to Israel had been to newness: "Get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, you men of Israel?" And then he promised, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit into you." But God was not calling man to anything that he himself was unwilling to do. God risked newness and vulnerability as a baby to make continual newness possible in us.

That baby became our redeemer, making it possible for us to "be made new in mind and spirit," and to "put on the new nature of God's creating." God's fullness of love *must* create, and so he creates the new and transforms the old. We are told that "when anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun." Just like babies, we have a new name and a new song.² The newness in God never stops. Not only can God transform us and give us a new nature, but that new nature "is being constantly renewed in the image of its Creator and brought to know God." Though we are nothing

compared to him, he permits us to be like him and even to know him! Our old selves could never do that. Truly we have been made new, and all because he was once made new in the womb of a woman named Mary.

Renewal in us is not a one-time happening, but it continues, just as the little baby Jesus grew daily. We can rejoice with Paul, "No wonder we do not lose heart! Though our outward humanity is in decay, yet day by day we are inwardly renewed."

Day by day the sun gives us light and hope in this physical world. It signifies the constant newness of God's creative power; it signifies our healing and our hope. The dawn of light is an apt symbol for the coming of that little baby, the light of the world. His newness is our newness; our "Son-rise" has come, "for the grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind!"

¹The following quotations are used in this article, all from the *New English Bible*: Titus 2:11, Heb. 13:8; Isaiah 43:18-20; Ezekiel 18:31, 36:26-7; Ephesians 4:23-4; II Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:10; II Corinthians 4:16.

²Psalms 40:3; Isaiah 62:2; Revelation 5:9; 14:3.

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"The Unity Which the Spirit Gives" Jan.-Feb. 1985

Free to Celebrate

DIANE G. H. KILMER

Lansing, Michigan

Come and celebrate with me! Come and let us be a celebrating people! Come, let us identify those things that come from the Lord each day and thank Him. Praise Him. Celebrate whatever it is He has allowed us to do or to receive! Remember what Paul said about everything we do being our worship to Him?

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — which is your spiritual worship."

Romans 12:1

Everything we do and receive every day can be our worship to Him. From the seemingly mundane to the really big milestones, it helps us to consider the events of the day as our worship to Him.

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Romans 12:2

Recognition of what God is doing in our life helps this renewal process of our mind. Considering in a spiritual way the events in our life, both simple and significant, is part of what Paul is talking about in I Corinthians 2:12:

"We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us ... The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Celebrating life in a spiritual way is part of our having "the mind of Christ." Making "occa-

sions" out of life's happenings and thanking God for the good in the events others might take for granted is living out Philippians 4:8:

"...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."

Yes, our church background has taught us much about how to celebrate Jesus and everything He means to us through communion each Sunday. Yet teaching regarding spiritual celebration of other events besides the Lord's Supper has either been confusing, negative, or non-existent. Let us consider for a moment Romans 14:5-8:

"One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."

Some of us have chosen to consider everyday alike except Sunday. But many of us who appreciate celebrating the Lord's Supper each Sunday also feel a deep yearning to give special attention to other events and days we "live to the Lord." For me, it is better to set aside a specific day to celebrate a particular blessing than to tell myself, "I'm going to take time out and do that some time." Too often I let life get too busy and then the celebration never happens.

We all know that we are not under the compulsion of the old law to celebrate exactly in the ways God specifically laid out for the Jews. But one of the delights of this new era in Christ is that we are now free to examine how God was teaching the Jews to celebrate, and then apply what we learn to our own Christian age. We can be inspired by those initial teachings, imitate some of them, and freely and creatively develop some of our own spiritual celebrations.

Events to Celebrate

What are some of the events that we might celebrate that come out of our discerning the ways God is involved in our daily life? Just this past week our family received a postcard in the mail from Christian friends inviting us to their open house. The explanation on the card for the open house was this: "Come Celebrate with Thanksgiving God's Abundant Provision." After eight years of financial struggle, our friend had just gotten a job for which he was well-qualified and for which he would receive good pay and benefits. And now he and his family were asking their friends to come and celebrate. For what else can we plan spiritual celebrations? How about baptisms, job promotions, a good crop, a much needed car, graduation from school, the birth of a baby, confession and restoration of a dear Christian brother or sister, a new place to live, a 7-year-old's first lost tooth, the attainment of a personal or family goal, a wedding, or political or cultural events. Wouldn't it be faith-building to have annual recollections of something the Lord saw us through when we cried out to Him (i.e., healings, comfort in grief, help in a time of danger, money when it was desperately needed, etc.). How about celebrations after difficult decision-making, both in the family or in the church family? We will see more and more opportunities for celebration to the Lord as more and more we view all the aspects of our life as our "spiritual worship" to God.

Celebrating Holidays

Is it appropriate to celebrate in a spiritual way those days already set aside as national holidays

or days of recognitions (i.e., Mother's Day, Fourth of July, etc.)? For those of us who are of the conviction that if it is not mentioned in the Bible then it should not be done, it is not, of course, appropriate. But for those of us who do celebrate "secular" holidays, I think we can develop our thinking even further. What kind of witness am I making to those around me if they see me celebrate Mother's Day, for example, without somehow celebrating God's part in this blessing of having a mother? Instead of celebrating days like this in a secular way only, we could choose to show by our example how we are also thankful to God for whatever blessing everyone is recognizing. We could lead the way in celebrating such an occasion in a spiritual way.

Recalling how our churches celebrate Christmas Day directs us to a good example of the confusion we feel regarding celebration. Most churches of Christ (non-instrumental) do little in the line of special worship services, Christmas music, or holiday decorating at Christmas time. At home, people may exchange gifts and eat holiday food but feel unsure about how religious the celebration should be. Yet if all of our life is worship and our religious life is not just a segment out of the week, yet *includes* those regular services on Sunday and mid-week, we are free to be thankful and praise God for whatever is on our hearts that day — at the church building and at home! Celebrating Christmas when most of the believing world is focusing on this holiday offers us such a big opportunity to express our unity with believers all over the world regarding one issue on which we can all agree: we are glad the son of God came into the world! This is not a time to isolate ourselves from other believers or to remember our differences but a good time to give witness to the non-believing world that on this we can agree: it was good for all that Christ came. Celebrating special religious days together with others (Easter is another time) offers us a chance to experience the sense of community and belonging we feel when we join others in celebration. We can derive strength and identity from joining together in the honor of a mutual belief regarding Christ. Some experts

say one reason why Jewish youths are rarely attracted to religious cults is because they have a strong sense of who they are and they know how to act out who they are (if they choose to) through their traditions practiced among family and fellow Jews. When Christians celebrate Christ's birth together, they can gain the same sense of belonging many Jews have but with some delightful advantages. We Christians are not only free to celebrate whenever we want to, but however we want to: creatively, joyfully, building personal and family traditions, readjusting the celebration to what is appropriate for that time of life, taking into consideration personality and the culture in which we are living. What fun it has been for our family to take the Church Christmas Walk organized among the various denominations in downtown Lansing. With other participants we walk from church building to church building, enjoying the decorations, hearing and singing Christmas music, observing teenagers give skits on the meaning of Christmas, sharing the celebration with people we have not met before. There is a sense of participating in something beyond our own family when we also see our church friends preparing their homes for celebration: setting out nativity scenes, decorating a tree with favorite ornaments, cooking holiday recipes for family and friends.

Celebrating holidays when the rest of the world is, can be beneficial when reaching out to non-believers. Using Christmas again as an example, this is a time when non-believers may feel particularly sensitive to their spiritual emptiness. Most people in the United States are not unaware of what Christmas is *really* about. They desperately want love and meaning in their life, too. Have you observed inadequate attempts at celebration by excessive drinking or by the giving of expensive gifts to prove love or by bitter attitudes that reflect the loneliness? This kind of celebrating will leave people even more spiritually bereft, and they may be more ready than at any other time to turn to someone outside of themselves for meaning. If we say at this time that we do not celebrate Christmas in a religious way, we may appear to join them in a secular celebration. But if we instead tell

them what Jesus' coming means to us now, and tell them how we express this in our home at this time and perhaps even invite them to a church worship service that will specifically touch upon their Christmas-time thoughts, we have offered them timely balm for their aching and have pointed them to Jesus and His way of life.

How Do We Do It?

We have talked about our freedom to celebrate and some of the benefits of setting aside special times to celebrate. The scriptures are quite clear about when we can celebrate:

"From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets the name of the Lord is to be praised!"

-from Psalm 113

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Philippians 4:4

How can we celebrate? Psalm 149:1-5 certainly sets the tone for how, what, when and where we should celebrate:

"Praise the Lord!

Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise in the assembly of the saints.

Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King.

Let them praise His name with dancing and make music to Him with tambourine and harp.

For the Lord takes delight in his people; He crowns the humble with salvation.

Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds!"

Whether we are together in a worship service or at home on our bed, celebration is at the core of our worship to God. When we worship we are celebrating who God is, thanking Him for His gifts, reveling in our relationship with Him.

And this kind of worship produces service — the kind of service that is appropriate and effective because such worship renews our mind and enables us to “test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:3.

Gleaning ideas from the Old Testament gives us plenty of direction for how to celebrate. When God instituted feast time He made statements that would set a relaxed, fun tone for anything we might plan in the 20th century:

“Do no regular work.” Leviticus 23:35

“Be joyful at your feast.” Deuteronomy 16:14.

“Enjoy choice food and sweet drinks and send some to those who have nothing prepared.” Nehemiah 8:10.

The Jews were told to gather the best fruit to eat and to decorate their homes with palm leaves and tree boughs. At the Feast of Tabernacles God told the Israelites to invite everyone to their celebration: family, co-workers, foreigners, orphans and widows, full-time temple staff. There was time set aside for music, wine, dancing, and parades. People often made special free-will offerings at feast times. A designated time was always set aside for a “sacred assembly.” When Hezekiah planned the Passover Celebration, the scripture says there was great rejoicing, choirs sang praises to God, encouraging words regarding the Lord were spoken. The Israelites were told to take time each day of the holiday season to hear God’s word. God trained the Jews to celebrate covenants, birthdays, national deliverances, the harvest of crops, and great spiritual experiences. Sometimes children and adults recited what the Lord had done for them in the past. Sometimes there were symbolic reenactments.

Wouldn’t it be enjoyable and faith-building for the local church to set aside a special gathering time to focus on some event or blessing for which the congregation is particularly thankful? Sometimes a celebration is very simple and lasts only a moment. Once I was present when a

group of Christians had to make some very difficult decisions regarding money. There had been fasting and prayer over making the right decisions and in hope that the fellowship would not be divided over money. The decisions were made with so much love, give and take, and clarity of direction that, at the end of the meeting, the group joyfully prayed thanksgiving to God, were silent for a moment, and then suddenly everyone burst into spontaneous applause to the Lord for what He had done!

At home our celebrating can be quite simple, too. How about placing amid birthday party decorations a sign that says, “Thank you, Jesus, for _____ (dad, sister, etc.).” My husband’s family likes to stand and sing a song of praise around the dinner table while holding hands. Another idea might be to invite someone with little or no family to your own family celebration. One Christmas my sister gave everyone a brand new pair of socks along with a tenderly written account of where the Lord had lead “each pair of feet” in the family that year. Another year our extended family sat in a circle, Christians and non-Christians, and shared something we had been thankful for that year. I have heard of churches doing this same thing on New Year’s Eve. Last Easter time my children spent the entire preceding week making clothes pin “resurrection puppets” and a paper mache tomb. On the Saturday night before Easter we invited friends over who had children about our children’s ages. While our kids acted out the story with puppets, my husband read the gospel account. Then the other families shared their favorite songs, stories and scriptures and afterward we ate cake! It was so enjoyable for everyone that I think we will do it again.

And that is the beauty of celebrating in the Christian era. We are free to celebrate, formally or informally, with ritual or without, using methods that are creative and meaningful for us. We are free to celebrate those blessings from God for which we are now thankful. Giving God our mind, body and time in spiritual, celebrating worship will give us the opportunity to:

“... have power, together with all the

saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:18,19.

When we recognize during our celebration who God is and what He has done, we will recognize that “we are God’s workmanship.” And the natural outcome will be our service to Him: “... created in Christ Jesus to do good work, which

God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10.

Come! Let us be a celebrating people! Let us sing as the angels in John’s Revelation:

“Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.

... All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

-from Revelation 15.

Experiencing the Death of an Unconceived Child

JANIS VAN HORN

Clawson, Michigan

It is estimated that one out of every six couples has the problem of infertility, the inability to conceive a child. My husband, John, and I are one of those couples. When we married, we decided to delay the starting of a family for a few years, as many in our age group were doing. We hoped to further our education, establish careers, build a home, and use the time to strengthen our marriage relationship before we took on the added responsibilities of parenthood. We had always seen having children as a part of our future; we both loved and enjoyed children. I had chosen teaching as my profession, and we were deeply involved in the children’s ministry of our congregation. Our prayer was that God would direct the planning and timing of our children.

We had been married for five years when I was laid-off from my teaching position due to declining enrollment in my school district. Since I was unable to find a teaching job in another system, we saw this as an answer to prayer — God was telling us that this was the time to begin our family. We discontinued the use of contraceptives and began trying to conceive a child. Several months of trying resulted in no pregnancy. A trip to the doctor produced a prescription for pills, a basal thermometer for daily temperature taking, and encouragement

to “keep trying.” Several more months of disappointment passed by, followed by appointments with several infertility specialists, more tests, and mounting frustration and discouragement. During this time we were reluctant to share with anyone the ordeal we were experiencing. We did, however, heed the New Testament exhortation found in James 5:14-15:

“Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up.”

We met with the elders of our church, explained our situation, asked for specific prayer regarding an upcoming doctor’s appointment, and prayed, in faith, for a healing. These godly men showered us with their love and concern, and the Lord lifted a great burden from our hearts that night.

We continued to pray and hope as we awaited the test results from one of the specialists we had seen. Finally, our answer came. We were told that we would be unable to conceive a baby; we would never be able to have our own biological child! Our dreams were shattered,

our hopes crushed. What we were experiencing has been termed the “death of an unconceived child.” We were suffering the loss of a potential life, a death for which there was no funeral, no period of mourning, and no sympathy from friends and loved ones, most of whom had no idea of what we were even going through.

In her book, *On Death and Dying*, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross discusses the various stages which terminally ill patients experience in coming to terms with their illnesses. These phases include; denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.¹ I would like to apply these same stages of acceptance to our situation as we feebly tried to cope with our loss.

1. Denial and isolation — When someone is confronted with devastating news, one’s initial reaction often is “It can’t be true, there must be some mistake.” This was our first reaction when told by the doctor of our inability of conceive. “Maybe we should see another doctor, try some more tests,” we told each other. God was merciful, however, and did not allow us to dwell on this disbelief. Because of our childlessness, though, we began to withdraw from many of our friends who were having babies. It was painful for us not to have parenting in common with them.

2. Anger — This phase in coming to terms with acceptance of our situation was very difficult for me. I became angry with God at what I saw as His refusal to answer my prayers. I was angry at what I perceived to be the inequity of those who “accidentally” became pregnant. I was alarmed by the growing percentage of teen-age pregnancies and appalled by the use of abortion as a method of birth control. I became sickened upon reading in the newspaper of women who secretly gave birth and then left their newborn infants to die in trash bins.

For many couples experiencing the trauma of infertility, anger is often directed at one’s spouse. John and I did not allow ourselves to vent our anger or direct blame at each other. Our anger at God soon resolved itself into reliance upon His strength and goodness as together we faced each day.

3. Bargaining — The Bible gives us an example of a woman who bargained with God for a child. In I Samuel 1:11 Hannah made a vow before the Lord saying,

“O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.” (NIV)

Like Hannah, I also bargained with God for the opportunity to conceive a child. In my prayers I claimed the words of the angel to Sarah when she doubted God’s promise that she would bear a son, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14) I fully expected and sincerely trusted that God could perform a miracle in our lives and allow us to conceive a child.

4. Depression — To again cite the Biblical example of Hannah, her husband, Elkanah tried to comfort her in her weeping and downheartedness at not being able to conceive a child:

“Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?” (I Samuel 1:8)

A well-meaning loved one, upon learning of our inability to conceive a child said to me, “At least you have each other, that’s what’s most important.” While that may have been true, having each other did not ease the sadness in our hearts at not being able to share that love with our own child.

During this time, many of our friends and relatives were announcing pregnancies and giving birth to babies. While we were happy for them and tried to share their joy, it became increasingly difficult to mask our tears of sadness behind smiles of delight. Baby showers became dreaded occasions, especially when someone would make a comment like “When is it going

to be your turn?” I often found myself wallowing in the depths of self-pity, asking God “Why did you allow this?” and feeling that we were the only ones we knew who were unable to have a baby. Upon recognizing my self-pity as sin and seeking God’s forgiveness, He began to lead us to those who could minister to us. We found three families within our own small congregation who had suffered infertility problems and adopted children. We slowly began to share our situation with specific Christian couples who joined with us in prayer and offered encouragement. We opened our arms of love to nephews and friend’s babies and were privileged to share in their growth and development.

5. Acceptance — Although we experienced many months of anger, despair, tears, isolation, depression, sadness, and heartache, we slowly began to accept our situation and God’s will in our lives. A verse which was especially meaningful to us was Romans 8:28, “We know that in everything God works for good with those who are called according to his purpose.” We no longer blamed God for our inability to conceive a child, for certainly He had not caused it. As we claimed His goodness and asked for His direction in our lives, our prayers began to change from “Lord, help us to conceive a child,” to “Lord, if it is your will for us to be parents, please send us the child You want us to have.”

Not A Place But A Person

IVAN E. JAMESON

Austin, Texas

I was at school when they called me out of class. They had found her that morning, asleep on the couch in the living room, her head resting peacefully on her hands with their palms together—only they couldn’t awaken her. “Would you speak at the funeral?” he asked. That was Norman, my brother, talking.

When we got there, Rosie and I, the familiar house, the one where I had grown up, was fill-

A Miracle in Itself

It has now been more than six years since we learned of our inability to conceive a child. God heard the desires of our hearts and has blessed us with two beautiful, healthy children through adoption. Our daughter and son remind me daily of our own status as adopted children of God, joint heirs with Jesus. John and I share the same joys, hopes, concerns, and even frustrations as all parents who rear children, and we could not love our children anymore even if they were our own, for truly they are our own. Because of our experience with infertility and the adoption process, God has led us to be an encouragement to others who have suffered similarly. The intent of this article has been to share with other Christians an experience about which little has been written, to offer support to couples who may be experiencing infertility, and to encourage all of us to be sensitive to childless couples.

¹Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, MacMillan, 1969, pp. 38-137.

Related Reading

Anderson, Ann Kiemel. *Taste of Tears—Touch of God*. Nashville, Tennessee: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1984.

ed with familiar faces—neighbors who had lived thereabouts for fifty-sixty-more-years. Solemn, sad, weathered faces. We “shook and howdied” and embraced several. Words of condolences were exchanged. Remembrances of her good deeds were recalled, and a few tears were shed.

“It was a blessing, going so peacefully.” “She had been so lonely since he died—it’s

been almost four years, you know; she never did get over it.” “She was at church the night before in her usual place, sitting so quietly, as she always did. Must have had a heart attack there—had chest pains, but told everybody it was nothing; she didn’t want us worrying.”

You would have to know the community—or maybe you wouldn’t; dirt farmers, mostly aging, good folk, so neighborly, so many sorrowing over the loss of loved ones—husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children—in the past few years, even one who had been killed in an accident just the week before.

They had brought food; they always do at times like this, so much of it. Not just food, there are those caravans of blood donors going all the way to Memphis, a hundred miles away, to give blood when a neighbor needed it! Then those 200 mile round trips, just to visit the person in the hospital. And can’t you hear the roar of the tractors rolling into an ailing farmer’s field at daybreak—neighbors putting in the crop for him!

That describes the community—men and women, the salt of the earth! Loving! Sharing! Helping! Sundays—most of them in church, the little Church of Christ! But how they were hurting! How much sorrow they have experienced!

Driving the 700 miles there, through the night, the question kept coming: “What to say at the funeral—Mom’s funeral?” “How can I minister to their needs at this time, on this occasion?”

The it came! The answer! Almost as if the Holy Spirit spoke there in that car!—in the night!—somewhere in Arkansas! “Read quickly, and without much comment, Psalms 23:4; Psalms 30:5b, 11-12; Isaiah 61:1-3; Matthew 5:4; John 14:1-3; 15-18, 27; 15:11; Acts 9:31; II Corinthians 1;3-7; I Thessalonians 4:9-18; and II Thessalonians 2:16-17.”

“Remind them,” the thoughts flooded on, “of the comfort of that place—that little church building—of all the memories connected with it—happy times and sad—the weekly gatherings—the ‘big-meetin’s’—and those many, many—oh so many—funerals—the singing, such sweet, soft, melodious singing—the comforting presence of close friends and car-

ing brothers and sisters in the Lord.”

“Remind them—yes—of that quiet, safe, familiar place—beloved—so comforting! But remind them, also, that the time comes when they have to walk out through those doors—out into the world again! Ask them, ‘Where, then, is the comfort?’ ‘**Where, then, is the comfort?**’”

But what about the neighborhood—the community—both the physical community and the spiritual one? Isn’t there comfort there?

“Oh yes, there is the comfort of the community, yes, remind them of that, too—the warmth of lifelong friendships, the joys of fellowship, the help of neighbors in hard times of need, their just being there to ease the loneliness, to share the sorrow.”

“But, remind them, there comes a time when the neighbors must go home, and they are all alone, as she was!—as Mom was!—when they call out in the night and no one is there, when the table which once was a place of shared family comfort and solace becomes a torture rack of loneliness; when they lie down to sleep and—as she did—choose the strange couch in order to avoid the memory-filled bed! Ask them, ‘Where, then, is the comfort?’”

“Tell them this—say, ‘Beloved, it is then, if the comfort is to be real, if it is to be permanent, that it must, of necessity, be in a Person, a supernatural, divine Person!’”

Now I see! Now I understand! That’s what those scriptures in the beginning were saying! There is the source of true comfort—even true joy!

Rejoice, beloved, you are not alone! God is not dead! He is not away! He is alive and well! He will live victoriously in you, whether you are in a comfortable, quiet, place apart, like this peaceful old church building, surrounded by a multitude of loving, comforting, friends sharing your grief, your toils, your trails, or lying awake, alone, in an empty house in the middle of a dark and lonely night!

“...for He Himself said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you,’ so that we may confidently say, ‘The Lord is my Helper, I will not be afraid.’” (Hebrews 13:5b-6a)

Sorrowing ones, God’s Holy Spirit is not a retired author! He is the “Paracletos” of John 14—“the one called along side”—“the another of the same kind”—That’s what Jesus called him—“The Intercessor”—“The Comforter.” He is your comfort!

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you...for you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ ... And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness’ for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:11, 15, 26-27)

Brokenhearted ones, Jesus has not deserted us, He has not left us orphans!

“...God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God; to those who

are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

He is the ‘Me’ of Isaiah 61:1-3—Not only in the death of a loved one, not only in our times of loneliness and sadness, but in any and every circumstance of life. He is there—He is here—to comfort!

“What shall we say then to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, not things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” AMEN! (Romans 8:31,35-39)

Beloved brethren, live in peace, live rejoicing, live with courage, live with confidence; you are the children of God!

The Source of Christian Boldness

ELMER PROUT

Roseville, California

Acts chapter four records a dramatic scene in which Simon Peter and the religious rulers are locked in a battle of wills. The rulers, with the power of Rome to back them up if they wished to use it, “charged him not to speak...in the name of Jesus.” Simon replied, “I cannot but speak of what I have seen and heard.” (cf. Acts 4:17-20)

That is impressive courage. It is invigorating to read that account of brave conviction. No fear, no doubt, no compromise — Simon Peter

went on to lead the new church in the paths of boldness in evangelism. The Christians filled the city of Jerusalem with the word of Jesus Christ. (Acts 4:21-33)

But there is another page in Peter’s life story. It tells of another time when Simon had the chance to speak out for Jesus. It was night. Beside a small fire the Apostle warmed his hands. His heart was cold with the dread he could not name: the undefined fear that the Jesus he loved was getting into something Simon

could not understand. Not far from the fire where Peter stood a trial was in progress. The questions and insults were thrown rudely at Jesus. Simon Peter felt lonely, exposed and defensive. Every eye at the fireside seemed to be set on him.

"You were with this Jesus!" A maid had spoken directly to Peter. He was no longer an unknown stranger — he had been recognized. Now what would happen? If he acknowledged his connection with Jesus would Peter be on trail next? Did Peter think, "I just stopped to get warm...I didn't think any one would know me..." He had no choice, it seemed: "I don't know him!! I never met him!! I'll take an oath on it!!" The denial was spoken — no courage left, only shame and the bitter tears in the dark

New Beginnings

(Continued from page 86)

of high school, college days, marriage, and professional career. She and her deeply committed Christian husband, John, have suffered the frustration, bitterness and agony of being denied natural parenthood. But this is not the end of the narrative for this beautiful Christian couple; for as Janis pours out their story of agony and ecstasy you will feel the affirmation of Scripture again, that this is the victory which overcomes all of life's hurts, obstacles, and problems: "even our faith." (I John 5:4)

What does one say when asked to share in the funeral of his own mother? Ivan Jameson in his own intensely personal style, shares his faith that comfort, strength and hope come only in a right relationship with the Person of Christ. How do Christians stand up bravely and boldly when life is really threatening? Elmer Prout suggests that the secret to such boldness is only in Him who was made flesh, dwelt among us, has been raised from death and now reigns eternally. There is truly no other name (Being) under heaven whereby men must be

night...

How does a person move from the shame of denial to the strength of confession? How did the Simon of the courtyard become the Simon of the courtroom in Acts 4? Was it self-realization? Auto-suggestion? Did he spend fifty days thinking positively about himself?

It was none of those approaches. It was a forgiving Master who repeated his call to a fallen disciple. It was the Lamb of God who set Simon Peter on the rock again. Simon's courage stood on the rock called forgiving love.

And, because we too stumble and fall, our courage stands in the same place. The forgiveness of God through Christ is the source of Christian boldness.

saved — made whole, brave, and victorious (Acts 4:12).

Elton Higgs' gift from God to take great Biblical truths and express them in poetic beauty is only too evident in his affirmation of the incarnation and how that "flesh emerged as Word" enables God to intimately empathize with us, suffer with us, save and sanctify us.

In a box on page 88 you will see the special issues published over the past several years, and the modest cost of the individual issue or volume.

On behalf of *Integrity's* directors and our editorial board I want to express again our deepest appreciation for the support of our readers. God has worked mightily in you so that this ministry might continue; and at the end of this year with new beginnings still before us, we commit this journal into His hands to use as He may will and work.

Joseph F. Jones, Chairman
Integrity Editorial Board

"And the Word Became Flesh"

(John 1:14)

When Word invested in flesh,
No matter the shrouds that swathed it;
The donning of sin's poor corpse
(Indignity enough)
Was rightly wrapped in robes of death.

Yet breath of God
Broke through the shroud,
Dispersed the cloud
That darkened every birth before.
Those swaddling bands bespoke
A glory in the grave,
When flesh emerged as Word.

Take up *this* flesh, O Lord:
Re-form it with Your breath,
That, clothed in wordless death,
It may be Your Word restored.

—Elton D. Higgs

Emmanuel

In God's Presence
Is the essence
Of perfect earth;
In one Birth
Knows all earth
The essence
Of God's Presence.

—Elton D. Higgs