

# Integrity

4051 S. Lincoln Road  
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106  
Permit No. 189

January/February 1991

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

(Continued from page 15)

Thank you for *Integrity*. I eagerly anticipate each issue and my soul is nourished as I read and contemplate what your writers are saying. I enjoy the artwork and poetry. Thanks for using mine. May God continue to bless all of you in your ministry in *Integrity*.

Frankie Shanks  
Poplar Bluff, MO

I look forward to receiving your magazine and its refreshing articles. Keep up the good work!

Jewel L. Jones  
Henagar, AL

I continue to be blessed by the ministry of *Integrity*. May God be with you.

Dwain Evans  
Houston, TX

God's blessings upon you as you faithfully apply His Word.

Catherine Reed  
Placerville, CA

Keep up the good work!

John Richardson  
Columbus, OH

Thank you for your refreshing and challenging articles. They are appreciated.

Helen M. Berg  
Port Arthur, TX

Thank you for sending me *Integrity* when I didn't pay for it. I want to encourage you to keep up the good work.

*Integrity* reader  
Joplin, MO

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Jan./Feb. 1991  
Vol. 22, No. 1

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written exclusively for  
INTEGRITY are  
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Available from  
1269 Pickwick Place  
Flint, MI 48507

## We Have Hope and Love

Before my friend died of cancer, we had time to talk about life and death. We chuckled over the good times we remembered. We discussed her physical suffering. We prayed together. She wondered if the disease was somehow punishment from God, although she knew her family's history of cancer, and the years she herself had smoked. Having time to search her past for sin, she could only confess to me regrets for not having handled certain situations better. She was a Christian. And I knew her as big-hearted and hospitable, evidenced by the collection of people and animals who gravitated to her when they needed a home away from home.

The day we knew we must say good-bye, we spoke of seeing each other again in heaven. Then I watched as she reached for her husband. Although they were still living in the same house, they had been estranged for years. I had had trouble forgiving him for the pain he had inflicted on her. More than one of us had wondered why she had stayed married to him. But there in the hospital room, she asked for his forgiveness for their past, and told him that she loved him. Now I see him the way she saw him that day — through eyes of compassion and love.

Pain. Suffering. Hope. Love. Reconciliation. All of us are faced with these issues some time in our lives. In this month's *Integrity*, Joseph Jones compassionately describes how much God cares for those of us in pain. Sidney and Wayne Bonvallet, a couple who have allowed God to heal their own painful experiences, offer significant advice for those of us struggling to get on with life. Craig Watts clearly explains what real love is and how we can express it within our fractured lives. Elton Higgs describes in poignant detail how a human who knows the Creator might feel while in the very midst of crisis. Then Kay Kendall presents us with an amazingly hopeful, upbeat article regarding people living with disabilities.

Those last few days with my suffering friend would have been lived out quite differently without the knowledge of God's care, or our hope of life after death. Although disease made her body fragile and inadequate, the love she felt for everyone was strong and huge, overflowing the hospital room and reaching toward all those she knew wherever they were. May we all learn to imitate the kind of love from which none of us can be separated.

Diane Kilmer  
Co-Editor

## “Does God Really Care When I Hurt?”

JOSEPH F. JONES

It was the close of the *Integrity* Board meeting in which I had agreed to prepare this article that we joined in singing:

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained  
Too deeply for mirth and song,  
As the burdens press, and the cares distress,  
And the way grows weary and long?

O yes, He cares, I know He cares,  
His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary,  
The long nights dreary,  
I know my Savior cares.

The Christian brothers and sisters who share responsibilities for this journal really believe this biblical assurance, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ cares when His children hurt, whatever the cause of that hurt and suffering may be. We further believe that He cares not only about His Christian children, but that He is touched by the pain and cries of all His creation.

This morning as I sat reading the last material before the typing began, the telephone rang, and a voice filled with pain and grief said, “Joe, Doris just died a few minutes ago.” The godly woman who died was a long time Christian, committed wife and loving mother and grandmother. Cause of death? That dreaded word “Cancer.” Painful illness followed with death had again invaded a beautiful life and family. The universality of this experience, namely, suffering and death hardly needs to be argued. Lloyd J. Ogilvie says that we all have three things in common: we have known the night of suffering, are in the night of suffering right now, or are deeply troubled about someone who is. There is something else that we also have in common, and that is two questions: Why does there have to be suffering in a world that

God made and declared good? And the second question, Granting that the world as we know it has the reality of suffering and pain in it, does the God whom we know through Jesus Christ really care that I hurt? Where is this God when my heart is pained, and the burdens press, and the cares distress, and the way grows weary and long?

### Affirmation More Than Argumentation

It is not the purpose of this message to enter into a philosophical or theological treatment of the complex problems of evil, pain, and suffering in the world, even were this writer competent to do so. While there is an abundance of literature from Jewish and Christian sources dealing with the problem of evil in the world, much of it comes from the perspective of a defense of God against skeptics and unbelievers who scoff at those who believe in a loving, all-wise and all-powerful God who yet allows such hurt to exist in the world. God hardly needs His mortals to argue His Being or divine intents in the world. It is not academic argumentation defending God's ways, that hurting men and women need, as much as the assurance that in their hurt God is near, and that His presence and power are available to provide courage and sustaining strength.

My life has been cast in a role that has seen about every form of human pain and suffering, illnesses and accidents, babies defective at birth, victims of natural catastrophies, and victims from the violence and sin of their fellowmen. Then there are those who suffer as a consequence of their own abused freedom, while others hurt as a result of human ignorance. But whatever the cause or source we may assign for human hurt, at that moment the damaged body and aching heart need affirmation such as the prophet gave when he wrote, “In all their affliction He was

afflicted" (Isa. 63:9). Two basic affirmations (or assumptions) undergird the answer to our question, Does God really care when I hurt? 1) That we live in a world where suffering is very real and universal, often unequally and unfairly experienced, sometimes explainable but often a mystery; and 2) that there is a true God, Lord of heaven and earth, Father of us all, whom the apostle Paul praised as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (II Cor. 1:3). It is this God who "comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction" (II Cor. 1:4).

### Simplistic Answers from Sincere People

There seems to be a deep-rooted need in most of us humans to answer or explain the presence of hurt and suffering. Whether requested or not by the sufferer, explanations will be offered, often bringing little hope and light on the problem, sometimes doing more harm than good. Representative of such sincere intentions of would-be comforters were Job's friends who parroted their traditional views about suffering. But in defense of Job's friends two things must be affirmed which were comforting: first of all, they came (Job 2:11). It must have been a painful experience for them to see their friend in such dire distress. It is not easy to see a friend suffering, and most of us would rather avoid the sight. In the second place, they sat in silent support, "for they saw that his suffering was very great" (Job 2:13).

It may help some of us to be reminded of the frequently offered words intended for comfort in the presence of human suffering and grief which may hurt more than help. Many such answers are efforts to defend the integrity and character of God. "It is the will of God," when we don't really know that. Spoken to the grieving parents of a two-year old who has been killed by a drunken driver who lost control of his automobile and ended up on the sidewalk where the child was playing, these words can only bring anger and resentment toward God. "It could have been much worse," or "He's much better off in heaven" may sound comforting but in actuality may be both confusing

and disquieting. "It was just his time, his number came up," an often reported fatalistic view explaining war deaths. Wherever there is human hurt and suffering of any kind, let the friend and would-be comforter exercise great restraint of speech. More comforting may be the warm embrace and silent presence!

### The God Who Cares and Comforts

We have stated our two basic assumptions that we live in a world saturated with the presence of evil and suffering, and that there is a God who cares and comforts. How then does God enter into the sufferings of His creatures to demonstrate this love and concern? Several suggestions are here offered which hopefully may bring practical help and possibly instill some meaning into what may appear to be senseless pain and suffering.

1) God can and certainly does bring His caring into reality through the community of faith, the People of God. Here are those who have experienced the whole gamut of human suffering, and can identify with the present sufferer, thus assuring him or her of freedom from loneliness, alienation, and of thinking that he or she may be the only one who ever experienced such pain and hurt. Where I once ministered in a congregation there was a godly elder and his wife who had borne the grief of losing their twelve year old precious son in death. Consequently, whenever I received a call that a child or young person had died, this elder accompanied me for the first condolence visit. He has walked through such waters, he really knew what a broken parental heart was experiencing. The church might well be characterized as a "Fellowship of Sufferers," for indeed it is; and through the individual and corporate hurts of all the members God mediates His love and concern to others as pain and hurt invade.

2) God comes with His caring through the avenue of prayer, but not always as the sufferer might pray or expect. The apostle Paul shares with us his pain from a "thorn in the flesh," characterized as "a messenger of Satan," to harass and humble him lest his pride become a real stumblingblock. Whatever the nature of this thorn, it was the source of much intense

pain and hurt. Understandably the man of God turned to his God for help. "Remove it, remove it, let it leave me," we hear the apostle crying out. But instead of removing the thorn, God's answer to his praying was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." The suffering servant of the Lord becomes a glowing witness to the sustaining presence and power of God's grace. Look for a moment at Luke's account of Jesus' intense agony and inner pain as He was faced with the horror of death by crucifixion. Praying with great intensity that He might be spared the cup of such suffering, the Father dispatched an angel from heaven to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43). Crosses and thorns may come and not be avoided or removed, yet His caring will be evident through the victory of faith.

3) Through the encouragement of the Scriptures God brings us assurance of His compassion and care. "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). A beautiful forty-two year old Christian woman, wife of a church deacon, pleaded with me through anguishing eyes and pain-wracked body, "Joe, I don't want to die; I want to live and enjoy my family and life in the fellowship of this church." But she knew that her cancer-riddled body was rapidly losing the fight for life. No simplistic religious cliches would do; no veiled lies that she will probably be around long after the rest of us are gone! But what an assurance from the scriptures of God's sustaining grace:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
When you pass through the waters I will be with you;  
And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
When you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
And the flame shall not consume you.  
For I am the Lord your God,  
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior."  
(Isaiah 43:1b-3a)

And with such comfort and hope she fell asleep.

4) The sufferer can put his pain, emotional grief, inner confusion all into the hands of a Sovereign God, for He is indeed Lord of life and death. From his Roman prison the apostle Paul shares his secret of dealing with present pain and even anticipated death. It is his prayer and faith that "with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:20,21). He does not try to explain the unfairness of his imprisonment, the false accusations which had brought him to this grievous predicament. Whatever his lot, Christ will be glorified.

5) But the final word of God's caring and compassionate heart comes in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. In the dying moments of Jesus we see the ignorance and evil of men which is often a source of pain brought under redemptive love. "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." At the foot of the cross and in the crowds around the cross there was present the long list of human emotions, needs, and the agony of a lost world laid bare. A mother's heart is pierced with sorrow as her Son's broken body is pierced with a spear. But just then she hears the caring voice of Him who is both her son and God's Son saying to the beloved John, "Behold, your mother!" And the bereaved mother found compassion and caring in that disciple's home from that day forward.

A penitent thief, suffering the same kind of death and getting what he deserved, heard a welcome into the paradise of God. In those last hours even stoic Roman soldiers felt the presence of God in this man hanging on the center cross, and the centurion in charge exclaimed, "Certainly this man was innocent," (Luke 23:47) while another Gospel writer who may have witnessed the crucifixion has the centurion declare, "Truly, this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39).

The cross puts meaning into suffering as no other event in human history. Paul, describing Jesus' sufferings, says, "God spared not His own Son." (Rom. 8:32) And why was He not spared? Because God had a purpose for Him, a great and glorious world-redeeming purpose, and suffering was the road to it. Here is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah's pic-

ture of the Suffering Servant in chapter 53. "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. . . and with his stripes we are healed."

But the final word of the gospel is not suffering and death for the Son of God, but rather life and hope through the resurrection. So this new message of death and resurrection gave new meaning to all who first heard it in the ancient world; and it has continued to bring hope to all who suffer the ills of mortality, the work of evil people, or the unexplained hurts and suffering at the hands of Nature. No wonder that

the apostle Paul could write, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Rom. 8:18) Why? Because Christ has been raised from the dead. So the saints can sing, "The Lord God omnipotent reigns!" And in this hope the Christian can both live and suffer; yes, even die.

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Dr. Joseph F. Jones has ministered to the Church of Christ in Troy, Michigan for 22 years. He holds doctorates in higher education and pastoral counseling. Joseph has worked and written for *Integrity* magazine since its earliest years and has served as the president of the Board for more than ten years.

## Hurts We Felt So Long Ago — Healing the Pain Within

SIDNEY AND WAYNE BONVALLET

We are children of God. . . created in His "image and likeness." The Psalmist proclaims in Psalms 139:13-14:

"For you created my inmost being,  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully  
and wonderfully made. . ."

We are His crowning creation. Then why do we often times feel so badly about ourselves? I am talking about those inner feelings we experience on a deep personal level. . . when we feel weak or frightened. Sometimes we feel unloved, undeserving, not as good as others. We experience the fear of failure, of not being liked, of not knowing, of being rejected. We fear that someone might find out what we are *really* like and not care for us. These are *painful feelings*, that too often stop us dead in our tracks; stop us from achieving the love and suc-

cess for which we were created.

We were not born with an inferiority complex. We acquired it over a period of time because we were not adequately affirmed by those whose love we sought. Because parents and other significant adults in our childhood were not perfect, we all acquired some measure of wounded self-esteem. None of us escaped childhood without some pain.

The intent of this article is *not* to fix blame on parents or other significant adults for our pain; but simply to face the realities so we can start the healing process. Because we had to be taught, socialized and disciplined, the "situation of childhood" leaves scars of inadequacy and inferiority. We then spend our adult life struggling with these negative feelings which work their way out in negative, self-defeating behaviors. Many people live in the feelings of shame, inadequacy and fear for their entire life.

Jesus and Paul admonished adults about their treatment of children in:

Matthew 18:10

"See that you do not *look down* on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."

Ephesians 6:4:

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Another version states: "Provoke not your children to wrath . . .")

Why were Jesus and Paul so emphatic in their admonition about the treatment of little children? Part of the answer may lie in the devastating effects of harsh treatment that can have lifelong consequences. The pains we suffered in childhood stay with us and permeate our adult lives *until* we have healed from them. Let me share three poignant examples:

### But I'm Only Kidding

Kerrie, a beautiful little 9 year old girl, is constantly teased by her father. He teases, "Why are you so ugly?" He often tells her if she doesn't "shape up" he'll get her good. Daily he *playfully* threatens to spank her or not feed her. When she objects to the teasing he chides, "I'm only kidding. Can't you take a joke?" Her self-image is being molded in a negative way. Kerrie already shows signs of low self-esteem.

### We're Going to Throw You Away!

James is a 60 year old man who recently got in touch with the *terror* he felt in childhood. His parents routinely threatened to throw him away, or, call the police to come and get him and take him away, or if he misbehaved, they would take him to the Boy's Reform School (which they drove him past to point it out to him). As he outgrew the believability of each threat, they used another in its place. The final threat was, "if you don't do as we say, we will pack your bags and put them on the porch." His father constantly compared him to the other "more successful" boys in the neighborhood. His father was abusive in his discipline, knock-

ing him in the head or "spanking" him (which were actually beatings). As a result, he felt he was not as good as other people. James had severe feelings of inferiority and felt unlovable until he began his healing journey.

### Well That's it Then

LeeAnn came from a very cold and rigid home. There was no display of loving emotion. She was never hugged or kissed or told, "I love you." On her 18th birthday she moved out. As she took the last of her possessions to her car, her mother said, "That's it then?" and she left. As an adult, LeeAnn battles with anorexia. She says she feels unworthy and compulsively seeks the validation she so desperately needed as a child. She has a full time job, goes to night school and is a volunteer for four service agencies. She can *never do enough*.

Many behaviors that we accepted as normal in childhood were *hurtful* and left scars. Children see grownups as all-knowing and truthful, therefore, they accept negative treatment and descriptions of themselves as deserved and factual.

Not all people go through this level of destructive experiences. Many do and don't remember or deny it; it is too painful to remember. Our sense of self was shaped by whatever experiences we had with the significant adults in our life. Even the best parents lose patience at times and inadvertently hurt the feelings of a little one.

If we will recognize our own pain and anger, we can start the healing process. We must alter our inner images so we do not cling to them and allow them to determine our behavior. Very often we are prone to repeat the very behaviors that had such a negative impact on us. Following are some self-destructive behaviors that can develop which sabotage us and keep us from growing in the full glory of the gifts God gave us:

- Inability to form intimate relationships
- Poor, ineffective communication skills
- Aggressive, angry behavior (e.g., Blaming others for everything that goes wrong in our life)
- Loneliness and withdrawal

- Letting others run over us. Unable to stand up for our rights and beliefs
- Fear of responsibility
- Compulsive spending resulting in financial problems
- Substance abuse
- Controlling events and people around us
- Etc.

**These behaviors cause pain**, and unresolved hurt does not just go away with time.

Jesus cautioned in Matthew 18:6:

“But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

It sure makes you want to parent your own children better. Could we “Parent in the name of Jesus?”

Gibran wrote of parents, “You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.” Just as a small deflection as the arrow leaves the bow can cause it to miss the target, so negative seeds planted in the child early in life can cause them to miss out on the joy and love they might have otherwise had.

**There is hope!** We are told in Ephesians 4:22-24:

“You were taught with regard to your former way of life to put off your *old self*, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made *new in the attitude of your minds*; and to put on the new self *created to be like God* in true righteousness and holiness.”

William James, the Father of American Psychology, said, “The greatest discovery of our time has been that we can change our lives by changing our attitudes.” That’s the same good news Christ brought us!

We can heal the “hurts we felt so long ago.” The feelings of humiliation and pain when we were yelled at or made fun of, or punished . . . or when love was withheld from us. We are assured in I Timothy 1:6-7:

“. . . I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you. . . For God did not

give us a spirit of timidity, but a *spirit of power, love and self discipline.*”

### The Quest to Health and Light

We can start our journey to renewal and healing the past wounds. What a wonderful time we live in with so many avenues for help. The first area we can explore is the power of forgiveness. That sounds simple, but there is more to it than that. Forgiveness is a *process*. It presumes there is something to forgive. To do that, we must give up the denial and face the reality that we were hurt; that the person who hurt us was wrong. In this way, we will have faced the pain and can then forgive and move *through* it. If we stop short at any of these steps, the healing process cannot be complete.

Working through the pain is the hard part. There are ways to do this; places to go for help:

- Read books (*Healing The Child Within, The Family, Toxic Parents, Healing The Shame That Binds You, the Bible, etc.*)
- Private or group counseling
- Join a support group (e.g. Emotions Anonymous, Adult Children of Alcoholics, A.A., Families Anonymous, etc.)
- Practice saying affirmations to *drown out* the negative self-talk (I am a strong, worthy person, I am lovable. God loves me and so do I. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, etc.)
- Attend legitimate healing seminars (John Bradshaw-Healing The Child Within, etc.)
- Let our brothers and sisters in Christ give loving support
- Confessing and sharing our pain with a confidant

If your parents were not intentional abusers, you could share your feelings of hurt with them. Very often, they are not aware of how a particular incident may have wounded you. My most healing experience was hearing my mother say she was sorry for the things she did that hurt me, and that if she could she would surely take them all back. “I’m sorry,” touches the wounded child within and releases a healing balm.

And above all, cling to the hope we are promised in Hebrews 13:5-6:

**“Never will I leave you;  
Never will I forsake you.  
So say with confidence,  
The Lord is my helper;  
I will not be afraid.”**

Such a soothing promise gives us the safe harbor we all seek. . . the “bosom of Abraham”

for which we yearn. We have God in each other. We can tenderly reach out with a kind word of encouragement, a loving touch, a glance of compassion and **heal the pain within.**

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Sidney and Wayne Bonvallet are an active couple in the Fenton, Michigan Church of Christ - Christian Church.

## The Love That is of God

CRAIG M. WATTS

Love is a perennial preoccupation of the human race. It is one of the qualities or capacities that make us distinct from the other creatures of the earth. Love is an incomparable power. No wonder love has inspired so many songs and poems. Its praises have been loudly shouted from house-tops and tenderly whispered into receptive ears.

There seems to be no limit to the exalted assertions made about the importance of love. One poet has written, “Take away love and our earth is a tomb.” Another person has claimed, “It is love that gives things their value.” A theologian once stated, “Only love can bring individual beings to their perfect completion as individuals.” An Italian Renaissance poet maintained, “Any time that is not spent on love is time wasted.” A popular contemporary musician sang, “All there is is love; love is all there is.”

But not all love is created equal. Not all that wears the label of love is worthy of identical honor. I John 4:7-12 tells us that “love is of God.” But not everything that passes itself off as love can legitimately claim divinity. Some expressions of love are truncated, constricted and ingrown. Such love may be the product of

some tribal deity but not of God of Jesus Christ who is the God of the universe.

Love has often been understood to be a feeling, a deep regard, attraction or devotion toward another person or thing. But such a definition of love is dubious. As the Bible depicts it, love is not primarily a feeling at all. It is a matter of will, *active* will. Love always behaves itself. It expresses itself. Love can’t stay hidden away in our skins somewhere, tucked in the recesses of our hearts. Love shows its stuff. Any claim to love that is not manifested in motion is empty.

A man says, “I love my children.” But he neglects them in their hunger and beats them without mercy. A young woman claims, “I love my job.” But she doesn’t show up half the time and even when she does she fails to perform the tasks assigned to her. “I love to learn,” says a would-be student. But he never picks up a book or reads an article or explores a new subject or enters a museum. The love such people as these claim to have is nothing but a fantasy. Real love is not mere sentiment, but an entire orientation toward life.

Still, I suppose every one has some genuine active love in their lives. Most of us have heard

stories about Nazi SS officers who ran concentration camps, directing the torture and murder of helpless men, women and children by day, but at night treating their own wives and children with tender affection. There are legends about the devotion some Mafia members have for their families. Yet these people do not hesitate to cheat, steal, maim and kill others in order to increase their profits. We find this disturbing. It's hard to imagine that someone who is capable of the worst abuse and violence toward others can still show love. It's tough to admit that there are people who will not hesitate to cruelly offer innocent victims on the altar of some ideological cause or personal advancement and yet in certain circumstances these same people may be capable of self-giving devotion.

Our scripture text says that "whoever loves is born of God and knows God." Does that mean that the most thoroughly twisted, morally bankrupt person is numbered with the redeemed if that individual manages to love someone, someplace at sometime? Is any and every manifestation of love sufficient proof that a person is in a vital and positive relationship with God? Of course not. But at the same time we must confess that everyone is connected to God in some way or another. After all, everyone of us is a product of the creative world of God, made in God's image. As such, all of us have a certain capacity to love.

The problem is that much of the love in the world is kept on a very short leash. It is not allowed to wander far. In fact, there is a good deal of covert selfishness in much that goes by the name of love. Consider this question: who do we normally love? We love our family, our friends, our race, our nation. All of these are things to which we are attached. They are a part of us and we are a part of them. We love "our own." Our love points back to ourselves, but this love is insufficient. It is ingrown and all-too-human.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus taught, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them" (6:32). In other words, if you love just your own, what you do is not much better than what the members of the Mob can do. Sure, it is com-

mendable that you make sacrifices for your family. It is a worthwhile endeavor to work to improve your neighborhood. It is honorable to support your country. But these loves are all natural, not distinctively divine. In fact, pushed to extremes, the love for "our own" can become diabolical. A distorted love for church made the Thirty Years War possible. An excessive love of race made the Holocaust possible. Not a war could be fought without there being a widespread, immoderate love of nation.

During this past week I was listening to a news report which dealt with the continuing conflict in Lebanon. At the conclusion of the broadcast, the correspondent mentioned seeing in the midst of the ruins a young man wearing a sweatshirt that had the words, "I LOVE THE PEOPLE," printed on it. The newsman remarked that such an assertion has limited credibility in Lebanon. And not only in Lebanon is the claim unconvincing, but in every place where there is deadly conflict. For all too often the claim, "I LOVE THE PEOPLE," means, "I LOVE MY PEOPLE." Such limited love is a dangerous thing. It turns a noble virtue into a corrupting vice. Shakespeare wrote,

For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

You see, we need a vision of love that is broader, deeper and purer than we normally see acted out in our world. We need a glimpse of love as love ought to be, love that has no disguised self-centeredness, love that does not justify hostility toward others. An abstract definition won't do. We need a definition of love that is alive, full, vibrant, challenging. And we have it — in Jesus Christ. In Christ divine love was made flesh. If we want to know what love looks like when every hint of self-centeredness is stripped away, look to Jesus. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world, so that we might live through him." A Christian notion of love cannot be separated from the person of Jesus Christ because we cannot know what love is in its manifold dimensions without looking to the story of Christ. Jesus didn't come preaching love as a general

principle. He came as the form of truthful love and he calls us to follow him.

*The love that is of God is a love that meets people where they are.* It does not stand from afar and shout "I love you" from beyond a wall of safety. Divine love is vulnerable. It identifies with the loved ones and draws near. In Christ, God came as one of us to show us the true form of love. In Michel Tournier's story, *The Four Wise Men*, one of the Magi is an African king named Gaspar. When he approaches the infant Jesus' resting place in the manger and bends down to see the child, he discovers a black baby with kinky hair and tiny flat nose. This appearance of the Christ-child is seen as a lesson in love. The king describes what the encounter taught him.

The Child in the crib. . .made black, better to welcome. . .the African king. There's more in that than in all the love stories I know. That beautiful image teaches us to become like those we love, to see with their eyes, to speak with their mother tongue, to respect them. . .True love is the pleasure we get from another's pleasure, the joy, the happiness it gives us to know that he is happy. (p. 202).

*The love that is of God is a love that forgives.* Forgiveness is not something that we do naturally and joyfully. When we are offended or threatened or wounded, our first impulse is to respond in kind. We rebel at the idea that we should absorb the pain and seek to reestablish a positive relationship with the offending party. That strikes us as an act of weakness. We pick our heroes from those who know how to meet destruction with greater destruction. The popularity of the revenge movies of our times bears testimony about the state of our souls. We get a thrill out of seeing someone "get even." We are prone to be like James and John, who were so bitterly incensed when a village of Samaritans would not receive Jesus and his company. The two apostles erupted, "Lord, do you want us to bid fire to come down out of heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:34). Jesus' attitude was made clear as he responded

to the request by chastening the hot-headed disciples.

Common wisdom sees forgiveness as a bitter pill and says, in contrast, that revenge is sweet. We may feel more akin to the mighty but fallen Samson, blinded captive in Gaza, who passionately prayed for his enemies — not for their salvation but for their utter destruction (Judges 16:28-30). We are tempted to chime right in whenever the song of retaliation is sung. But Jesus sang a different song. Though humiliated, tortured and abused, he uttered from the very cross that killed him, that sublime prayer, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:24). He would not perpetuate the cycle of violence but was ready to absolve guilt and invite reconciliation. That is something that can be done only by divine love.

*The love that is of God is a love that goes beyond the circles of friendship, kinship and nationality.* This love extends its embrace to those who are outsiders, even enemies. Jesus did not limit his compassion to the good, respectable people of his world. He accepted those who had been rejected by proper society. Prostitutes, the hated tax collectors, the Samaritan half-breeds, were all received and respected. Equally, he advocated love toward the traditional enemies of his own people. He responded to threats, not by building unbreachable defensive barriers, but by constructing bridges of compassion. He would not give self-protection priority. Jesus surprised his opponents by unexpected care.

Our scripture text tells us that "if we love . . . God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." We fulfill God's love as we follow in Christ's steps. Long-time missionary to India of a past generation, E. Stanley Jones, told a story of a friend of his who walked into her room in a Paris hotel to find a thief rummaging through her things where she had jewelry and a considerable sum of money. When she came in, the man turned a gun on her. She talked to him quietly and lovingly. She even pointed out some places to look for valuables that he had overlooked. Suddenly the man let out a mournful cry and ran from the room, taking

nothing. The next day she received a note from the man which said, "I am not afraid of hate. But you showed me love and kindness. That disarmed me."

Of course, we have no guarantees that loving action will always "work" in the short run. No one was more loving than Jesus, yet he ended up on a cross. But love is God's way. And in the long run it will "work" to proclaim

the truth of the God who cares for us beyond measure. It will "work" to announce the coming of the kingdom of God. And this love will draw us ever closer to the One who is the source of fulfillment for our lives. For us there is nothing more important.

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## Hope for People with Disabilities

KAY KENDALL

The crippled on the curb in Guatemala City are stranded there for hours without help or regard. The lepers in Japan and worldwide are isolated and oppressed. The victims of the Black Plague in Europe were outcast and dreaded. And we need only to look 'inside ourselves' to see our own apprehension when confronted with a severely disabled or handicapped person. Down through the ages and across the continents, we have struggled with stunning or chronic suffering. On the rehab unit where I work we encounter these fragile patients again and again. The details are varied and challenging. But the lives in need, the 'neighbors' recognized on the road to Jericho, scream out at us continually. Sometimes the tragedy seems to outdistance the compassion we would offer.

And yet, God provides a word of encouragement, a vision of possibility, an event of unparalleled inspiration. Professionally and personally, the Congress on the Church and Disability was such an event for me and many others as it met in Grand Rapids, Michigan this past May, 1990. Drawing together physicians and patients, therapists and nurses, able bodied and profoundly challenged persons, celebrities and very common folk, those with ministries to describe and those with hurts to reveal, peo-

ple with fresh insights to share and ones with unanswered questions to ask, this congress became a place of unique loving and healing for all who came. Nearly 750 of us attended, from 40 countries and 38 states. There were 111 internationals, 153 persons with disabilities and 82 people in wheelchairs, and each one felt that God touched a personal need and renewed a living hope for the days ahead.

A major focus of the Congress on the Church and Disability was to "encourage one another to love and good works." Sponsored by Joni and Friends and the Christian Council on Persons with Disability, the testimonies and presentations were designed to equip the church to notice and nurture those around us whom Jesus would love. Hour after hour and day after day we met people in whom God had changed weakness into strength. The images of their enriching stories flood back through mind and heart to lift a weary spirit and to strengthen a faltering hand.

Speaking only a few days following her father's death, Joni Eareckson Tada, a quadruplegic of 20 years, urged us to fight the *good* fight and chronicled the faithful perseverance of her mother over the years. Holding in her arms a 14 year old daughter who

had never walked or spoken, Sandy Rois sang of fears and failures here, but also of heaven's hope and promise to come. Voicing the heartfelt appreciation of all, a blind concert pianist and vocalist, Ken Medema, sang to Joni, ("After This Life") ". . . I'll look in your eyes and you'll dance in my arms." Reporting in gripping detail the occasion of his severely disfiguring injury, a Vietnam veteran enabled us to 'welcome home' dozens of other vets in the audience and told of God's enduring love through his extensive rehabilitation. Considering Dave Roeber's contracted hands and missing fingers, we listened with wonder to his classical and beautiful piano playing, learned painstakingly *since* the life-changing trauma. There is not enough time to tell of the young man born without arms, but who played Jesus-glorifying guitar with his feet; or of Silent Touch — a deaf choir who signed and dramatized music only *we* could hear; or of the Miracles choir — all developmentally impaired, but whose godly praises have been heard by queens and presidents.

In quiet and reflective moments we heard overcomers tell how God brought them from the clenched fist shouting 'WHY!' to the outstretched palm whispering 'Why, Lord?' We heard from famous entertainers and strong mountain climbers and outcast children and downcast grandparents. Each one revealed a journey, seldom a rapid journey, of emerging faith and ministry. All recounted how they came to realize that God had not struck them with a baffling affliction, but had instead *entrusted* them with a challenging adversity. Speaking at the 1988 Congress, J.I. Packer (Knowing God, IVP) summarized this process by observing, ". . . We always ask 'Why?' looking back into the past, but we need to ask 'Why?' looking ahead into God's grace."

Again and again, we who listened were able to reevaluate a personal crisis, or revise the plan for a problem patient, or release purifying tears of understanding and renewed hope. We were able to ask: what all would it really *take* for my church to support a physically dependent person in his or her own home, or to provide respite care for parents of disabled children, or

to make our building truly accessible? In times of broad and majestic worship, we were able to envision that living hope of which Peter spoke, and to eagerly anticipate that promised inheritance which is 'imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.' We were able to rejoice with those who have experienced God's strength and who are turning their tragedy into a treasure poured out into the lives of others.

There were grand and exultant moments to relish with the large group, and there were small and surprising moments to jolt one toward a new conviction. In one remote corner of a question and answer session the man who had spoken of his outreach to AIDS patients was gently but repeatedly asked to reveal more of his personal testimony. The account was painful to give and incredible to receive. At one juncture a questioner asked, "But don't you think you're trying to avert the wrath of God. . .?" He replied, "Well, yes, I do. But I believe that the whole point of the cross of Christ was 'to avert the wrath of God.' "

A certain sense of 'you were chosen to be here' encompassed those who came. It seemed that God wanted to 'punctuate' each one's experience with some personal detail. At lunch one day we met a beautiful young mother from Thailand, and with her, a vibrant and energetic two year old daughter. The little girl was newly adopted, and had been blind from birth. Since our home church supports a missionary in Thailand, we asked this mother, "Have you by any chance ever heard of Ken Rideout?" She thoughtfully replied, "Ken Rideout was the first person who ever spoke to me of Jesus Christ."

We have been created in the image of God. And God claims and accepts responsibility for how we were created. Whether physically whole, or mentally marred, or spiritually scarred, we are all 'Image bearers.' And we must learn, whether able bodied or significantly challenged, how to better appreciate and bear that Image.

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Kay Kendall works as a registered nurse in the Rehabilitation Unit of William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan. She is a member of the Troy, Michigan, Church of Christ.

## Joseph in Prison

How far away the fields where grazed my father's sheep,  
Where in my sleep the visions spoke,  
Affirming that my special coat was well deserved;  
And in my youth I knew that God had favored me.  
A willing instrument I was, rebuking in my father's name  
My brother's worldly ways.  
And then the pit, the chains, the foreign land —  
No one then to listen to my dreams!

But God was gracious to me still,  
As Potiphar repaid the works of God in me,  
And I regained my virtuous pride.  
In confidence I turned aside  
The evil of my master's wife,  
Rebuked in righteous words her monstrous lust.

And for my trouble once again  
I lie imprisoned and disgraced.  
Has God seduced me too, and cast me off  
For basking in His favor?  
It seems but scant reward  
To be the chief of those who languish in the dark.  
How shall I deal with One who rips away  
What He Himself bestowed?  
My robe of innocence my brothers drenched in blood;  
My robe of righteousness was snatched  
To scandalize my name.

How shall I now be clothed, my Lord,  
Lying naked to Your will?

Elton D. Higgs

Dr. Elton D. Higgs, professor at University of Michigan, Dearborn for more than 25 years, is an expert in Medieval Literature. As a member of the board, he has dedicated time and skills to the *Integrity* ministry for more than ten years.

## Readers' Response

Most of your articles are written with an attitude I haven't seen in awhile. There is a graciousness in most that is refreshing. However, I have noticed (I am a teacher of adults) when I do mention the name of some of the authors e.g. Ketcherside, Garrett, Hook, etc., I usually get a lot of peculiar looks and a copy of the *Spiritual Sword* is immediately placed in my hand. I am convinced after *much* study of the Word (Jesus) that *most* of the time you are on the right track. But a bunch, and I mean a bunch, of people consider "you" very close to a heretic if not one. I attend a Church of Christ. . . non-instrumental. . . non-thinking. "We" are on the verge of a major change, so keep plugging.

I. Cor. 11:19  
Different but unified!

*Integrity* reader  
Texas

I am prompted to offer some comments on the review by Joseph F. Jones of the book, *The Cruciform Church* by C. Leonard Allen (reviewed Sept./Oct. 1990). The first impression that came to my mind was: Could this book have been written by a professor in and been published by the press of a churches of Christ school forty years ago? I doubt it. Some might say: Hurrah or Hallelujah while others will cry Heresy or Humbug! It depends on "where you are coming from" or the mind/attitude set you bring to the book.

A second impression is: How significant is the constituency which Allen represents? Surely he not only speaks *to* his fellow members of the churches of Christ, generally, but in some degree speaks *for* a specific segment of this total "brotherhood." Will this book contribute to the constructive interchange within the entire group or will it be largely ignored by the editors and educators who influence the direction of the

movement? I pray that constructive dialogue will ensue.

Beyond these questions which primarily pertain to the internal functioning of this specific grouping known as churches of Christ, I would offer some observations. To point professed Christians of whatever brotherhood or denominational affiliation to the centrality of the cross of Christ is commendable and urgently needed. The lack of the cruciform character of our individual lives as well as in the corporate expression of this kind of life seems painfully evident. The call to "deny self and take up the cross" and follow Jesus as Lord and Savior is not the invitation we want to hear and respond to. While it has been over three decades since I was identified with churches of Christ, this call to return to the original pattern of the Christian message and lifestyle strikes me as authentic appeal. This is a challenge both for those within the brotherhood of churches of Christ and for those in the larger "Brotherhood" — even all those in every place who confess Jesus of Nazareth as Lord. I feel indebted to both the author and to the reviewer.

William O. Baker, Jr.  
Lebanon, OR

When you mentioned in your letter (*Integrity* funds appear 9/90) that "needs within *our* church brotherhood are being met," I was a little perplexed. I have always believed the New Testament taught there was one brotherhood, not "our brotherhood." There is one priesthood. There is one faith, one Lord and one baptism. But Christianity is so fractured and splintered and rampant with party spirit, I guess we can't help but emphasize the particular group we are in and put it first, individuals second, families third, and congregations fourth.

Seth W. Dodge  
Dallas, Oregon

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