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Bring him your ev'ry care If great or small—

Whatever troubles you—O bring it all!

Bring him the haunting fears, The nameless dread,

Thy heart he will relieve, And lift up thy head.

Bring him your weariness, Receive his rest;

Weep out your blinding tears Upon his breast;

His love is wonderful, His power is great,

And none that trust in him Shall be desolate.

Blest Savior of us all! Almighty Friend!

His presence shall be ours Unto the end;

Without him life would be How dark, how drear!

But with him morning breaks— And heaven is near!"

—T.O. Chisholm

This issue's authors describe what redemption looks like when we submit our experiences, our choices, our understanding, our affections, our hopes . . . to the repossession of God, through Jesus. Our God is able!

Bruce Kilmer

Co-editor, *Integrity*

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.

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Redemption

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of this grace that he lavished on us." Ephesians 1:7

The theme of redemption runs throughout the Bible—from Adam and Eve to the visions recorded in Revelation. Even creation declares the theme of redemption as the seasons change in a cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. The God who made us has revealed that he wants to redeem us and all of creation from our brokenness (Romans 8:18-24).

Then why is it so difficult for me at times to turn over my disappointments, my sadness, my weaknesses, my failures, and my losses to God? Do I think he's unable to redeem them? Surely the God who created us and the earth, the solar system, and the galaxies has the power to redeem any and every thing: the wrong decisions, the selfish choices, the foolish moment, the broken relationship, the injured pride and self esteem, the losses of life, and even death. Am I afraid he won't redeem me and the events of my life? Yet the fact that he sent his own son, Jesus Christ, proves how much he loves me.

So my lack of faith and trust in God for my redemption may be just another weakness I must also present to him for redemption. Because the moment we accept the fact that God has chosen to redeem us, is the moment we begin to face life with courage, hope, and joy, as the old hymn teaches:

*Bring Christ your broken life,
So marred by sin,
He will create anew,
Make whole again;
Your empty, wasted years
He will restore,
And your iniquities
Remember no more.*

(continued on back cover)

When Life Falls Apart

ALEX V. WILSON

Her name is Mary Jane Worden, and the Lord was bringing all her dreams to pass. Happy courtship and marriage. . . Christ-centered home. . . three fine children . . . a dynamic ministry. Life was wonderful. But then her husband was killed by a drunk driver! (Her story is told in *Early Widow*, published by InterVarsity Press.)

What do you do when life crashes, when everything caves in? In various forms it happens to many of us or at least to someone close to us. Several examples come to mind of tragedies that struck leaders of the Restoration Movement. While Alexander Campbell was visiting Scotland, his favorite son Wycliffe, just eleven years old, drowned while swimming on the family farm at Bethany. Campbell didn't even learn about it till three weeks later when he landed in New York. In fact, of his fourteen children, ten died before he did. Ponder that.

Famous frontier preacher Raccoon John Smith also experienced catastrophe while away from home. His log cabin burned to the ground, killing two of his children. His wife became totally distraught as a result, and died soon after, while Raccoon John himself caught a stubborn fever that laid him low for four months. Talk about life falling apart . . .

A third example was preacher and editor Isaac Errett. His son went to Paris, France, to study art. While there he was murdered.

Not one of us has a guaranteed immunity to disaster. So the question remains: How can we handle calamity when it comes?

Why did this happen?

I read of a Christian man who was hit by a car and hospitalized. A friend told him, "The devil has done this to keep you from serving the Lord." Another friend assured him, "God has put you here to be quiet and rest in him." And his wife asked, "Why didn't you look where you were going?"

Time and again questions arise about God's will, Satan's work, and our responsibility.

There are no easy answers. Someone told about a believer who narrowly escaped being struck by a speeding bus. He responded, "God loves me, for the bus did not hit me." Later on, he was hit and injured by a bus. He said, "God loves me, for the bus did not kill me." Still later in life he was killed by a vehicle. His Christian friends said, "God loves him, for he called him out of this sinful, unhappy world." Were all those claims valid, or were they just pat answers we give while ignoring hard realities, as unbelievers claim?

Well, non-Christians can't solve the puzzles either. Hinduism says pain and suffering result from Karma, the unbending law of sowing and reaping. Suffering is the effect of sin earlier in life or in an earlier life. Buddhism teaches that life is pain; just endure it. "Christian Science" says there is no pain; it is only a delusion of our mind and senses.

The Bible declares that suffering is real, and to some extent inescapable now. Much of it does result from reaping what we sow, but not all of it by any means. Sometimes bad people suffer little and good people lots. But—wonder of wonders—in his love God enters into our pain and shares it with

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us. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted" (Isa. 63:9). And, praise his name, suffering is temporary. The Lord will abolish it at last.

A Classic Scripture Passage

Of the numerous Bible texts that deal with these subjects, one of the major ones is Romans 8:16-39. Some folks consider it the greatest section in the Bible. Notice these particular highlights which address our topic of suffering:

Verses 17, 18, 21, 30: Incomparable glory lies ahead of us at the end. In the meantime, we face sufferings: frustration, bondage to decay, groaning, hardship, persecution, famine, danger, death, etc.

Verses 18, 22-23, 26, 28, 38: Nevertheless, despite all this, there are some facts we know, are convinced of, and should consider:

- We now have the Holy Spirit as the first-fruits of our salvation
- The Spirit helps us pray
- The Father works for the good of his children whom he is conforming more and more to the likeness of Christ
- We are justified through him who died, was raised to life and to heaven, and now intercedes for us there.

Since all of these things are so, absolutely nothing in the cosmos can separate us from his love. That's breathtaking and incredible!

And what should our attitude be during this groaning time? Note two phrases: We wait eagerly . . . we wait patiently, due to our hope (vs. 23-25). Wait with eager yearning; wait with patient endurance; remember the Glory-time is coming. These truths and attitudes can undergird and sustain us when life falls apart.

Others Are Suffering, Too

Peter gives other valuable insights (I Peter 5:8-11). After warning us about that prowling, devouring lion, Satan, he says: "Resist him. . . because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." In other words, don't have a pity party, thinking you are the only ones facing such heartaches. Then he adds, "After you have suffered a little while, Christ will . . . make you strong, firm, and steadfast." The implication seems to be that he uses those very sufferings as his means of strengthening us and firming us up.

"Dear Abby" made the same two points in one of her columns. Here are some excerpts:

- Blind him at 44, and you have John Milton, who 16 years later wrote *Paradise Lost*.
- Bury him in the snows of Valley Forge, and you have George Washington.
- Raise him in abject poverty, and you have an Abraham Lincoln.
- Have him or her born black in a society filled with racial discrimination, and you have a Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Marian Anderson, or Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Deny a child the ability to see, hear and speak, and you have a Helen Keller.
- Label him "too stupid to learn" and you have a Thomas Edison.
- Call a slow learner "retarded" and write him off as ineducable, and you have an Albert Einstein.
- Call him dull and hopeless and flunk him in the 6th grade, and you have a Winston Churchill.
- Make him a "hopeless" alcoholic, and you have a Bill Wilson, founder of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Have him born of parents who survived a Nazi concentration camp,

paralyze him from the waist down when he is 4, and you have concert violinist Itzhak Perlman.

- Your list would not be complete without a smiling Max Cleland, who lost both legs and an arm in Viet Nam and later headed the Veterans Administration.
- Spit on him, humiliate him, then crucify him and he forgives you, and you have Jesus Christ.

Yes, life sometimes crashes in around us, but by God's grace we can carry on. Said a man who every day has excruciating headaches, "Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional." It all depends on our attitude. So, with hope in our Lord, may we wait both eagerly and patiently. Eager for the end of suffering; patient in the midst of suffering.

Alex V. Wilson is a pastor/teacher in Louisville, Kentucky, and also edits the *Word and Work* magazine. He and his wife, Ruth, were missionaries in the Philippines for 20 years.

What Matters Most

CRAIG WATTS

What really matters? What is central rather than peripheral? What is kernel rather than shell? What is primary rather than secondary? What is substance rather than mere form? Essential rather than optional? What really matters?

Most people I have talked to about this question—and its variations—confess that too much of their time is taken up by things that aren't very important. Jobs that they hate. Chores that are dispensable. Entertainment that is empty. Relationships that are superficial. Still, despite it all, we have established routines that give life a sense of stability and security. But the vitality that comes from keeping the most meaningful things central is missing.

What really matters in church? What is the enduring essence? It can be stated in a variety of ways but it comes down to this:

the conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God and the Lord and Savior of the world. Further, that we should give him thankful praise and persuade people to become his obedient disciples. That's the core. Everything we do in church either focuses our energy and efforts on that core or distracts us from it.

At its best, the church mobilizes itself around its essential message and task. Members single-mindedly ask themselves, "How can we exalt Jesus as Lord and Savior and most effectively urge others to follow him?" At its worse, the church bickers about personal preferences, methods, styles, personality conflicts and assorted trivia, all of which distract from what really matters most. When we are clear about and committed to the church's essence, the other stuff is no big deal. We move ahead with joy to accomplish what matters most.

Craig Watts, a contributing writer to *Integrity* for many years, ministers to the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Louisville, Kentucky.

The Wild Plant

ELTON D. HIGGS

Some seeds we plant
Grow counter to
The cultivator's plan.

No vision can encompass
What may spring from
Sun and water, ground and care—
What flowers there defy
The formal garden
Laid out to please the mind.

This kind of flower
Grows uncomfortably
Past the bed that
Incubated it, wrestles
With the order of its inception.

And in its turn
It seeks to propagate
The license of some
Unknown and wild progenitor;
While I, poor ordered I,
Can only clip a tendril
Here and there,
And share the way God's love
Entwines and sweetens
Even bitter herbs.

Elton D. Higgs is a Professor at the University of Michigan and a member of the *Integrity* Board of Directors.

Message of Thanks from our Treasurer

Dear Readers of *Integrity*,

It has been a real blessing for me to go to my mailbox for the last few months. Almost every day I have pulled out a handful of envelopes from you, our *Integrity* readers. One day my 13-year-old son went out for the mail and met the carrier as she was delivering it. She asked him, "Hey, what is *Integrity*, anyway?"

As you know, *Integrity* magazine relies upon contributions from our readers to keep the journal going. We have received checks from over 300 readers since our fall appeal. The total received thus far will about cover the cost of three issues.

We as a Board give thanks to God for supplying the finances needed to continue the ministry of *Integrity*. As Board members, we also contribute to the ministry financially and make up the difference between what is contributed by our readers and the actual cost of six issues per year. We believe that if the Lord wants this ministry to continue, he will provide the necessary financial support. We thank you for your part in the work of *Integrity*.

If you ever want more specific information about the disbursement of our collected funds, please write to me and I'll be happy to send you a financial report. If you have not yet had opportunity to contribute, you may send in a contribution anytime. I am always thankful to hear from *Integrity* readers. God bless you!

Sincerely,
Jan Van Horn, Treasurer, *Integrity*
4860 Livernois Troy, MI 48098

My Journey Toward Spiritual Freedom

IVAN E. JAMESON

My recent visit to a congregation which withdrew fellowship from us back in 1973 reminded me of other "mileposts"—occasions when I realized how far my thinking had changed since I delivered my first sermons beginning in 1948. In my teachings back then there was no grace, no love of God. Back then I thought I knew everything, that I had the "tail of the tiger on a downhill drag." I realize now how little I do know.

One milepost on my journey from the bondage of legalism to the glorious freedom in Christ came shortly after the death of my father in 1981. I wrote an article, published in *Restoration Review*, which declared my disillusionment with the legalistic position of the church in which my father had been an elder, and for which I had been a preacher.

Another milepost was passed in 1984 when I visited a church where I had ministered thirty years earlier. It was a bitter-sweet time. It was sweet because it renewed friendships that had meant so much to me thirty years before. It felt bitter because I saw a total lack of spiritual growth in these old friends. The songs, the prayers, and the sermon were all replays of my experiences there three decades before. I was appalled by what I saw. I knew what was wrong—it was more of the legalism that I had written about after Dad's death. However, I could not explain the "why" of the stagnant condition I found there. I could not understand the mechanism that bound these dear people.

Still another milepost appeared in 1991 as I visited a man with whom I had worked closely in the early 1950s. When he learned where I was spiritually, he was devastated. I had left the faith, so far as he was

concerned. Yet I felt like I had gone farther and deeper, and that he and others like him still seemed to be camping out at the same, shallow places.

And a final milepost. A little while ago my brother and his wife came to visit us. On Sunday we took them to the church that had withdrawn from us in 1973 because of where we were on our spiritual journey. Again, it was a bittersweet experience. Sweet because I still love those who were there when we were. Bitter because, again, I heard a replay of what was playing twenty-six years ago. It was after this experience that I suddenly began to understand the dynamics of this stagnant condition.

From Stagnation to Growth

How did my journey begin? Let me describe a change that took place in my practice that led to a change in my understanding of the scripture. I think it was important as I traveled the road from bondage to freedom.

I delivered my first "sermon" in January of 1948. During the next fifteen years I kept, and reused, every teaching outline that I ever had. These outlines effectively kept me in bondage to the party line. All these outlines began with a scripture text, and were sprinkled with proof texts applying to the subject being discussed. It was only later that I realized that most of these proof texts were used out of context with the scripture as a whole. These proof texts were locked into my teaching because of their previous usage. Every "new" lesson outline was but a rearrangement of the old.

I never listened with an open mind to any teaching presented by a "denominational teacher." My view was that I was not

a member of a denomination. I was a member of "the church." We always spelled "church" with a small "c," rather than a capital "C." This somehow indicated that it was not a "name," thus, did not represent a denomination. I was totally ignorant of what other people actually believed and practiced. I listened only to those whose spiritual experience and persuasion were as limited and as parochial as mine. I was, as columnist Bob Lively expressed it in a recent article in our local paper, "... more invested in being right than in seeking the truth."

Gradually I began to be disenchanted with the traditional, legalistic interpretations of scripture that I had always used. I threw away my old outlines.

Then came a very important milestone. I was invited to teach a class on Galatians. I approached the book in a fresh manner and was stunned at what I began to see. My old

I began to be disenchanted with the traditional, legalistic interpretations of scripture . . . I threw away my old outlines.

outlines were gone and with them the bonds of their preconceived ideas. Now I was exploring the scripture anew, afresh. It was so enlightening. My teaching began to seem so new, fresh, and exciting to me. I began to make connections in the scriptures that had never appeared to me before.

The Holy Spirit became real in my interpretation process. He began to show me the meaning of passages that had previously been poorly understood, or were totally meaningless to me. This experience led me to discuss scriptural ideas with others of

different persuasions. The chains of tradition were unlocked and I began to experience freedom.

My newly-found freedom began to change me. I began to experience truth as I had never experienced it before. This truth began to affect my daily walk. I had a new, deeper, personal relationship with a God who lived, not way out yonder, but whose dwelling place was within my own heart. I began to experience a peace, a joy, an assurance which I did not know existed.

My Bible took on a unified story line from Genesis to Revelation. I began to see the big picture for the first time. It was a glorious experience.

Breaking the Chain

Now the application. In the visits to the churches from my past, where the stagnation in spiritual growth was so evident, I could not identify the cause. Then, on that visit to the church from which we had been withdrawn, the sermon being preached gave me the answer. I realized the preacher was preaching an old outline, one that I had preached dozens of times. One, I'm sure, he has preached often. He used only one phrase from a lengthy text. He used that phrase to impeach "the denominational world" and to show how "wrong" they were. He spoke clichés about that of which he had no personal knowledge for, very obviously, he had only a legalistic, secondhand, traditional view of what "they" believe and teach. He really said nothing, but was praised for "his deep insight into God's word" by the one who led the closing prayer. He had followed the "party line." He had repeated the party's unwritten creed. He was "preaching to the choir" who already knew what he was going to say even before he said it. They had heard it before. They were comfortable with it. It did not challenge them to think.

He had his old outlines. They were the chains that bound him and his church to the old legalism. They effectively keep them from drinking of the living water that God has for those who are willing to be led by the Holy Spirit. They have dried up on the vine.

Dear reader, I urge you to attend some

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To the Right . . . No, to the Left

ELMER PROUT

I heard it again the other morning—the familiar cry of a troubled believer: "If we could just be a little more liberal and open-minded, our congregation would get along really well!" Later that same day I heard another equally familiar cry from another troubled believer: "If we could just be a little more conservative and stable, our congregation would get along really well!"

Except for four words, the statements and the tone were identical. They were spoken by members of the same local church. Both of the speakers were troubled by events in that church. On the surface the two persons appear to represent opposite sides of an issue: one "on the left," that is, liberal; the other "on the right," or conservative.

It is certainly true that the details of church life style that these two persons would approve of and permit are quite different. We dare not underestimate those differences. But at the same time, we should not overlook the basic assumption that both speakers share. Both positions are founded on the same "if only" wistfulness.

other folks' worship services. Analyze, without the old outlines, not only what other folk teach and do, but also the manner in which they use the word of God. Observe from a fresh perspective. Learn to see with a Spirit-led eye. Think with a prayerful mind. Begin to allow the truth to set you free. You will find the experience glorious.

Both statements were shaped by the assumption that "If only we moved in *this* direction . . ." problems either would not arise, or if they did, would be solved quickly—as if church problems come from only one direction. Identify that direction—left or right, whichever the case might be—and presto, there is a solution.

A night or two before those conversations, I listened to a recitation of Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade." Three lines stuck in my mind:

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them
Cannon in front of them . . .

In that "Valley of Death" the Six Hundred faced danger from every side as the cannon "volleyed and thundered." The threat of death did not come from the right in contrast to the left. It did not come from the left in contrast to the right. The danger was on all sides and had to be faced on those terms.

Our human tendency to shift the blame to someone else—a tendency which dates back to the Garden of Eden—makes all of us quick to warn of the “danger the church faces from them.” We are also quite skillful at marking “them” (whoever they are) as either “liberal” or “conservative,” depending on where we ourselves happen to be standing.

Again, this is not to say that there are not serious doctrinal differences which should be dealt with. It is to say, however, that legalism (the trust in certain patterns of work and worship for the church instead of trust in God) is found and approved on all sides. Liberal legalism as well as conservative legalism exists. Whenever we trust in rules and forms to solve church problems, we have drifted into legalism. Such legalism is the churchly counterpart of the cultural call “There ought to be (another and another) law!”, as if the multiplication of laws could press human hearts into the service of the good and the true.

When we are tempted by the undoubted appeal of “To the right! No, to the left!” we

would do well to return to Romans 14. It is striking that Paul, the former Pharisee who knew well the power of rules and forms, did not deal with the meat and day issue in terms of a new law. Paul did not even hint at dependence on rules from either side of the issue. He called believers to turn their trust away from every human opinion, action or form, away from that human cleverness which was at the heart of the problem and, instead, to turn their trust over to the Lord, who is able to save people on both sides of the questions (Romans 14:1-2).

The tempter does not care if we veer to the right or to the left as long as our trust is in ourselves rather than in the Lord, who alone justifies people. The way of the world is the way of trust in human definitions. The biblical answer to that temptation is neither to the right nor to the left. The answer, rather, is to turn to the Lord Christ, who has accepted us and thus made it possible for us to accept each other as he has accepted us (see Romans 15:7).

Elmer Prout, a minister and missionary within the Stone-Campbell movement for many years, presently ministers to the church in Graton, California.

Meditation: I Come to the Garden Alone

BY CURTIS D. MCCLANE

I see Christ pointing to the woman's water jar. He is seated by the well, right hand lying in his lap, weary and exhausted. The woman pauses momentarily, uncertain as to what she should say or do. The rough-cut white stone of the well and seat stand in stark contrast to the bronze and green of the two figures: the Christ and the Samaritan woman.

Sitting a few moments on the stone bench nearby in full sunshine, I could feel the weariness and the exhaustion of the Christ. I went to the well, bent over and peered in. It was filled with water. And Christ is sitting with the top of his body draped in the shade while the Samaritan woman at the well is standing, bathed entirely in the sun.

The facial expression of Christ is one of deep insight, calm repose, and generous offering. The woman seems to intuitively sense this because there appears a faint, furtive smile on her face that recognizes something extraordinary is taking place. Her eyes are longingly gazing at the Christ's upraised hand.

Peering into the well gave me a new insight into the water that Jesus was offering her. My eyes fell upon the many leaves and green algae floating on top. His “living” water would be pure, spiritual and healthy. His “living” water would not be filled with the leaves of neglect nor the algae of tradition.

This woman had felt the sting of both neglect and tradition. Neglect—because she had been through five failed marriages. Tradition—because she was a Samaritan woman who had had to learn her place in society. As John records this vignette from a page in her life's story, she could never have imagined that day how her usual trip to Jacob's well would change her life. She would leave an empty jar for a heart brimming over with “living” water. The parched tongue would be replaced with a pacified heart.

Dipping Deeper

On July 5, 1996, God guided me to the “Agape Garden” on the premises of the Upper Room chapel and memorial building in downtown Nashville. This devotional I am sharing with you was the interchange that my heart had with the Spirit of God. I did, indeed, come to the garden alone, but I was not alone! This re-creation of Jesus and the woman at the well, in bronze and stone, is worth seeing and meditating on.

As I pondered on this woman meeting Jesus in the midst of an ordinary day, carrying on her mundane, ordinary affairs, I couldn't help but think, “such a simple

place to meet, around the well, but what a powerful interchange!” She went for one thing and received another. She arrived as a woman with a reputation, and she departed as a person of worth. She approached the well with a mundane task, but she returned to the city full of excitement and new hope. But isn't this just how I meet Jesus today?

**What does Jesus say to me
when I meet him
at my computer?
At the ATM?
At the post office?**

My well takes various forms. It can be disguised in one of the hundreds of tasks I pursue as I go about my daily affairs. What does Jesus say to me when I meet him at my computer? At the ATM? At the post office? At the grocery store? In the car on my way to work?

At the computer he assures me that he is the program tailored for my daily tasks, user-friendly. He does not constantly need an update—JESUS '95, for instance. I never have to worry about a glitch in his program or whether a virus has infected him. He is the only program I'll ever need from the cradle to the grave.

At the ATM he reminds me that he takes care of my life's necessities. He may not have gold and silver to give me right on the spot (which would be nice on those days when I think I am going to overdraw!), but he gives a treasure that I can deposit in my heart and store up in heaven where thieves do not break in and steal.

At the post office he informs me that any message I send to the Father will arrive on time and never get lost. I have had

important letters and payments never reach their destination. Who knows what planet they ended up on! But when I communicate with God I can be assured that the message will arrive. I also know that he will respond to my message.

At the grocery store he points out that he is bread of life, he is the salad dressing on my salad, and he is the refreshing soft drink to quench my thirst. When I pull out my checkbook to pay for my purchases, he reminds me that he has already emptied his checkbook account for me. He held nothing back and paid the full price for me. I was not a bargain nor was I a clearance item. Jesus purchased me because I was dear to him.

In the car he is my driver. He takes me where I need to go. When my teenage daughter began to learn to drive, I found it very hard to give up the driver's seat. It has been the same with Jesus. But he is a careful driver. He asks me to trust him. He really does know where he is going and what he is doing.

Meeting at Your Well

Maybe you can begin to envision your own meeting place with Jesus and what your daily "well" looks like. But wherever it is, he will appear before you with a request. With the Samaritan woman it was, "Give me a drink." Today he may be asking, "Do you need to reprogram your life? Do you want to lay up treasures in heaven? Do you want to communicate with the Father? Are you ready to check out and let me pay the full price for you? Are you willing to scoot over and let me take the wheel?"

On the ground near the bronze figure of the Christ is a plaque which reads, "Worship in spirit and in truth"—John 4:24. The

well scene gives me a whole new insight into a text which had been used and interpreted polemically. The prostration of oneself (proskuneo) for worship can take on different postures. The worship that Jesus is talking about I could see in the posture of the Samaritan woman. She had paused to listen rather than dip her jar into the well. Worship is a pausing and listening for the thirst-quenching reality of the Spirit. And

Worship is a pausing and listening for the thirst-quenching reality of the Spirit.

worship is a pausing and listening for the embodiment of God's will in the offering of Jesus—the truth.

"Truth" in the gospel of John is the living, breathing, embodiment of the divine in human form. In that classic text in 8:32 where Jesus pronounces that whoever knows the truth will be set free, we sense that freedom being acted out in the Samaritan woman. Sometimes freedom causes one to do some strange things. She left her water jar at the well! She freed herself from the bondage of the mundane. Jesus has that power to free and transform. He also has the power to give us life. And our worship is a daily response to that offering.

I will never be able to read the Samaritan woman at the well narrative the same way again. For on that beautiful morning in downtown Nashville God opened my spiritual eyes to see the encounter between Jesus and the woman. And I will continue to taste of the "spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Bending the Twig

LAQUITA AND ELTON HIGGS

While I was standing in the check-out line at the supermarket and trying to keep wiggly Rachel in her seat, a woman began telling me about her 11-year-old granddaughter, who was coming for a visit. The grandmother related that she dreaded for the child to come. She explained that the parents had never corrected the girl, but always let her have her own way, and now no one wants to be around her. What a terrible disadvantage for that child, and what a trial for everyone around her. Ask any teacher, and you'll get a woeful litany of increasing behavioral problems in the schools, much of it resulting from a lack of discipline in the home.

Recently we received an e-mail message from Matt Murdy, a missionary friend in Taipei, and his sage words inspired us to devote this column to the matter of discipline. The following are Matt's thoughts (mostly his own words, though edited a little): "I am twenty-seven and youngest of three kids. My parents divorced when I was thirteen, and I took it the hardest of any of the children. I grew up basically without a father, and my mother did her best to raise three children alone. I went through junior and senior high school without much parental guidance. I recently received a copy of my high school transcript which recorded my days absent for my freshman to senior years. They were 19, 24, 34, and 44, respectively. I ran with a few of the wrong kids from school who wanted to 'try everything.' My mom had set a curfew for me and would occasionally set up house rules, but I often didn't obey. Like many teens today, I felt I could do whatever I wanted to do, and I know my mother was discouraged. She worked second shift as a nurse and we would pass each other when I got home

from school, or she would see me sometimes after she got off of work. Other kids envied me for having so much 'freedom,' and I admit that I liked it. I took advantage of my mother's being unable to place effective boundaries on my behavior, and both of us suffered for it.

"I'm not positive whether or how a parent could have gotten through to me then, but I know things would have been different if there had been clear ground rules consistently enforced. As the father of a two-and-a-half-year-old, I have found that clear rules and a predictable response when they are broken are the foundation of effective discipline; even if an attempt at setting boundaries proves to be untenable, you have to keep searching until you find a set of rules that you are able and willing to enforce. This kind of creative but firm parenting is as important for teen-agers as for small children. It is vital also for a parent to realize that showing love and administering discipline are not contrary to each other, but essentially complementary; to back off from the unpleasantness of correcting a child, merely out of a supposed desire to show love, is a tragic abdication of responsibility. Such a retreat, far from endearing the parent to the child, often engenders contempt for the parent's weakness, even when the child seems to get some short-term benefit from it.

"By the grace of God, I am no longer the young adult whose refusal to be disciplined by his mother led to lack of respect for all authority; God changed me to the extent that I have been able repeatedly to apologize to Mom for my lack of submission and to thank her for her sacrifices as a single mother. But I have often thought of how much pain could have been saved if she had

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been able to enforce, and I had been willing to receive, the discipline that the Lord intended to be exercised by parents for the benefit of their children." Thank you for sharing, Matt.

Resource Books

We want to mention two good books on discipline, the first by Dr. James Dobson, *The New Dare to Discipline* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992, \$18.99), a revision of *Dare to Discipline*, first published in 1970. Dobson retains his basic belief that children need both love and control, that they must be taught responsibility and basic virtues, and that early respect for parents is essential if those parents want the adolescent child later to respect their religion and values. The new edition reflects the current on-going controversy around the disciplining of children; for example, here in Michigan, it is now illegal for a teacher to spank a child, and parents are fearful of spanking a child in public lest they be accused of child abuse. Dobson talks at some length about spanking—he is in favor of “a reasonable spanking in response to willful disobedience” (p. 61), but he also cautions about the proper use of corporal punishment. Dobson is keen on the use of rewards for teaching responsibilities and behaviors. Excellent.

Another good book on discipline has a catchy title, *Making Children Mind without Losing Yours*, by Dr. Kevin Leman (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1984). Using what he calls Reality Discipline, Leman stresses encouragement, guidance, and training, rather than reward and punishment, and that training is to teach a child to be accountable and responsible for his or her decisions. Leman is not opposed to spanking, but believes that there are often better ways to handle a situation, especially the use of “that most powerful ally,” natural

or logical consequences. Sometimes it is hard for parents to let their children suffer the consequences of bad choices, so Leman stresses that it takes time, perseverance, commitment, and courage to train a child. Though parents should love a child unconditionally, they should also discipline in an authoritative way, but not be authoritarian

Leman stresses encouragement, guidance, and training, rather than reward and punishment . . .

(that is, overbearing and domineering). Nor should a parent nag. Make the rules clear, then expect obedience, and take immediate action if it is not forthcoming. An outstanding book and very practical, with a long section devoted to handling specific situations.

A previous column about living with rebellious teenagers prompted Nancy Lindsey from Bowling Green, Kentucky, to recommend *Your Prodigal Child* by D. James Kennedy. The book was a great help to Nancy when one their children was “acting out,” and she says that Kennedy’s discussion of how God must have felt over the rebellion of Adam and Eve was especially meaningful to her.

In another recent column, we talked about the value of reading aloud to children. Joyce Gaskin from Beaumont, Texas, a specialist in child development, told us about Jim Trelease’s *The New Read-Aloud Handbook* (\$9.95; 1989; Penguin Books, 375 Hudson St., New York 10014), which we found in our public library. Like Gladys Hunt in *Honey for a Child’s Heart*, Trelease inspires parents and teachers to read aloud to children, but his chapter on the effects of television is alone worth the value of the

book. Trelease writes, “Television has become the most pervasive and powerful influence on the human family, and, at the same time, the major stumbling block to literacy in America.” He recognizes that television is here to stay, but he suggests a method for dealing with it, “to make it work for us instead of against us” (pp. 117-18). A

Readers’ Response

We have enjoyed so many of the fine articles over the years, although possibly not agreeing with all of them. But then, can unanimity ever be expected? I think not! Most Churches of Christ (a cappella) suffer from the disease I would call “jot and tittle-itis” and are shackled still with enforcing non-Biblical traditions that have absolutely no bearing at all on evangelism, rescuing hurting folk with contemporary problems and salvation. These fine adherents, of which I was formerly one, do this to “preserve the faith,” in all good conscience, and I feel sure in most cases not out of malice but for the love of and obedience to the Lord.

I am a biologist, and if one can put much credence in basic biological theories, it is believed that many living organisms, through time, evolve into such specialized forms that it brings about their demise. I would make this analogy with some communions within the Restoration Movement which the founders might now not even recognize; these have evolved, splintered and developed specialized customs which, over time, have become meaningless and irrelevant, and in fact are bringing about death. If the church likewise does not address real issues and people problems of the culture, and also see the Scripture’s main

long annotated bibliography of suggested books is included. Though Trelease does not write from a religious perspective, the book is one that any parent could profitably use.

Send your suggestions or comments (9 Adams Lane, Dearborn, M 48120) or e-mail (<Ehiggs@umich.edu>).

theme and charge, she, too, will die. A good many churches have made good changes and are flourishing.

Again, let me add my thanks for the pleasure, agreement and insight that my wife and I receive when we read many of the scholarly papers.

R. Jay Stipes

May the Lord continue to bless your good work!

Mr. and Mrs. Ernest E. Lyon
Kentucky

I appreciate your including writings by Christian Church leaders and others. The Lord’s church includes many people who witness for him. Thank you for *Integrity*.

Amber Yodom

Thanks to *Integrity* Staff. Thanks to our Lord! May we all praise and love that the world may believe!

Kathy & Phil Wyler, Texas

Nathan Green’s “Don’t Call Me Generation X” was most heartening! Nathan is quite perceptive. I pray that his influence and intellect will never be subverted.

Robert Leon Gibson