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# Contents

MAY/JUNE 2005

FRONTLINE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 15 • NUMBER 2

## 6 A Matter of Worship

*Steve Thomas*

Every time someone indulges in sexual immorality, he or she bows at the altar of self-worship.

## 11 Womb for Rent

*Ken Endean*

The question is not *can* it be done, but *should* it be done? Surrogate parenting does have moral ramifications.

## 15 Euthanasia

*Gordon Dickson*

Terri Schiavo, *Million Dollar Baby*, the Groningen Protocol, Peter Singer, Jack Kevorkian: Wherever you look in civilized society, euthanasia is on center stage.

## 23 Stem Cell Research

*Kurt Harding*

Our ability to diagnose and treat illness and disease is unparalleled with any other time in history. With the explosion of knowledge comes great responsibility and accountability.

## 21 The Christian and Alcohol

*Chuck Phelps*

Could it be that the present silence and ambivalence of the Christian community in America is partially responsible for our nation's ever-increasing alcohol-related challenges?

## 9 The Abortion Debate

*Ted Harris*

Christians must know what they believe about the issue of abortion and share their convictions with others.

## 13 Seducing Society

*Jeff Straub*

Is gambling a harmless pastime only a few abuse, or is it an un-Biblical practice that believers ought to reject?



## Departments

### 4 Mail Bag

### 5 On the Front Line

An Interview with  
Dr. Rod Bell  
*John C. Vaughn*

### 20 On the Home Front

### 25 Wit & Wisdom

*David Atkinson*

### 26 Ladies' Circle

Need Some Empty Boxes?  
*Marilyn Janke*

### 29 The Evangelist's Corner

Music for Evangelistic Meetings  
*Jerry Sionksty*

### 30 At a Glance

Finding Christ in Unlikely Places  
*Layton Talbert*

### 33 Newsworthy

### 35 Global Focus

From Exodus to Exiles in Eritrea  
*Pearson Johnson*

### 37 Chaplain News

*Bob Ellis*

### 39 Behind the Lines

To Whom Shall We Go?  
*Brad Smith*

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## An Interview with Dr. Rod Bell

**A**fter Dr. Rod Bell resigned both his church and the presidency of the FBFI, a report was printed in this space. Although some would like nothing more than to forget the matter, we believe it is ethical and right to report what the Lord has been doing since then.

**FrontLine:** Dr. Bell, what has happened in the last year and a half?

**Dr. Bell:** A lot of soul-searching and working with my counselor, Dr. Jim Binney. Most of all, I have been in the Word, getting spiritual nourishment and physical rest. My life is changing in many ways, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. All of my life I have been doing and going, but during this time the Lord has put the emphasis on “being.” I had been busy doing the work of God, but had not taken time for God. I have, many times in the past, been guilty of trying to fit God into my schedule. Now I don’t have a schedule or an agenda. I want what He wants for my life. I have a thirst for God, a longing to be in His presence. His Word has been manna for my soul. I could not have gotten through this year and a half without His Word.

**FrontLine:** How is your view of Christ different now than it was a year and half ago?

**Dr. Bell:** It is one thing to know truth in your head; it is another thing to experience it in your heart. I have come to realize that Christ is all I need; He is enough; He is more than enough. I have always been a self-confident person. I’ve been like Martha, busy about many things, but not taking time for Christ Himself.

**FrontLine:** Do you think that other men are depending on their own strengths—jeopardizing themselves and their ministries—or putting

themselves in danger of temptation or failure through self-reliance?

**Dr. Bell:** Well, I certainly know how easy that is to do. The heart of my sin has been self-reliance and pride. That is nothing less than deifying self. What we think is our strength may actually be our greatest weakness. I can’t speak for others, but it certainly was for me.

**FrontLine:** What is the most important spiritual lesson you have learned? Could you have learned it any other way?

**Dr. Bell:** That I am a sinner, filled with pride. God is stripping me of self-reliance. It has been painful. His truth has been in His Word all along, but I could not have seen it if God had not shown me my confidence in self and how wrong it was.

**FrontLine:** Do you think this is a one-time crisis or something that He continues to do?

**Dr. Bell:** (Chuckling.) Like peeling an onion, it has been coming off a layer at a time, and it will no doubt continue until I am naked and open in the sight of a Holy God. He sees me already, but I don’t think I would have seen Him until He started bringing me to the end of myself. I am truly thankful He is doing this. Until the day I die, I will have to go through this process. Trouble comes when we try to do the work of God without the power of God. Self has been my biggest enemy.

**FrontLine:** What about the ministry? You pastored for forty years and held other positions of leadership. How will you serve the Lord now that that is over?

**Dr. Bell:** Well, my health has greatly improved. My mind is clear. I had come to a sorry state. In my flesh, I was a living dead man. Now, in Christ, I’m a dead living man. I have peace. I’m sleeping. I’m not worried. I am learning as never before to take my burdens

to the Lord and leave them there. It is amazing what the Lord can do! I was a foolish man. I drove myself and pushed my ministry where I should have been trusting and waiting on God. Now, since the Lord has revealed myself to me, He is revealing Himself to me. I don’t like what I see when I look at myself—it’s frightening, but I’m certainly loving what I see about my Lord. Of course, I have much yet to learn from the past, but in another sense, I have to forget it and press toward the mark. God has opened up a field of service for me in the Caribbean Islands as a representative for Calvary Baptist Bible College, and working with the nationals. I believe the Lord would have me to do what I can to serve Him in that way.

**FrontLine:** This interview will be read by those who have encouraged you and those who are have been critical of your life and failure. If you could speak to them in person, what would you most like to say?

**Dr. Bell:** To my friends, “Thank you for the hundreds of cards and letters of compassion and concern. You have taught me the right attitude toward a soldier who is wounded in battle. I have heard that Fundamentalism tends to shoot its wounded, but that has certainly not been my experience.” I thank my friends, but I should also say, “Take heed when you think you stand, lest you fall.” To my critics . . . well, I have not received one card or call from a critic, but I would say to any there are, “Criticism in the right spirit is good. If there is truth in it, then it is a help.” I have experienced what must be some of the reality of the Bema Seat. The dross is coming to the surface. Some men’s sins go before them and some follow after. I am rejoicing in a Sovereign God that is in control of every circumstance of life. He’s keeping the records. He is faithful, even when we are not.





# A Matter of Worship:

## The Truth About Sexual Immorality

**P**astor, I don't really know where to begin. I guess it all started when I was about twelve. You see, I found some pornography at a friend's house. Before long, I made every excuse to spend time there so I could rifle through his father's magazine collection. Through the years it got worse, and now, with the Internet, it all seems out of control. I'm scared."

These words draw a fictitious composite sketch of men in churches across the country. Pastors hear these sad stories dozens of times. Superficial responses can never bring healing and change to those struggling with sexual sin. We must begin with a strong and often surprising statement: Sexual immorality is a matter of worship.

### **Idols of the Heart: The True Nature of Sexual Immorality**

Those caught up in sexual immorality exhibit an uncanny ability to compartmentalize the various facets of life. They push lust into its own small, carefully guarded room mentally isolated from the other segments of their existence. "I love God and my wife. I regret my occasional secret excursions into sin, but they do not change who

I really am." So goes the rationalization. However, when we look at sexual immorality through the lens of Biblical truth, we gain a different perspective.

Scripture frequently uses sexual expressions as a metaphor for idolatry. For example, Ezekiel 16 unleashes a scathing rebuke against Judah for abandoning God for a love affair with idols. God calls her a harlot and describes her idolatry as fornication, adultery, and whoredom. When we unpack the significance of these terms, they emerge as more than mere figures of speech. Idols wielded seductive power by holding out the promise of fertility and procreation in the worshiper's family, fields, and flocks. Adoration of idols consisted of ritual prostitution at pagan shrines that littered the landscape of Israel's high places. In those shrines, metaphor and reality merged in a grotesque form of worship.

However, carved images and rampant sexual activity were mere symptoms. The real problem lurked in the heart. God declared, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart" (Ezek. 14:3). Victory over lust requires us to define it as God defines it: It is an idol of the heart. The object of lust simply serves as a front for the real focus of worship, namely self. Every time someone indulges in sexual immorality, he or she bows at the altar of self-worship, despising the pleasure of God in the pursuit of personal pleasure. In the end, self-worship will pervade and taint every "compartment" of life.

## Living in the High Places: The Ubiquity of Sexual Immorality

In Proverbs, Solomon repeatedly warned naïve, simple young men against setting foot on the path of folly paved with easy money and easy sex—two attractions that merged in the worship of fertility gods. “Reproofs of instruction are the way of life: To keep thee from the evil woman,” he said (Prov. 6:23, 24). The author wove this theme throughout the book because he understood the power and prevalence of sex. When Israel failed to listen to his instruction, pagan shrines multiplied in the high places of the land and served as havens for unbridled lust. “Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot” (Jer. 3:6).

We live in the high places. We hear the seductive call to worship everywhere. The axiom “sex sells” drives the marketing industry so that lurid images beckon to us from billboards and TV commercials. “Sexy” replaced “modesty” as the essential standard for style sometime in the forgotten past—even for many Christians. And then there is the Internet—a private world of explicit fantasy available at the click of a mouse.

Statistics tell an alarming story:<sup>1</sup>

- The average American adolescent will view nearly 14,000 sexual references per year on TV.
- Network TV features sexual content every four minutes.
- Movies have an 87% likelihood of presenting sexual material.

Another agency<sup>2</sup> reports that:

- Nine out of 10 children between ages 8 and 16 have viewed pornography on the Internet.
- 4.2 million pornographic websites exist, featuring 372 million pages.

Yes, we live in the high places. Christians must equip themselves to stand against the idolatrous allurements encountered daily within the home, the marketplace, and the office.

## The Rites of Idolatry: Sexual Immorality as an Obsessive Force

Proverbs 5–7 paints a vivid portrait of a youth traveling a pathway near the house of the adulteress. Solomon uses the “pathway” motif to signify a chosen lifestyle of sexual immorality. This pathway has a definite beginning and end, with well defined mile markers in between. The entrance to the path is *idle curiosity*, for 7:8 describes the youth strolling near her house. Nothing indicates purposeful resolve to commit adultery. Instead we can easily picture a youth who harbors the hope of a secret glimpse—just enough to satisfy curiosity. Sexual immorality always begins this way. No one simply wakes up one day and resolves to become an adulterer. “In order to slip past our consciences, it must begin with small steps of disobedience. . . . When the sentry of our hearts is not vigilant, idolatry is like an instinct.”<sup>3</sup>

We then come to the mile marker of *active participation*. The youth not only saw the adulteress; she came to meet him (7:10)! What a flush of exhilaration—a thrill far beyond his hopes. Soon her attractions ensnared him: “With her much fair speech she caused him to yield” (7:21). We can almost hear him say, “Only this time.” Anyone who entertains those words soon repeatedly says, “Only one more time,” because the third mile marker is *obsessive enslavement*. No one anticipates that. Each convinces himself that he has the power to stop whenever he chooses, not realizing that “many strong men have been slain by her” (7:26).

*Insatiable escalation* marks the next mile. Lust stimulates



appetites that nothing can satisfy. Activities that once made the idolater flush with excitement soon become boring. The quest then begins for more explicit pornography. Boundaries get pushed farther and farther. When images fail to satisfy, idols of the heart demand new sacrifices: the worshiper must replace images with reality.

Eventually, the pathway that once held out promise of great pleasure brings every idolater to the same end: *painful tragedy*. Homes disintegrate. Testimonies crumble. Wealth disappears (5:10). Health withers (5:11). Eyes flow with tears of regret over wasted lives (5:10, 12). “Her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword” (5:4).

### **Reaping the “Reward” of Idolatry: The Bitter End of Sexual Immorality**

Think about this irony: idolaters always set out to *use* their idols, manipulating them for personal reward, only to have their idols turn on them and become cruel masters. The idolater expects the reward of pleasure only to find that lust, unchecked, brings the “reward” of eternal loss.

The apostle Paul stated the case clearly: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [male prostitutes] nor abusers of themselves with mankind [homosexuals] . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9, 10). He did not mean that Christians who commit these sins lose their salvation. Nor did he mean that a genuine Christian will never commit these sins. Paul went on to say, “Such *were* some of you” (6:11). In other words, God delivered the Corinthian believers out of that lifestyle. Therefore, if anyone professes faith in Christ, yet refuses to battle lust and cherishes sins of sexual immorality, that one has never come to Christ in genuine repentance. He or she still travels a path that leads to an eternity without Christ.

### **Toppling the Idols: Breaking the Chains of Sexual Immorality**

No one ever achieves immunity from sexual temptation. Only a fool would think so. What should we do, then, to safeguard our hearts? How do we help those who have already put their foot on the wrong pathway? We can only topple idols of the heart by cultivating the right kind of heart. Here are five characteristics of a heart free of idols.

*A repentant heart*—Develop the habit of repenting over the right issues. Too often repentance focuses on outward deeds, ignoring inward attitudes. This only masks selfishness behind a thin veneer of spirituality to soothe the conscience until the next occasion of sin. To topple the idols one must learn to pray, “Forgive me for valuing my pleasure above Yours, for worshiping the creation rather than the Creator, for despising You by regarding human beings created in Your image as worthless objects, for brazen selfishness and enormous pride, for failure to love others as You have commanded,” etc. God will honor prayers that strip away all superficiality and expose the ugliness of the idols lurking within.

*A disciplined heart*—Practice the discipline of radical amputation. Jesus said, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matt. 5:29). Do you remember the story of Aron Ralston, the man who cut off his right arm with a pocketknife after being trapped by a boulder in a remote mountain canyon in Utah? The story flooded the news wires in May 2003 and stunned the nation with the reality of what a man is willing to do when faced with the choice of life or death. We need to start asking, what are you willing to do to live? Are you willing to sever all immoral relationships? Are you willing to sell the TV that you won’t control? Are you willing to entrust the Internet password to someone else? These things are more important than life and death.

*A transparent heart*—Establish an accountability relationship. Few people, if any, possess the strength necessary to topple these idols alone. We need help. The command to “bear . . . one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2) specifically applies. The spiritually strong must help the spiritually weak. Unfortunately, the shame associated with this sin prevents many from seeking the help they desperately need. The knowledge that a loving brother in Christ will soon look you in the eye and ask the hard questions provides a powerful encouragement to stay off the wrong path.

*A thankful heart*—Cultivate a spirit of thankfulness. The door to sexual sin swings on the hinges of pride. Some excuse lust as a reward for achievement, while others excuse it as a solace for disappointment. Either way pride dominates the heart, for it says, “I deserve something.” However, pride cannot coexist with thanksgiving. A thankful heart always acknowledges utter dependence on God for every achievement and recognizes God’s grace in times of disappointment.

*An enlightened heart*—Pursue the knowledge of God with vigor. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would have their hearts enlightened in order to know God better (Eph. 1:17, 18). He wanted them to delight in God’s majestic glory unveiled in His eternal plan for the church. This profound knowledge of God lays the foundation for a life worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1). A worthy life does not even have a hint of sexual immorality (Eph. 5:3). We must keep praying that God will deepen our understanding of His glory, a beauty that shatters the attraction of all idols.

May God grant His people the resolve to give attention to our worship so that we might always fulfill the command of the apostle John: “Keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:21).

Steven Thomas pastors Huron Baptist Church in Flat Rock, Michigan, where he has served since 1983.

<sup>1</sup> [www.nationalcoalition.org/cablechoice/mediastats.html](http://www.nationalcoalition.org/cablechoice/mediastats.html)

<sup>2</sup> [www.familyfirst.net/internetguide/dangers.htm](http://www.familyfirst.net/internetguide/dangers.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Edward Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), p. 69.





# The Abortion Debate

**T**o many Christians today, abortion is a settled issue and not worth discussing with others. Paul's approach to a similar issue of his day, the "unknown god" of Mars' Hill, was quite different. He had a tough audience which included Stoics and Epicureans. What were the results of his message? Some believed, some scoffed, and some said, "we will hear thee again of this" (Acts 17:32). In the marketplace of ideas today, we cannot ignore the questions about abortion. If we do, we will miss the opportunity to reach others. Confronting new ethical dilemmas they have not previously considered may shake the faith of some Christians. But with millions of babies being aborted in this country, Christians must know what they believe about the issue of abortion and share it with others.

Statistics from the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of Planned Parenthood, place total pregnancies terminated by abortions at 1.3 million in the year 2000,<sup>1</sup> a figure they agree is low. Though there has been an annual decline in the last few years, the total number of infants killed in the womb since 1973 is still approximately 43 million. In other words, "abortion is one of the most common surgical procedures in the United States."<sup>2</sup>

The Scriptures, however, speak quite clearly concerning this issue. God made man (Gen. 9:6), and He alone owns man (Ezek. 18:4). Moreover, God knows each man prior to birth (Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:13–16). Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:6 exalts the Lord alone as the One who has control over life and death, closely connecting the issues of abortion and euthanasia. As Christians we should "know how [we] ought to answer every man" from the Word of God (Col. 4:6), or we will never influence those around us for Christ.

## Killing for Convenience?

The Guttmacher Institute states that 92% of these abortions are done for convenience, not medical necessity. "Convenience" would include "inadequate finances—21%," "not ready for responsibility—21%," "woman's life would be changed too much—16%," "problems with relationship; unmarried—12%," "too young; not mature enough—11%," "children are grown; woman has all she wants—8%."<sup>3</sup> Yet arguments for abortion such as "choice" or "convenience" are easily answered. The mother made a "choice" when she opted for physical intimacy. The reasons given above arise simply from the self-centered idolatry of putting oneself in the place of the God of life.

## What about Abortion for Victims of Rape or Incest?

Guttmacher statistics list rape or incest as the cause for 1% of aborted pregnancies. This difficult situation is one many believers stumble over. A woman has been forced, through no choice of her own, into a pregnancy. Yet Scriptural principles still apply. God still controls all circumstances, and as the unchanging God of life, He still owns, knows, and values this child (see previous references). Though the mother is undoubtedly a victim in such a situation, aborting her baby will only create a second innocent victim. Furthermore, abortions tend to scar the mothers emotionally, often leading to depression. Thus, for these women, an abortion merely creates a second trauma to deal with.

## What about Aborting a Child for the Health of the Mother?

How do you deal with the "dilemmas" of pregnancy? I believe there to be four main categories for these "dilemmas":

1. In some cases our knowledge is limited and dogmatic pronouncements are mostly opinion. For

instance, in two cases I encountered, the mother was assured she would die in labor should she choose not to abort. Yet both deliveries were uncomplicated and produced healthy babies.

2. At other times, treatment of the mother's medical problem produces risk, but is in the best interests of both mom and baby. An example would be the medication and monitoring required for chronic hypertension.

3. The most serious circumstances involve treatment of an aggressive condition such as a rapidly growing cancer. If you do not treat the illness, Mom will die. If you do, the baby may die due to the treatment. In such cases, we leave that result with a sovereign God, who always has more knowledge and wisdom than we have. I recently followed two such cases, both of which resulted in healthy babies and mothers.

4. Finally, in some situations, allowing Mom to go near to term, then delivering the baby and treating Mom is a valid option. Interestingly enough, there is evidence that breast cancer may fit this category.

In summary, because millions of babies are yet being aborted in this country, Christians must know what they believe about abortion and share those convictions with others. If we as Christians are to have any impact in the lives of those around us, we must be prepared to discuss these topics and willing to declare the reasonable faith that we have.

Dr. Ted Harris, a family physician practicing in Greenville, South Carolina, has delivered over 1200 babies.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.agi-usa.org/presentations/ab\\_slides.html](http://www.agi-usa.org/presentations/ab_slides.html), accessed 03/23/05.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## What about the Pill?

A question in the area of birth control that continues to be raised is whether the estrogen-progesterone pill (also known as the sequential, or combined) is an abortifacient—that is, it allows an abortion, unintended, at some interval. I do not believe it does this, having delivered several children conceived while the mother was on the pill and taking it correctly. I believe the issue arises because three effects of the pill were listed when it first came on the market, incorrectly implying that all were simultaneously at work in preventing pregnancy.

Lest I confuse you with some physiology, we'll try to keep it straightforward. The first mechanism of the pill, agreed on by all, is that it prevents ovulation. This outcome is not achieved 100% of the time, due to skipped pills, a possible interaction with antibiotics, and the pill's simple failure to work at times. The quoted pregnancy rate per year, no skipped pills, is 1–2%. The second mechanism given is that the mucous in the cervix is more hostile to the passage of sperm, and therefore hinders conception. Finally, the pill provides a thinner, more hostile uterine lining for the implantation of the conceived egg, or ovum. This mechanism is known to be the primary method in other forms of contraception, which we do not use. Although the combined pill in its usual mode of inhibiting ovulation does provide a thinner, more hostile uterine lining, that calculated effect ignores one fact of physiology. When ovulation does not occur (the primary effect of the pill), the hormone progesterone that builds up the lining for implantation is not produced. Similarly, on the occasions when ovulation does occur, progesterone is produced in order to thicken the lining, preparing for implantation and pregnancy. Since implantation does not occur for seven days, the pill allows time for that process to occur. Thus, the pill does not abort the implantation of a conceived ovum.

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# Womb for Rent

## Some Thoughts on Surrogate Parenting

Roger<sup>1</sup> pulled me into an empty classroom after church. He had attended services for several weeks, but I could tell something was troubling him. Then he asked, "What does the Bible say about surrogate parenting?" His wife, Rita, had not yet come to church with him because she was pregnant with twins that she was carrying for another couple. What would other people think? What would I think? What does the Bible say? Later, as I sat down with this couple in their home, it was obvious that these questions weren't simply an academic study or theological exercise, but issues where they lived.

Modern medical advances have raised ethical issues that humans didn't fathom in the days when the Bible was written. Some people respond with a condemnation due to an emotional revulsion, while others philosophically justify the process, pointing to adoption and accepted medical procedures. One author, recognizing the difficulties for Christians in dealing with this issue, wrote:

In effect, it is a "womb for hire," for the mother carrying the baby is not the wife of the husband. And even though there is no adultery involved, nevertheless there are serious social, legal, and psychological problems to be considered. . . . Theoretically, surrogate motherhood is only the reverse of artificial insemination and is like an adoption. In this respect there is nothing inherently immoral about it. However, **we do not live in a theoretical world.** Deep-seated human feelings are

involved. Surrogate motherhood carries with it tremendous potential for exploitation of womanhood and the degradation of motherhood.<sup>2</sup>

While not questioning the motives or goals, which in many cases are laudable, Christians must examine some concerns and questions regarding surrogate parenting. Not all of these issues carry the same importance, but taken together they should cause a Christian to take care.

God in His wisdom has given principles that apply to every area of life and godliness.<sup>3</sup> The concept of surrogacy, a woman carrying a child for another person, is not new. While one might consider the story of Abram and Hagar as a warning, the issues involved had to do with specific promises God gave Abram and Abram's attempt to assist God in fulfilling those promises. The story also reminds us that "not all practices *described* by Scripture are thereby *endorsed* by Scripture as moral ideals."<sup>4</sup>

What is new is that today's medical technology makes the procedure more available.<sup>5</sup> But ability does not equal morality. Such an approach to motherhood is *unorthodox and unusual*. It possesses a mercenary approach to life—i.e., the desire for a child is so great as to cause potential parents to look for whatever means are necessary. Surrogacy for convenience would be wrong since such a situation would be based in selfishness.

One must consider personal *testimony*. The woman I mentioned at the beginning of this article was hesitant to

## The question is not CAN it be done, but SHOULD it be done?

come to church, thus “forsaking the assembly” for fear of what people might think. Yet the impression one gives to others must be considered. What example will children, young people, and the world observe? Not all unbelievers accept such an unusual approach to childbearing. While Christians don’t base their decisions solely on what unsaved people accept, we must weigh the testimony aspect so as not to give an offense to the gospel. Romans 14:16 admonishes us, “Let not then your good be evil spoken of.” Could such a situation give the appearance of evil? Would such a situation raise questions or demand explanation that could not always be satisfied? Casual observers would not have all the facts, but they would have many questions. Could this bring reproach on the name of Christ? What if a single person were willing to carry the child, showing visible signs of the pregnancy for many months—would this be proper? Would a pregnant single person portray a picture of purity to the community? If marriage is a prerequisite, should we examine God’s place for childbearing?

God’s place for physical intimacy is within the *boundaries* of marriage. “And God created a place for having babies; in one’s own wife’s womb. If we cannot have them there, then maybe we should consider whether it is God’s will to have one of our own genetic offspring.”<sup>6</sup> Might it possibly be God’s will for that couple to become the father and mother to the “fatherless” and “motherless”—to adopt babies that are already in need?

Too often surrogacy fails to consider the *risk factor* to the pregnant woman. Pregnancy always carries some element of risk to the life and health of the mother. Some contractual agreements require the individuals receiving the child to provide a life insurance policy on the surrogate during the pregnancy. A woman’s intentionally putting her own life at risk must be carefully examined. If the potential surrogate has children of her own, that God has entrusted to her, her personal health for the sake of her family must be priority.

Surrogate parenting does have *moral ramifications*. For some women, surrogate motherhood provides a way of coping with guilt from having an abortion.<sup>7</sup> The procedure also creates an avenue that could be exploited, and has a tendency to be a “slippery slope.” For example, what might the future ramifications be toward the growing homosexual community in our country? Websites dealing with surrogacy consistently mention assisting same-sex couples. The welcome page for one “world-renowned surrogate parenting program” with over 23 years of experience states that the organization “supports gay parenting for those gay couples in long term, committed relationships.”<sup>8</sup> Their website indicates that not only do they support, but actively direct potential surrogates to gay couples. They advance studies that declare gay couples are good, stable parents, and indicate their pro-homosexual agenda when they say “as our children grow up, being gay will become more acceptable to our diverse society.”<sup>9</sup>

If *money is involved*, apart from doctors’ and hospital bills, then one loses the moral high ground. People involved in such transactions are in essence selling a baby, or renting out motherhood. Yet, often tens of thousands of dollars is paid for surrogacy compensation, along with a clothing allowance, monthly allowance, housekeeping, childcare, and lost wages reimbursement. Doesn’t renting out wifehood/motherhood in this regard make surrogate motherhood similar to prostitution?<sup>10</sup> It should also be noted that the legality—or illegality—of such contracts is an issue in many states.

Ultimately, one must realize that such a process is bringing a soul into being, a *soul that will spend eternity somewhere*. This fact has enormous implications. As a pastor I often remind folks that our children are not ours but God’s. He has entrusted them to us to raise for His glory. We will give an account for our faithfulness in “[bringing] them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). We pray that our children will trust Christ as Savior. What does it say for a Christian to knowingly plan and participate in placing a child, not yet conceived, into the home of unbelievers? In this unsaved home the parents, but for the grace of God, will not direct that child to know Christ. Is that not tantamount to preparing a soul for Hell?

Believers have a mandate to live and serve so that God will be glorified, the gospel proclaimed, and sinners converted. We must guard our testimony and walk differently than the culture around us. Ephesians 5:8, 10 “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light . . . Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”

The question is not CAN it be done, but SHOULD it be done? When one considers personal testimony, God’s created structure for procreation and surrogacy’s unorthodox approach, the moral ramifications, financial motivation, and the sanctity and eternality of life, I personally, would have to say “no.”

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<sup>1</sup> Names have been changed and details summarized.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 1989), p. 188. Emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter 1:3.

<sup>4</sup> John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1993), p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> Often the surrogate mother is also the biological mother with the child conceived through artificial insemination. In gestational surrogacy the child is conceived through in vitro fertilization and then implanted in the surrogate’s uterus.

<sup>6</sup> Geisler.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, p. 65. Would there be a shortage of children to adopt if “abortion on demand” weren’t practiced?

<sup>8</sup> Center for Surrogate Parenting, Inc. <http://www.creatingfamilies.com/surrogacy/smwelc.HTML>.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.creatingfamilies.com/surrogacy/smgaycouple.HTML>.

<sup>10</sup> Geisler.



# Seducing Society

## The High Cost of Gambling

**A**s a new resident, I was struck by two types of commercials ubiquitous on Minneapolis airwaves. An example of the first features a Native American paddling a canoe down a placid stream. The ad highlights the virtues of one of the newest forms of economic development—Indian-run gaming. Millions in revenue create thousands of jobs. Indian tribes are doing their part to stimulate the state's economy. In other commercials, ordinary Minnesotans rehearse favorite casino stories. A newly married couple first met at the casino. A farmer's wife milks the cows wearing expensive earrings won at the casino. A grandmother boasts of two Harley Davidson motorcycles won on consecutive casino visits. The message is subtle—gambling is a harmless activity that is fun and rewarding for ordinary Minnesotans. In apparent agreement, the governor wants to increase gaming to help balance the budget. There is talk about adding a casino at the Mall of America and even putting a casino at the airport.

Minnesota is hardly alone when it comes to gaming. Detroit introduced casinos to revitalize its downtown and stop more than \$1.5 million that daily flowed to the casino at neighboring Windsor, Ontario. According to a recent study of Indian gaming, more than \$18.5 billion in revenue was generated in 2003 and more than 500,000 people were employed nationwide at Indian-run gaming in thirty-five states. Since the passing of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988, more than half of all Native Americans benefit from a variety of forms of gaming. Schools, hospitals, clinics, roads, and infrastructure are being built with its proceeds from California to Michigan. Slot machines have replaced the buffalo as the source of native prosperity, according to a recent television ad. But Indian tribal gam-

ing, the greatest growth area in U.S. gaming, is just one of numerous gambling venues. Well-known cities like Las Vegas and Atlantic City come to mind, as do the plethora of state-run lotteries. Most pernicious is the explosion of online gambling, which can be done with anonymity in the privacy of one's home. Gambling as a means of civic prosperity and personal pleasure has become a mainstay in American life.

However, there is a dark side to all of this good news. Although difficult to measure, patterns emerge that link gambling with social problems. Some segments of society may prosper, but others suffer dire consequences. According to the National Gambling Impact Study Commission Report (1999), gambling was a significant factor (nearly 1 in 5) in homelessness from Chicago to Las Vegas and Atlantic City. Domestic violence increased 300% in one Mississippi area after the introduction of casinos. Such increases were also seen in Rhode Island and Maryland. Children suffer from gambling directly through parental neglect when children are left unattended, sometimes locked in the car in the casino parking lot. They also suffer indirectly as families encounter hardship from the poverty created by compulsive gambling. One recent television report chronicled a blue collar worker who lost more than \$100,000, resulting in his wife divorcing him and his employer prosecuting him for embezzlement. His children, caught in the middle, lost both family and security.

What does all this have to do with Christians? According to one report, 95% of Minnesotans do some wagering every year. Whether it is the state lottery, off-track betting, the casino, or Internet poker, gambling has permeated Minnesota life and is representative of trends across the

## ... gambling ought to be rejected by believers as contrary to a life of faith.

as do an alarming 45% of those who consider themselves "born-again."<sup>1</sup> Even if one does not personally wager, the culture in which we live is steeped in gambling. Even children are at risk.

How should Christians respond to this cultural phenomenon? Is gambling a harmless pastime only a few abuse, or is it an un-Biblical practice that believers ought to reject? Christians have historically rejected gambling for a number of reasons. Among them is the association of gambling and the crucifixion. As Christ hung on the cross, the soldiers "cast lots" for His garments (Mark 15:24). "It may be noted that the habit of gambling is of all others the most hardening, for men could practise it even at the cross-foot while besprinkled with the blood of the Crucified. No Christian will endure the rattle of the dice when he thinks of this" (C. H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, Psalm 22:18). This association, however, is not the only reason that a believer should abstain from gambling. Several others come to mind.

First, gambling is *poor stewardship*. At the casino the odds always favor the house, by as much as 35% in some cases. Of every \$100 spent, the house expects to keep \$35. The \$18.5 billion that Indian gaming netted in 2003 represents an equal loss by thousands of gamblers. Believers are reminded that all possessions, including money, come from the Lord and are to be invested for His work. Treasures are to be laid up in Heaven, not on earth (Matt. 6:20), and funds are to be given to the poor rather than gathered and squandered (Matt. 19:21).

Gambling also leads one to violate the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" (Exod. 20:17). Covetousness—*lust*—is the inordinate desire to possess what God has not given. All believers struggle with covetousness from time to time. The gaming industry capitalizes on this philosophy of lust, with the prospect of a big payoff always dangled before unwitting players. Colossians 3:5 reminds us that covetousness is idolatry, condemned by God, and to be put away from believers because it will be the object of divine wrath.

Gambling is also highly addictive. Paul warns against being controlled by the wrong things when he provides the rubrics of what is lawful. "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12). With the rate of gambling rapidly rising in the United States, the number of compulsive gamblers has risen dramatically. According to studies done on adolescent gambling, 80% of high schoolers gambled in a twelve-month period with 4–8% being problem gamblers and another 10–14% at risk for developing serious gam-

U.S. According to a November 2003 Barna survey, 61% of adults consider gambling morally acceptable. The survey also found that 27% of evangelicals feel the same way,

bling problems.<sup>2</sup> Given the numbers, it is fair to believe that Christian young people are among those ensnared.

Gambling is also associated with other un-Biblical behavior from alcohol consumption to sexual promiscuity and organized crime. The Scriptures give clear guidelines to believers regarding the associations that ought to govern a believer's life. A man is godly if he does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful (Psalm 1). The modern gaming industry creates an environment where the believer is immersed in the culture of the ungodly, not to bear witness to the redemptive work of Christ, but to join the wicked in the lustful pursuit of wealth.

Gambling is opposed to the Biblical portrait of a sovereign God. The Bible tells us that God works everything according to His will (Eph. 1:11), yet gambling depends upon mere chance, good fortune or "lady luck." The Bible knows nothing of luck. Believers are commanded to depend on a sovereign God who controls the affairs of our life and not on fate or luck. Proverbs 3:5, 6 reminds us to "trust in the LORD," not in fortune.

Finally, gambling ought to be rejected by believers as contrary to a life of faith. Paul reminded the Romans that "the just . . . live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). Faith is required by all who would please God (Heb. 11:6). Yet gambling tests God, expects something for nothing, and seeks wealth through chance in a sinful environment. This hardly constitutes the life about which Paul was speaking. Some might mistakenly argue that God can provide through gaming, but this is contrary to the expectation that man will labor for what he gets. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28).<sup>3</sup>

Everything the believer does ought to bring honor and glory to the Lord (1 Cor. 10:31–33). When one looks at the broad issue of gambling, despite any apparent benefit, the culture which is engendered by the gambling industry can hardly be said to glorify God. How then can any believer who wishes to glorify God participate?

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<sup>1</sup>"Morality Continues to Decay," Barna Update, 3 November 2003. Available at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=152>. Accessed 8 March 2005.

<sup>2</sup>"Youth Problem Gambling," <http://www.education.mcgill.ca/gambling/en/problemgambling.htm>. Accessed 7 March 2005.

<sup>3</sup>Information on gambling is abundant. Three sources were of particular value in the preparation of this article. Roger Dunstan, "Gambling in California." Available at <http://www.library.ca.gov/CRB/97/03/crb97003.html#toc>. Accessed 8 March 2005. Also "An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Indian Gaming in 2004," published by the National Indian Gaming Association. Available online at [http://www.indiangaming.org/NIGA\\_econ\\_impact\\_2004.pdf](http://www.indiangaming.org/NIGA_econ_impact_2004.pdf). Accessed 8 March 2005. Also the final report (1999) of the National Gambling Impact Study Commission. Available online at <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/ngisc/reports/finrpt.html>. Accessed 8 March 2005.



# Euthanasia: Compassion or Control?

**T**erri Schiavo. *Million Dollar Baby*. The Groningen Protocol. Peter Singer. Jack Kevorkian. Wherever you look in civilized society, euthanasia is on center stage.

Jack Kevorkian, the infamous “Dr. Death,” who is now serving 10 to 25 years in a Michigan prison, assisted 69 patients in murdering themselves.

Dutch doctors at Groningen recently put forth a policy to routinely advocate infanticide.

Peter Singer, Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, justifies euthanasia by making a distinction between human life and “personhood.”<sup>1</sup>

The films *Million Dollar Baby* and *The Sea Inside*, affirming strong pro-euthanasia messages, received Oscars at the recent Academy Awards.

At the heart of this ethical storm are patients such as Terri Schiavo, a victim of brain damage. In late March, Congress and the judiciary were locked in a tug-of-war over Terri’s feeding tube.

How did these changes in society come about? The modern “right to die” movement manufactured the term “euthanasia” (to mean “good death”). Then it welded euthanasia and compassion together with the slogan “death with dignity.” Now, the “good death propaganda” has become a shield to encourage suicide, physician-assisted suicide, and infanticide; it represents “controlled death.” When those who hold to Biblical absolutes confront the euthanasia movement, they must practice what they preach. They must demonstrate that human control over death does not result in “death with dignity.” Believers must also demonstrate Biblical compassion for the dying. Christians will make a major impact on society by practicing Biblical compassion for the dying while rejecting a godlike control over death.

## Death and Life

The euthanasia movement emphasizes godlike control rather than genuine compassion. Euthanasia has been practiced for centuries, but modern technology has forced our society to reexamine its values. The weapons developed to battle disease and prolong life are now being manipulated to tear apart our moral fabric. To apply “right to die” values to the evils of dying, advocates have redefined death and life. Physical death, which was once understood to involve the permanent dissolution of the organs and tissues necessary to sustain life, has taken on new meanings. For instance, “death” has been redefined as “brain death” indicated by machines that monitor activities in the brain.<sup>2</sup> “Life” has also been reclassified. In the eyes of the euthanasia proponents, it must mean more than mere survival; it must mean a good “quality” life. This perverse approach has been used to end the lives of the infirm as well as infants. For instance, “according to Professor Singer, ‘a period of 28 days after birth might be allowed before an infant is accepted as having the same right to live as others.’”<sup>3</sup> This isn’t compassion for life; this is contempt for life. Where will this lead our society? It will rip the “civil” right out of civilization.

## Going Dutch?

It is precisely this sort of thinking that led to the recent Groningen Protocol in the Netherlands. This is the formalized procedure for killing disabled infants at the Groningen University Hospital—infants “with a hopeless prognosis who experience unbearable suffering and for whom a very poor quality of life with sustained suffering is predicted.”<sup>4</sup> Who decides that suffering is “unbearable”? Apparently, every man does what is right

in his own eyes. Recent news reports indicate that Dutch doctors believe that there are five unreported infant murders for every one that is reported.<sup>5</sup> This is because “virtually every guideline established by the Dutch to regulate euthanasia has been modified or violated with impunity.”<sup>6</sup> Herbert Hendin has shown that “the Netherlands has moved from assisted suicide to euthanasia, from euthanasia for people who are terminally ill to euthanasia for those who are chronically ill, from euthanasia for physical illness to euthanasia for psychological distress, and from voluntary euthanasia to involuntary euthanasia (called ‘termination of the patient without explicit request.’)”<sup>7</sup>

## Control or Compassion?

For the last two decades in the United States, proponents of euthanasia have framed the debate by stressing “individual rights.” “It is now fashionable, in many aspects of public life, to demand what one wants or needs as a matter of rights. How to do the right thing gets translated into a right to get or do your own thing.”<sup>8</sup> This insistent preaching of “individual rights” now seems to mean that there are no individual “wrongs.” In reality, these new definitions are an attempt to replace God Himself; they spring from a desire for godlike control: the worship of self. “Control and choice of when, where and how, plus personal dignity and a wish to avoid distress, physical and emotional, during the dying process are the key considerations.”<sup>9</sup> “Self-determination is indeed the only issue of any real substance in the controversy over euthanasia.”<sup>10</sup> Self-determination is the worship of the “almighty, omniscient me.” This substitution of self in the seat of the Sovereign God places mankind on the slippery slope to destruction.

The “right to die”<sup>11</sup> movement arrogantly assumes a godlike control in order to kill patients while throwing compassion aside. These proponents of controlled death have tried to conceal their deadly weapons under the velvet cloak of compassion. It’s time to snatch the covering away. Is what they offer a compassionate “death with dignity”? Let’s consider this carefully.

Euthanasia is an act of contempt, not compassion. “Compassion” (com: “with,” passion: “suffering”) literally means “suffering with.” By exalting self-centered control, those who insist on legalizing euthanasia are impatiently rushing patients toward death. “A doctor who suggests euthanasia as an option to a patient—such suggestions are accepted practice in the Netherlands—or relatives who respond too readily to a patient’s mention of euthanasia send a

powerful message that they believe that the patient should not continue to live. In such cases we are not dealing with autonomy or the patient’s right to die, but with the will of the doctor and the relatives and their right to influence the ending of a life that has become a burden, or that they think is not worth living.”<sup>12</sup> This leaves depressed, disabled people in what one specialist calls “a state of unrecognized terror.”<sup>13</sup> This is coercion, not compassion. Attempts to assume a godlike control over death also send doctors down a poisonous path. “According to one medical consultant who observed the trials of the Nazis at Nuremberg, ‘Whatever proportions these crimes finally assumed . . . the beginnings at first were merely a subtle shift in emphasis in the basic attitude of the physicians . . . toward the non-rehabilitable sick.’”<sup>14</sup> In addition, the methods of euthanasia are far from a “sure thing,” leaving many victims alive but disabled. Far from “suffering with” patients, euthanasia proponents have discarded compassion in the mad dash for godlike control.

## God’s Control

Christians reject this godlike control by insisting on Biblical absolutes. Non-Biblical arguments against euthanasia are mushy at best.<sup>15</sup> Like contractors stepping into miry clay in order to lay a good foundation, Christians must step into this issue in order to lay the foundation with Biblical absolutes: God made man in His image (Gen. 9:6). God owns man (Ezek. 18:4) because He is the Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of man (Rom. 11:36). This establishes our belief in the sanctity of life. The deterioration of the human body is a direct result of the curse brought on by man’s rebellious “control” (Gen. 3:17–19). As the Great Physician, Jesus fought against sickness and death, just as we do. In addition to Christ, three more groaning observers agonize over our present plight (Rom. 8:20–26).<sup>16</sup> God is the God of comfort (2 Cor. 1:3–11). His unique excellence can be seen even in human sickness and distress (John 9:1–3; 2 Cor. 12:1–10), and His glory will be recognized ultimately in the resurrection of the human body (1 Cor. 15:51–57).

Start to finish, God is in control. The Bible reveals that those who committed suicide (such as Saul, Ahithophel, Zimri, and Judas) insisted on being in control. By contrast, men such as Job and Samson wished for death, but submitted themselves to the Lord’s control. These Biblical absolutes lead us to what President George Bush has called “a presumption for life.” However, those who hold to Biblical absolutes have been charged with lacking compassion. How should we answer this charge?

This insistent preaching of “individual rights” now seems to mean that there are no individual “wrongs.”



## Christian Compassion

Christians will make a major impact on society by practicing Biblical compassion.

By “suffering with” terminally ill patients, believers can testify to their Redeemer. After all, bearing one another’s burdens fulfills the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). Is there a way to stress the sanctity of life and the quality of life near the end of life? Yes, this is the reasoning behind the modern hospice movement. The name “hospice” has become synonymous with specialized pain relief for individuals near the end of life. Those who hold to Biblical absolutes can demonstrate compassion by helping to educate physicians and others in new techniques to relieve pain. According to David Cundiff, M.D., “the absence of palliative care training for medical professionals results in suboptimal care for almost all terminally ill patients and elicits the wish to hasten their own deaths in a few.”<sup>17</sup> In addition, the President’s Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research “emphasized in its 1983 report that excessive pain, discomfort, and anxiety are nearly always examples of inadequate treatment, not inadequate ethics.”<sup>18</sup> This means that the euthanasia movement arrogantly assumes a godlike control in order to kill patients instead of emphasizing compassionate alternative care. And they call it “death with dignity” or “killing with kindness.” “How dignified is it, however, when a doctor, charged with care and cure, actively kills his patient or provides the means for the patient to do it himself?”<sup>19</sup> Euthanasia advocates recognize the weakness of their position. One religious leader said, “A strong supporter of euthanasia once told me that only the hospice movement, undergirded by the religious stress on the sanctity of life, could withstand the demands of euthanasia.”<sup>20</sup> Early indications from the Netherlands show that the hospice movement may be having an impact even there.

There are other questions that need to be addressed. Only a few can be dealt with in this brief article. Euthanasia proponents insist that it is a form of euthanasia to file a “do not resuscitate” (DNR) order when there is little or no hope for cure or recovery. This is a false charge, since no one is trying to take control over or bring about death. There are instances when it would be wrong to use extraordinary measures to extend life for a few more days just because one has the ability to do so. This author has not researched every aspect of Terri Schiavo’s case, but the debate centers on whether or not she was “alive” (because life and death have been redefined by some). This unfortunate debate has largely obscured the question of what constitutes normal and extraordinary care. Does the tube which provided food and water replace an organ necessary for life for which there is no hope of improvement? Would proper medical care with therapy have allowed Mrs. Schiavo to improve? It would be very helpful to hear from informed medical professionals who can address these issues from a Biblical standpoint.

One conclusion is clear: Christians will make a major impact on society by practicing Biblical compassion for

**... Excessive pain, discomfort, and anxiety are nearly always examples of inadequate treatment, not inadequate ethics."**

the dying while rejecting a godlike control over death. The euthanasia movement rejects compassion in its mad dash for godlike control. By building on Biblical absolutes and “suffering with” suffering patients, believers will testify to the Lord of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Singer, Peter. *Rethinking Life and Death: A New Ethical Approach in Last Rights? Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia Debated*, edited by Michael M. Uhlmann, Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998. At times, Singer advocates animal rights over human rights with declarations such as “Not all members of the species *Homo sapiens* are persons and not all persons are members of the species *Homo sapiens*” (p. 187). Cf. Singer’s classroom strategy in “The Ethicist” available at <http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/about/20050126.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Conceding this definition is dangerous. Peter Singer pointed this out in graphic terms. “They have redefined death so that they can remove beating hearts from warm, breathing bodies and give them to others with better prospects, while telling themselves that they are only taking organs from a corpse” (p. 172). More recent advances in technology have identified formerly unrecognized brain activity. See the 2005 *American Academy of Neurology Journal* abstract at <http://www.neurology.org/cgi/content/abstract/64/3/514> and a related news article at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/08/science/08coma.html?oref=login> (accessed March 9, 2005). There have also been charges that the Minimally Conscious State (MCS) has been frequently misdiagnosed as the Persistent Vegetative State (PVS). A 1996 article in the *British Medical Journal* concluded that “The vegetative state needs considerable skill to diagnose, requiring assessment over a period of time; diagnosis cannot be made, even by the most experienced clinician, from a bedside assessment” (BMJ 1996; 313:13–16 [6 July]). Available at <http://bmj.bmjjournals.com/cgi/content/full/313/7048/13>. These studies have major implications for patients such as Terri Schiavo.

<sup>3</sup> Canady, Charles T., Statement of the Chairman, Subcommittee on the Constitution, Congressional Testimony, July 20, 2000, citing Peter Singer.

<sup>4</sup> Verhagen, Eduard, *The Groningen Protocol—Euthanasia in Severely Ill Newborns*, abstract, *New England Journal of Medicine*; March 10, 2005, Vol. 352, Issue 10, p. 959.

<sup>5</sup> <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/7140163/>, accessed 03/21/05.

<sup>6</sup> Hendin, Herbert. *Seduced by Death* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1997), p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Kass, Leon R., *Death with Dignity and the Sanctity of Life in Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia Debated*, edited by Michael M. Uhlmann, Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998, p. 201.

<sup>9</sup> Shewmon, D. Alan, *Active Voluntary Euthanasia*, in *Last Rights? Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia Debated*, edited by Michael M. Uhlmann, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998, p. 344, quoting Derek Humphrey, co-founder of the Hemlock Society.

<sup>10</sup> Shewmon, p. 344

<sup>11</sup> Herbert Hendin notes that "the 'right to die' is a good slogan designed to sell euthanasia. Historically, however, it is life that has been considered an inalienable right; death is a biological fact. One could with equal or more justification speak of legalization as establishing the doctor's right to kill. The notion of right to die has a preposterous quality, conjuring up images of the state denying us the right and granting us immortality" (p. 157).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.160

<sup>14</sup> Shewmon, D. Alan, *Active Voluntary Euthanasia*, in *Last Rights? Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia Debated*, edited by Michael M. Uhlmann, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998, p. 343, quoting Leo Alexander, M.D., U.S. medical consultant at the Nuremberg trials, in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, 241, (1949):39-47.

<sup>15</sup> Shea, Christopher, "The Ethicist," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, January 26, 2005. Available at <http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/about/20050126.htm>. Note Singer's approach to the issue with his students.

<sup>16</sup> *Creation, Christians and the Spirit of God*.

<sup>17</sup> Cundiff, David, *Euthanasia Is Not the Answer*, Totawa, NJ: The Humana Press, Inc., 1992, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Shewmon, p. 344.

<sup>19</sup> Otto, Randall, "Care for the Dying: The Church and Hospice," *Quodlibet Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Spring 2001; available at <http://www.quodlibet.net/otto-hospice.shtml>; accessed March 19, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., citing Wood, Foreword, *Death Without Dignity* (ed. N. M. de S. Cameron; Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1990).

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# SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

## First Partaker

### Superlative Pastoral Theology

Frequently I'm asked for recommendations about books on the ministry. This morning I counted those on my shelves having to do with pastoral theology in general or the field of homiletics more specifically and found over one hundred such titles. And these would be only a small portion of what has been written in this field since the Reformation.

Some of these books on pastoral theology are widely considered classics and would repay rereading every few years. I would personally put Phillips Brooks' *Lectures on Preaching*, John Henry Jowett's *The Preacher: His Life and Work*, C. H. Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*, and Charles Jefferson's *The Minister as Shepherd* in this category, to name a few. Others, as for instance *Between Two Worlds* by John Stott or *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry* by John MacArthur and the Master's College faculty, are newcomers to the field. Only time will tell whether they command lasting attention.

What I'm going to recommend, then, are the five titles that for me are in a class to themselves. I don't expect that anyone else might see it the same way. I can only say that all five are books I've owned and read for many years now, four of them for over twenty-five, and each is a work I find myself strangely drawn back to again and again. They have, for me at least, a quality something like the Scripture in that I seem never to be able to exhaust their wisdom and inspiration. In addition, the mood they bring to my soul is precious beyond words. Here then are my top five recommendations.

#### Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*

The book to which I've returned more often than any other is Charles Bridges' frequently republished *The*

*Christian Ministry*. I purchased my copy in 1972 and have reread most of it many times. Simply out of grateful sentimentality I went hunting for a first edition several years ago. Although unsuccessful, I was at least able to obtain the rich brown, full leather second edition (published in the same year of 1830) that now quietly graces a top shelf among rare books as a tribute to my profound indebtedness to its contents.

Charles Bridges was a 19<sup>th</sup>-century leader in the evangelical party within the Church of England. He ministered in a town called Old Newton for over twenty-five years and authored many devotional and biographical works popular at the time. Today he's known for his commentaries on Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Psalm 119. Of the last, C. H. Spurgeon offered something that applies equally to *The Christian Ministry*, when he estimated, *Worth its weight in gold . . . we praise it for its surpassing grace and unction*.

Bridges begins with nearly seventy pages surveying the Christian ministry, starting with its Divine origin. Can one conceive of any grander conception of the Church than that with which he opens? Referencing Ephesians 3:10, he writes, *The Church is the mirror, that reflects the whole effulgence of the Divine character. It is the grand scene, in which the perfections of Jehovah are displayed to the universe*. If men would linger long over those two sentences and then rise up to obey the Heavenly calling it might alter forever the character of their churches.

If congregations have such an impressive calling, what is the nature of the ministerial office? Bridges refers to it as a *sacred dignity*. *The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian ministry*, he warns, *our right arm is withered; nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains*.

What can he mean that losing the sense of our ministry's sacred dignity will inevitably result in *imbecility and*

*"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits"*  
(2 Tim. 2:6)

### Inside

Bring . . . the Books—Key books for the pastor's study . . . . .	5
Straight Cuts—An exegetical study . . . . .	6
Windows—Themed sermon illustrations . . . . .	7

relaxation? This, too, cries for reflection—and perhaps repentance.

The heart of Bridges' work is two sections amounting to over a hundred pages having to do with the *inefficiency* of the ministry. In fact, the book is subtitled provocatively, *Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency*. I'm aware of nothing anywhere similar to these chapters.

Just look, for instance, at some of their headings: "The Withholding of Divine Influence," "Fear of Man," "The Spirit of Covetousness," "The Influence of Spiritual Pride," "The Want [Lack] of Connection of the Minister's Family with His Work."

Still another chapter along this line is entitled "Want of Entire Devotedness of Heart to the Christian Ministry." To underscore his concern over ministers who entangle themselves, he quotes from a letter by Thomas Scott, the commentator: *It ought . . . to be our solemn and cheerful determination, to refrain from studies, pursuits, and even recreations, that may not be made evidently subservient to the grand purpose of our Ministry.* In the same vein, he recalls that Richard Cecil, the friend and biographer of John Newton, *used to say, that the devil did not care how ministers were employed, [just] so that it was not in their proper work.* Whether it was

may feed your own soul. In my case at least, Bridges' desire has been fulfilled every time I've opened his masterpiece, *The Christian Ministry*. I trust that your experience will be as blessed as mine.

## **Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor***

Now I come to the most convicting book I've ever read (or perhaps ever could). In fact, it haunts me. So much so that I wore out my first copy seven or eight years ago and am likewise now endangering a second. I refer to *The Reformed Pastor* by the English Puritan Richard Baxter. Don't let the word "Reformed" mislead you. Although Baxter preached reformation theology, he's not referring to that here, but to what we mean by the word *revived*. *The Revived Pastor*, we might say.

It would almost be enough just to quote a sample of the tributes that have been given to this book. For instance, Spurgeon frequently asked his wife, Susannah, to read from it to him on Sunday evenings when he was not only *weary, but sorely depressed in spirit*. Read the touching accounts for yourself in the first volume of Spurgeon's autobiography (*The Early Years*, p. 417). Phillip Doddridge (author of our hymns "O Happy Day" and "Grace! 'Tis a Charming Sound"), wrote of it, *A most extraordinary performance, and should be read by every young minister, before he takes people under his stated care; and, I think, the practical part of it reviewed every three or four years; for nothing would have a greater tendency to awaken the spirit of a minister to that zeal in his work, for want of which many good men are but shadows of what (by the blessing of God) they might be.* And Francis Asbury, leader of the early Methodists in America, exclaimed, *Oh what a prize!*

So what is this book about? In his introduction to the present edition, J. I. Packer sums up the questions with which *The Reformed Pastor* faces us. (1) *Do I believe the gospel Baxter believed . . . ?* (2) *Do I then share Baxter's view of the vital necessity of conversion?* (3) *Am I then as real as I should be in letting this view of things shape my life and work?* (4) *Have I set myself, as Baxter set himself, to find the best way of creating situations in which I can talk to my people personally, on a regular basis, about their spiritual lives?*

This fourth question is generated by Baxter's example (explained in the book) of fervently pursuing every means, both public and private, for compelling lost people to come to Christ. This is the sharp point of the whole book.

*Satan will not be charmed out of his possession, Baxter argued. We must lay siege to the souls of sinners, which are his garrison, and find out where his chief strength lieth, and lay the battery of God's ordinance against it, and ply it close, till a breach is made; and then suffer them not by their shifts to repair it again.*

Baxter did what he advocated by setting aside two days every week during which he and an assistant met with the people of his parish from morning to night in order to privately catechize them into accepting and

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**Now I come to the most convicting book I've ever read (or perhaps ever could). In fact, it haunts me. So much so that I wore out my first copy seven or eight years ago and am likewise now endangering a second. I refer to *The Reformed Pastor* by the English Puritan Richard Baxter.**

*hunting or sporting, cards and assemblies, writing notes upon the classics, or politics, it was all one to him. Each might please his own taste.*

These statements from Scott and Cecil illustrate one of the most blessed features of Bridges' work. It offers hundreds of allusions, anecdotes, and quotations from other preachers. Though some are disappointingly (at least for me) in Latin, those in English are worth many times the price of the book. Warren Wiersbe went so far as to call them *priceless*. Perhaps you'll come to agree.

The Lord seems, like a loving Father, to sometimes give us little things that we don't actually need, but that would nevertheless delight us. That was at least my view of what happened when early last year I was able to obtain a one-page letter in Bridges' own hand. Dated October 7, 1863, and written to encourage a fellow minister assuming responsibility for a new congregation, it conveys Bridges' wish *that our precious Lord*



submitting to Christ. *Before we undertook this work our hands were full*, he sighed. Indeed. He was responsible for some 800 families—not people—families!

With a multitude so large, Baxter conceded the difficulties of persuading all; yet *the design of the work*, he affirmed, *is the reforming and saving of all the people*.

When the small pastors' reading fellowship of which I'm a member studied *The Reformed Pastor* several years ago, we were to a man smitten by the contrast between our own lame efforts and those which Baxter recounts, especially when even he confessed to a feeling of failure. *I marvel . . .*, he lamented, *how I can let men alone in their sins, and that I do not go to them, and beseech them, for the Lord's sake, to repent, however they may take it, and whatever pains or trouble it may cost me! I seldom come out of the pulpit, but my conscience smiteth me that I have been no more serious and fervent*.

This is one of those rare books that so humbles, one hardly dares to continue it but suspects his integrity if he doesn't. And Baxter knew he was cutting to the quick. But to him thin skin was pride. *We are so tender*, he reproached, *that a man can scarcely touch us but we are hurt; and so high-minded, that a man who is not versed in complimenting, and skilled in flattery . . . can scarcely tell how to handle us . . . without there being some word, or some neglect, which our high spirits will fasten on, and take as injurious to our honour*.

### **John Angell James, *An Earnest Ministry***

It can't be coincidental that the author of my third favorite book on the ministry also nourished his own soul on Baxter's *Reformed Pastor*. A few hours before John Angell James, minister of Carr's Lane, Birmingham, died, he testified, *I have made, next to the Bible, Baxter's Reformed Pastor my rule as regards the object of my ministry. It were well if that volume were often read by all our pastors*.

This recommendation could also be made for James' own work, *An Earnest Ministry: The Want of the Times*. The title is the content—earnestness.

There are concurrent confessions by the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists . . . that there is a deadness in all their churches, that revivals are rare, and conversions few, and the power of godliness among professing Christians is low, he begins. So, after forty-two years in the ministry, James felt justified in proposing that the great need was blood earnestness.

How then can the work of the ministry be accomplished? Every view we can take of it replies, "Only by earnestness." Every syllable of the apostle's language replies, "Only by earnestness." Every survey we can take of human nature replies, "Only by earnestness." Every recollection of our own experience, as well as every observation we can make of the experience of others, replies, "Only by earnestness." *This, this is what we want, and must have, if the ends of the gospel are ever to be extensively accomplished, an earnest ministry*.

Regarding the ways in which earnestness manifests

itself, James writes, *It is impossible not to observe how much the popularity of some preachers depends upon their manner; they do not say better or more striking things than other men; but they say them in a better and more striking manner. There is passion in their tones, power in their looks*. He cites a striking instance from the example of Robert Murray McCheyne. After McCheyne's death there was found upon his desk an unopened letter from someone who had heard his last sermon. *Pardon a stranger for addressing you a few lines*, it began. *I heard you preach last Sabbath evening. It pleased God to bless that sermon to my soul. It was not so much what you said, as*

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**"I marvel . . .", he lamented, "how I can let men alone in their sins, and that I do not go to them, and beseech them, for the Lord's sake, to repent, however they may take it, and whatever pains or trouble it may cost me!"**

*your manner of speaking it that struck me. I saw in you a beauty of holiness I never saw before*.

James makes the case that the secret of earnestness is in the ability to feel. It is in *an intense feeling of the subject of discourse; in a mind deeply impressed, and a heart warmed with the theme discussed. All men are in earnest when they feel*.

A friend of James who was highly regarded as an eloquent preacher sat on a conference platform listening to another brother whose simple sermon seemed to strangely penetrate the minds of the people. Their faces showed that they were deeply affected. James' friend began to sob. Ah, he explained afterwards, *I would give the world to be able to produce that effect in such a legitimate way*. . . . Oh, he said again and again, *I care nothing what people may think or say of my abilities if I may but be useful to souls! And then, with a swelling indignation, God knows, I do not want their applause, I want their salvation*.

That's earnestness, and it alone will turn the tide.

### **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers***

Over a period of six weeks in the spring of 1969, Dr. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones delivered a notable series of lectures on preaching before the faculty and student body of Westminster Theological Seminary. They were the mature fruit of his forty-two years of pulpit experience in two pastorates and literally thousands of additional engagements (he preached in other churches nearly every Tuesday or Thursday

throughout his entire ministry).

The Westminster lectures were quickly put into print in a volume titled *Preaching and Preachers*. Between 1972 and 1981 the book's popularity called for twelve printings. I've no idea how many have been called for since. But I do suspect that it will be kept in print as long as there are preachers whose philosophy of ministry has been shaped by Scripture, because they will find in its pages an almost unequaled encouragement to persevere with their convictions despite whatever frothy trends are sweeping professing Christianity.

Here is a man, Lloyd-Jones writes, who is *standing in a pulpit and speaking*. People are sitting in pew and listening. *What is happening? What is this? Why does that man stand in that pulpit? What is his object? Why does the Church put him there to do this? Why do these other people come to listen? What is this man meant to be doing?*

*He is not there, Lloyd-Jones answers, merely to talk to them, he is not there to entertain them. He is there—and I want to emphasize this, he said, to do something to those people; he is there to produce results of various kinds. . . . His preaching is meant to affect the*

***But to Jefferson's disgust, many young men entering the ministry "say quite openly that they despise pastoral work. Study they enjoy, books they love, preaching they revel in. But as for shepherding the sheep, their soul hates it."***

*whole person at the very centre of life. Preaching should make such a difference to a man who is listening that he is never the same again.*

Not surprisingly, the good doctor found much of modern preaching to be reprehensible. *Light entertainment, easy familiarity and jocularity are not compatible with a realisation of the seriousness of the condition of the souls of all men by nature. . . . These methods may affect people psychologically, he warned, and they may lead to "decisions," he conceded, but our object is not merely to get decisions.*

One of the most fascinating attractions of this book is its anecdotal nature. In his introduction, Lloyd-Jones states that this was one of his objectives, to share a good deal of the personal and anecdotal. I'm not aware of

another book on the preaching and the ministry that is quite so full of this. Some are quite entertaining, especially those about sermon stealers.

He relates having heard a poor preacher in South Wales who had probably never been outside Wales, not even to England, let alone anywhere else. On this particular Sunday the pitiful man read out his text and then began, *As I stood the other day at the head of the Wyoming Valley. . . . As Lloyd-Jones observed, Sermon stealers ought at least know what to leave out!*

## **Charles Edward Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd***

My fifth recommendation came out of the George Shephard Lectures on Preaching series given at Bangor Theological Seminary. I wish I didn't have to say that it's by a theological liberal.

Charles Edward Jefferson pastored the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City for thirty-nine years (1898–1937). He seems to have attempted to formulate mediating positions between orthodoxy and unbelief. Nevertheless, his lectures at Bangor that were printed under the title *The Minister as Shepherd* are superb. In fact, in his history of preaching, David L. Larsen gives his opinion: *Perhaps no one in modern times has spoken or written as movingly about the shepherd character of ministry as has Jefferson. I certainly don't know of a rival.*

*The heart of a man is like the heart of a sheep, Jefferson observes. It beats at the sight of a shepherd.* So, Jefferson continued, *The shepherd conception haunts us, clings to us, will not let us go. This is the Lord's doing, and it ought to be marvelous in our eyes. Blessed is the man who ponders its significance and allows it to teach him what it has to tell.*

Jefferson proposes that what this conception has to tell is something about four subjects: the shepherd's work, opportunity, temptations, and reward. The work, among other things, is to be (like the Good Shepherd) something of a great physician. *There are soul diseases peculiar to certain ages and certain temperaments, and certain callings and certain environments, and the minister ought to know the symptoms of these diseases, the stages of their development, and the hygienic processes by which they may be cured, he admonished.*

But to Jefferson's disgust, many young men entering the ministry *say quite openly that they despise pastoral work. Study they enjoy, books they love, preaching they revel in. But as for shepherding the sheep, their soul hates it. They like to feel that they have special gifts for the pulpit. When their friends prophesy for them a glorious pulpit career, their heart sings. But such men have their reward. Because they desert the people through the week, Jefferson noted, God deserts them on Sunday.*

I trust that you'll find in at least one of these classics something that will really thrill your soul with the magnificence of what God has called us pastor-teachers to do. ☞



Dr. Mark Minnick is the pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980. He speaks frequently in churches and at conferences across the nation and ministers regularly on mission fields around the world.



# Bring . . . the Books

## Little Is Much When God Is in It: The Life of William Carey

At a conference held in 1792 at Nottingham, England, a young pastor delivered an impassioned appeal for the propagation of the gospel among the heathen. “He packed his message into two brief urgings—‘two plain, practical, pungent, quotable watchwords’—*Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.*” That young preacher was William Carey, and the sermon he preached that day became one of the most famous missionary messages of all time. That assembly authorized the following statement: “Resolved, that a plan be prepared against the next ministers’ meeting at Kettering, for forming a Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathens.”

Six months later, however, when twelve men met at Kettering to discuss “The Plan,” the initial excitement had waned. These pastors of small rural churches whose congregations were largely “illiterate and poor,” had lost heart—until Carey stood and recounted the missionary endeavors among other Christian groups, especially the Moravians: “See, said he, what Moravians are daring, and some of them British like ourselves, and many only artisan and poor! Cannot we Baptists at least attempt something in fealty to the same Lord?” Four of the men joined Carey’s efforts to establish a society for missionary endeavors among like-minded Baptist churches. The modern missionary movement was born, and Carey earned the title Father of Modern Missions.

The story of William Carey, like the story of the society that he founded, is a glorious reminder that God often uses humble and obscure people to do His greatest work. One of the best accounts of Carey’s life and work was written by his great-grandson, S. Pearce Carey first published his biography, *William Carey*, in 1923; he revised it in 1934. My copy is an updated edition edited by Peter Masters of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and published in 1993 by the Wakeman Trust.


Born and reared in the heart of England, Carey inherited his love for learning from his father, a local weaver and the village schoolmaster. Realizing the weaver’s trade would be profoundly affected by the industrial revolution taking place, Carey’s father apprenticed him to a master cobbler. This craft played a major role in awakening his heart for missions. At seventeen, Carey came to know Christ and had a passion to share Him with others. His other passion was reading. He had always been fascinated by the accounts of the legendary Captain Cook’s travels to the South Pacific Islands. These two passions combined to produce in him a missionary zeal that left a legacy unmatched in the annals of missionary history.

For forty years Carey labored to reach the heathen in India for Christ. His service to Christ came at great cost to his family and his body. By the end of his ministry he had buried several loved ones, including his first and second wives. But his sacrifice yielded a great harvest. Over 600 converts were baptized in the first twenty years of ministry. By the time he had completed thirty years of ministry, over 200,000 items had been printed and translated into over 40 different languages. Sir William Hunter, recounting Carey’s efforts, said in an address delivered in 1888,

“... when  
thou comest,  
bring with thee  
... the books”  
(2 Tim. 4:13)

The record of the work done by the Serampore missionaries reads like an Eastern romance. They created a prose vernacular literature for Bengal; they established the modern method of popular education; they founded the present Protestant North Indian Church. They gave the first impulse to the native press. They set up the first steam-engine in India: with its help they introduced the modern manufacture of paper on a large scale. They translated and printed the Bible, or parts thereof into thirty-one languages, earning the main part of their funds with their own hands. They built a college, which still ranks amongst the most splendid educational edifices in India. As one contemplates . . . one is lost in admiration of the faith of the three men who dared to build on such a scale.

Perhaps his greatest contribution lay in his pioneering work in translating the Scriptures. He translated the Bible into so many languages that some who doubted the ability of such a feat accused him of inventing languages and then claiming to have translated the Bible into that language. The truth was his translation came at great labor and personal diligence: “If I could learn languages faster, the work of translation would be more rapid. But some of the languages are very difficult, and differ so widely from others as to occasion me much hard labor. Every translation goes through my hands, except the Burmese and the Chinese.”

In June 1834, Carey finished his earthly course and entered into his eternal rest. But he did not go empty handed; nor did his labors die with him. Multiplied thousands have found Christ by reading a copy of the Scriptures that he translated into their language. Thousands more from all over the world, stirred by his life and example, have followed him into missionary service for Christ. Perchance by reading his story yourself, the Lord may stir your heart to expect great things from God and attempt great things for God! 

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

# Straight Cuts

## Hebrews 6:4–6

Where there is life there must also be growth. The admonition to spiritual growth in Hebrews 5:11–14 is followed by a stern warning of apostasy in 6:4–6. This warning is in three parts. First, who is warned? Five descriptive phrases form the body of verses 4 and 5: “those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” Second, what are they warned about? The expression arching across verses 4 and 6 answers this: “It is impossible for those . . . If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.” Finally, why are they warned? This is answered by the twin expressions “seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

Some interpret the text as referring to former Christians who have forfeited their salvation. The five descriptive phrases of verses 4 and 5 seem to support this view. In addition, the reference to renewing them “again” to repentance suggests that they had genuinely repented in the past: if they persist in their fallen condition, then it is impossible for them to be renewed *again* to repentance, but if they confess and repent of having fallen away then they can be renewed. This is the Arminian interpretation.

Others have posited that the warning presents the hypothetical case of a sin (i.e., falling away) that cannot be committed today. “If anyone should become apostate, it would be impossible to restore him” (Hughes, 212). They agree that the five phrases of verses 4 and 5 do indeed describe converted people, but lean heavily on the conditional nature of the phrase “if they fall away” in verse 6. The writer’s assurance that they have not apostatized (v. 9) reinforces this position. The strength of this position is its agreement with the doctrine of eternal security.


A third position argues that the five phrases of verses 4 and 5 do not describe genuinely converted people, but those who have an extensive familiarity with gospel truth. Such individuals have not genuinely responded to the knowledge they have but, rather, have turned and repudiated it and “fallen away” (verse 6). The strength of this position is its agreement with other passages that teach both eternal security and the danger of apostasy.

This text begins by explaining the reason that the reader should go on to perfection: “Let us go on to perfection . . . for it is impossible . . . to renew them again to repentance” (vv. 1, 4, 6). The five phrases at the heart

of the text describe individuals who had heard and embraced the gospel. The writer uses three terms—*enlightened*, *tasted*, and *made partakers*—to describe their experience, but they were not actually saved. The past tenses suggest that when the writer sends this epistle to them, these things are no longer true of some of them. Moreover, they are now rejecting what they had then willingly embraced.

There is Scriptural precedent for this kind of gospel experience. Paul expresses concern that some of the readers of the Corinthian epistles are not genuinely converted (1 Cor. 6:9ff.; 2 Cor. 13:5), though they had experienced the gospel. Judas (Acts 1) and Simon (Acts 8) stand out as first-century examples. In the parable of the soils, some receive the gospel “with joy” and yet are not truly saved (Matt. 13:20, 21). What distinguishes the apostate is not that he rejects the truth. It is that he at first embraces it and shows every appearance of participating in it. John declares that such “went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 John 2:19). What distinguishes the apostate from the backslider is the falseness of his profession. Both Judas and Peter denied their Lord. Judas perished eternally. Peter was restored. He had something to restore. Judas did not. What distinguishes the apostate from the nominal professor of religion is, first, the amount of enlightenment, and, second, the strength of his response to it. The apostate has seen much and professed much.

The problem is that the apostates fell away. Perhaps like the seed sown in stony ground, they had “sprung up with joy.” But providentially allowed difficulty was followed by false teaching. Imperceptibly at first, but then more openly, they began a slide from acceptance of Christianity. The expression here seems to indicate that a crisis event had precipitated the declaration of rejection. For those thus described it is “impossible” (*adunaton*) for them to *make them new again unto repentance*. The impossibility of their restoration is emphatically forward (Westcott). It is not merely unlikely or difficult. It is *not able* to occur. Their halfheartedness has become hardheartedness, till they cannot become renewed.

The warning, then, is for those who profess Christ to truly possess Him, to know Him and walk with Him and love Him and follow Him. It is not enough to have had some wonderful experience. One must “improve” the knowledge of the gospel until it becomes personal. 

**“Rightly  
dividing  
the Word  
of Truth”  
(2 Tim. 2:15)**



The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines “hope” as “looking forward with confidence or expectation.” Such anticipation of future events is one of the greatest thrills of the human experience. Children wait excitedly for their birthday celebration. Hope drives fans to fanatical dedication at athletic events. People often work hard all their lives and save their money with the anticipation of retiring and living an easier life. Women who are “with child” are called “expectant” mothers. In the country of France, it is polite for one who is introduced to an expectant mother to say, *Je vous felicite de votre esperance* (“I congratulate you on your hope”). Such is the pervasiveness of great expectations in our society.

God has built anticipation into the Christian experience. The New Testament word for eager anticipation is the word “hope.” Scripture addresses the idea of hope in numerous passages, providing the believer with many reasons to anticipate good things from God. The prestigious list of three Christian virtues summarized in 1 Corinthians 13:13 includes “hope.”

The ability of the believer to experience a consistent excitement in the Christian life comes from the very goodness of our great God who is “the God of hope” (Rom. 15:13). The believer’s expectation has an eternal foundation: God’s trustworthiness. If God can be trusted, the Christian has every reason to be continuously full of hope.

Even unbelievers know that for hope to have any legitimacy, it must have a strong foundation. A little over a month before he died, the famous atheist Jean-Paul Sartre declared that he so strongly resisted feelings of despair that he would say to himself, “I know I shall die in hope.” Then in profound sadness, he would add, “But hope needs a foundation.” In stark contrast, the Christian has the character of God as a foundation for hope.

Because God has also demonstrated His ability to keep His Word, He continues to show the Christian that He can be trusted. The apostle Peter praises God for this demonstration which “hath begotten us again unto a lively hope” (1 Pet. 1:3). What is this powerful demonstration? It is “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”! Since Jesus rose from the dead, the believer has an unlimited supply of hope for any situation.

Hope must be acted upon by the believer. The Christian must trust what God has said. The Psalmist repeatedly reminds the reader that his hope is in God (38:15; 39:7; 71:5, etc.); he then implores the reader to place his hope in God (42:5, 11; 43:5). The believer must deliberately choose to trust in all that God has promised.

When a Christian places his trust in God’s promises,

he testifies to others of the trustworthiness of his Savior, for now and for eternity. The example of one woman illustrates such a hope and expectation. Having been diagnosed with a terminal illness, the woman contacted her pastor to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told the pastor which songs she wanted sung at the service and what

Scriptures to read. She also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible. “There’s one more thing,” she said excitedly. “I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand.” The pastor stood looking at the woman, not knowing quite what to say. The woman explained, “In all my years of attending church fellowship meals, I always remember that when the dishes were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, ‘Keep your fork.’ It was my favorite part of the meal because I knew that something better was coming. Some wonderful dessert was awaiting me. So I just want people to see me and know that I believe after this life the best is yet to come!”

God provides not only hope for the present but also hope that points believers to the future. In Hebrews 13:5, He has promised He will always be with us. From Romans 8:28, we learn that He is in control of what happens in our lives. Through life’s experiences, He is conforming us to Jesus Christ so that we can “wait for the hope of righteousness” (Gal. 5:5). Future events that we can look forward to with joy include the imminent return of our Savior: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). When this life is over, God has eternal life in Heaven awaiting those who are redeemed (Titus 1:2). These promises provide the believer with hope for this life and for eternity.

Eugene Lang greatly changed the lives of a sixth-grade class in East Harlem. Lang, a self-made millionaire, had been asked to speak to a class of 59 sixth-graders. What could he say to inspire these students, most of whom would drop out of school? He wondered how he could get these predominantly black and Puerto Rican children even to look at him. Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak to them from his heart. “Stay in school,” he admonished, “and I’ll help pay the college tuition for every one of you.” At that moment the lives of these students changed. For the first time they had hope. One student stated, “I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling.” As a result of the hope that Mr. Lang offered to these students, nearly 90 percent of that class went on to graduate from high school.

*“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”*

*Charles Spurgeon*

When the believer, trusting God, determines to anticipate the good things that God has promised, wonderful results take place in the area of practical living. He will not be ashamed to live for Christ: "and hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:5). The Christian will be emboldened in his testimony for his Savior: "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech" (2 Cor. 3:12). He will stay clear of attitudes and actions that displease the Lord: "and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself" (1 John 3:3). And his very countenance will be noticeably changed: "rejoicing in hope" (Rom. 12:12).

One cannot help noticing the abounding hope expressed by the apostle Paul in all of his epistles. A casual reading through Acts reminds the reader of the intense opposition and difficulties experienced by Paul. Yet he still chose to anticipate good things from God. The Christian believer should have this same attitude of hope. Christians would do well to demonstrate the same hopeful attitude as that of a Little League baseball team member whose team was behind by 18 runs in the first inning. "Boy," said one spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged." "Why should I be discouraged?" replied the player. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet."

When the believer grasps the magnitude of God's love for him in the marvelous salvation through Jesus Christ, he cannot help being filled with joyful anticipation of the good things God has in store for him. If God would go through all that trouble to redeem mankind to Himself, He must have something wonderful awaiting those who trust in Him.

How much do you trust the Lord? Do you trust Him for what He has promised, even though you cannot see it now? When hope is held in the heart, it has the ability to sustain a person through even the most difficult circumstances. Such was the case for a small boy in the hospital. The school system in a large city had a program to help children keep up with their schoolwork during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child's name and room number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn't fall too far behind."

The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she hadn't accomplished much. But the next day, a nurse

asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live."


Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization. He expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?"

Hope is a must for the believer. Hebrews 6:19 states that hope is the "anchor of the soul." A sick man in a hospital bed turned to his doctor who was visiting his room posing this question to his physician: "Doctor, do you know what Heaven is like?" As the doctor turned toward his patient, he heard the sounds of scratching and whining outside the door. Opening the door, the doctor watched the man's dog spring in and leap on his master with an eager show of gladness. Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice how your dog entered the room? He has never been in this room before and did not know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened he entered with great anticipation. I know little about Heaven, but I have the excitement of knowing my Master is there, and that is enough."

What if things are not going well? Keep anticipating the good things God has planned for those who are His. Martin Luther once said, "Everything that is done in the world is done by the hopeful." "Other men see only a hopeless end," said Gilbert Beenken, "but the Christian rejoices in an endless hope." Believer, keep hoping in God!

"An atheist has a reason, but no hope for his reason. A hypocrite has a hope, but no reason for his hope. A Christian has a reason for his hope, and a hope for his reason" (Viola Walden, ed., *Sword Scrapbook II* [Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1975], p. 174).

If you are low in hope, turn to the Scriptures and trust the promises of God. Through faithfulness and through claiming the promises of God, your anticipation of God's bestowment upon you of His goodness will increase. Romans 15:4 says "we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

Give thanks to God for the blessing of being able to anticipate good from Him as we serve Him faithfully. God is so good to give us the opportunity to live life with excitement about all that He is going to do. Paul rejoiced in this "good hope" given to us from God by His grace. Even in the midst of adverse circumstances, others have demonstrated this same eager anticipation. You too can rejoice in the blessing of hope afforded us by God. Let's determine by the grace of God to "lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:18). 

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# The Christian and Alcohol

*"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." (Prov. 20:1)*

## A Huge Problem

In 1979 a drunk driver veered off the road, careened across a well-manicured lawn and struck a parked car. My friend's infant daughter was safely tucked into her car seat in the parked car. Her mother was escorting her brother and sister into their grandma's house when the drunk driver struck, and the infant's short life was ended.

Did you know that a similar tragic scene is repeated every 22 minutes in America? That's right. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a person dies every 22 minutes in an alcohol-related motor vehicle accident. Over 310,000 people are injured in alcohol-related accidents each year. (That's one injury every 2 minutes.) Drinking and driving is the number one killer of Americans between the ages of 17 and 24.

The United States Justice Department reports that 4 in 10 violent crimes involve alcohol. The abuse of alcohol is present in 70% of all murders and other violent crimes. Victim reports show that an average of 183,000 rapes and sexual assaults involve alcohol each year, as do just over 197,000 robberies, 661,000 aggravated assaults, and nearly 1.7 million simple assaults.

Once again, the Bible is right! Proverbs 23:31, 32 says, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

## Where Is the Voice of the Christian Community?

It wasn't long ago that the Christian community stood united in its opposition to the use of alcohol. The April 24, 1965, issue of *Christianity Today* gave this warning: "Every tenth person becomes automatically hooked. The only solution is total abstinence!" Yet in the April 3, 2000, issue of the same magazine, Lawrence Burkholder, President Emeritus of Goshen Christian College in Goshen, Indiana, writes, "Christians who do not commit to a principle of total abstinence should follow a guideline that would

represent both discernment and Christian freedom by allowing limited use, now and then, and within the context of family, friendship, religious celebration and diplomatic protocol. These limits need not imply the strictness of an absolute principle. Still, they should be taken seriously. Such a policy offers the practical advantages of sobriety, the personal advantages of responsible maturity and the theological advantages of biblical wisdom."

Could it be that the present silence and ambivalence of the Christian community in America is partially responsible for our nation's ever-increasing alcohol-related challenges? Between 2 and 3% of the current college population will die from alcohol-related causes. Thirty percent of college failure is alcohol related. According to the University of Michigan's "Monitoring the Future" project, 43% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 65% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 73% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders used alcohol the previous year. Eight percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 24% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 32% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders were drunk in the last 30 days.

## The Bible Has Much to Say about Alcohol

There are 637 references to wine, drink, and drinking in the King James Version of the Bible. Most English readers read "wine" and assume that the word refers to a drink containing alcohol. This assumption is not always true. There are thirteen different Hebrew and Greek words that are translated "wine," with a wide range of meaning—everything from grape juice to concentrated grape syrup to alcoholic wine (Prov. 3:10; 31:4; Num. 28:7; Luke 1:15; 10:34).

Some Christians simply argue that all of the references to "wine" in the Bible are speaking of "grape juice." Such a position is hard to defend.

- Luke 10:34 shows wine being used for an open wound. Nonalcoholic wine would not be of much help in such a case.

- First Timothy 5:23 speaks of taking "a little wine" medicinally. Would there be any medicinal benefit in drinking nonalcoholic wine?

- Genesis 9:21, Proverbs 23:29–35, and Ephesians 5:18 all speak of the wine's power to intoxicate.

The truth is, without modern bottling techniques or refrigeration, unfermented grape juice has a short shelf life. Clearly, some Bible "wines" had the ability to intoxicate.

# What the Bible frequently meant by wine was basically purified water.

## The Wine of the Bible Was Not Like Wine Sold Today

Natural fermentation occurs when the juice of the grape comes into contact with the yeast released when the grape skin is broken. Under normal circumstances, naturally fermented wine contains no more than 7% alcohol. Modern "table wines" contain as much as 14% alcohol due to the addition of extra yeast and temperature regulations used during the fermentation process. Modern "fortified wines," such as port or sherry, have alcohol added, resulting in an alcoholic content of 18 to 24%. The distillation of spirits is a fairly modern process dating back to around A.D. 1000. "Hard liquor" produced by distillation, such as vodka or gin, has as much as 40% alcohol.

## The Wine of the Bible Was Diluted

According to secular authorities, people in Bible times would dilute their wine with at least 2 parts water (sometimes with as much as 20 parts water), reducing the alcoholic content to 2½%. The alcohol in the wine was actually being used to kill harmful bacteria in drinking water, and it would require nearly a gallon of this mixture to intoxicate the average person.

In all these countries [Syria, Palestine, Egypt], wine was always diluted with water, a long-standing custom in Mediterranean regions, where pure potable water is not very common. (R. Forbes, Professor of History of Pure and Applied Sciences in Antiquity, University of Amsterdam, in *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1989, vol. 29, pp. 44-45)

The wine of classical antiquity . . . was very different from modern wine. They . . . always diluted it with water before consumption. . . . Only barbarians drank undiluted wine. (Maynard A. Amerine, *Collier's Encyclopedia*, 1994, vol. 23, p. 518)

Whereas people in ancient times sought to reduce the alcoholic contents of their wine, people today seek to do the opposite. This is exactly what the Bible forbids in Proverbs 23:31. Norman Geisler, former dean of Liberty Center for Christian Scholarship, Liberty University, has written,

Many wine-drinking Christians today mistakenly assume that what the New Testament meant by wine is identical to wine used today. This, however, is false. In fact, today's wine is by biblical definition strong drink, and hence forbidden by the Bible. What the Bible frequently meant by wine was basically

purified water. . . . Therefore, Christians ought not to drink wine, beer, or other alcoholic beverages for they are actually strong drink forbidden in Scripture. Even ancient pagans did not drink what some Christians drink today!

Christian, you should be aware that even 12 ounces of modern "beer," which contains 4 to 7% alcohol, contains 3 times more alcohol than an 8-ounce cup of diluted wine in Bible times.

## Reasons a Christian Should Just Say "No!"

Did you know that President George W. Bush is a teetotaler? His abstinence has not limited his career. Quite the opposite is true! President Bush claims to have trusted Christ as Savior and put away alcohol. What does our Christian president know that you need to know too?

1. Alcohol is very addictive, enslaving one out of every ten users! First Corinthians 6:12 forbids such addictions, as does Ephesians 5:18.
2. Alcohol harms your body, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20). "Beer, wine and hard liquor form toxic substances called aldehydes that can destroy the liver, kidney and brain cells" (Robert Haas, M.D., former president of the American College of Sports Nutrition).
3. The Bible forbids the use of "strong drink" (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-31). All modern alcoholic drinks are forbidden by this prohibition!
4. Your example will cause others to stumble (Rom. 14:21). According to a survey by the *Daily Journal* newspaper (Oct. 26, 1988), one of the top five reasons teenagers drink is because their parents drink.
5. Christians are kings and priests (1 Pet. 2:9). The Bible says that kings and priests are not to drink (Prov. 31:4, 5; Lev. 10:8, 9).
6. The cost may be huge (Prov. 21:17)! The annual consumption of alcoholic beverages in the United States has reached 2.7 gallons of pure alcohol for every person 14 years of age and older, the equivalent of 591 beers each (a substantial financial expenditure).

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# Stem Cell Research

**W**e live in very exciting times. Our ability to diagnose and treat illness and disease is unparalleled with any other time in history. Yet with this explosion of knowledge comes great responsibility and accountability. Christians need to provide the scientific community (often controlled by the political community) with a sound moral platform founded on the Word of God.

To most of us, the idea of interacting with the scientific and political communities on the ethical issues of stem cells, embryos, and cloning is much too daunting. Where do we begin?

There are always Biblical principles that can be used to evaluate any issue in our current culture (2 Tim 3:16, 17; 2 Pet 1:3). The task at hand, then, is to gather what information we can regarding stem cell research: Where do the stem cells come from? How are they used? Then we must carefully filter this knowledge through the precepts of God's Word and prayerfully ask God to give wisdom and discernment. In so doing, we can provide a moral compass to guide the research in this area.

## What Are Stem Cells?

Stem cells are simply unspecialized cells that can differentiate into specialized cells. The process of differentiation is controlled by the genes within the stem cells. Given the right environment, stem cells can develop into any one of the 210 different types of tissues found in the body, such as muscle, bone, brain, heart, etc.

Stem cells can be named according to their type or based upon their origins. A brief review of early embryology will help us understand some of the different types of stem cells and where they can be found.

At the moment of conception a single cell entity called a zygote is formed, which consists of 23 chromosomes from the mother and 23 from the father—a unique genetic code, i.e., a new human being. As soon as the zygote begins to divide, it is called an embryo. The embryo from day 1 to approximately day 7 consists of stem cells which are *totipotent*, meaning their potential is total since they can differentiate into an entire human being. At approximately the seventh day after further differentiation, the embryo is termed a blastocyst, which now contains *pluripotent* stem cells and, according to recent research, totipotent stem cells as well. Pluripotent stem cells can develop into any body cell, but they cannot become an entire human being. The last type of stem cell is a *multipotent* stem cell. Such cells can differentiate only into the same tissue type.

## Where Do Stem Cells Come From?

There are currently five potential sources of stem cells, with a possible sixth under development. The first two sources fall under the broad category of *embryonic stem cells*.

1. Embryonic stem cells are harvested from the inner cell mass of the blastocyst. These are mostly obtained from the process of in vitro fertilization. Outside of the womb, a harvested egg is fertilized with a sperm, placed in the proper environment, and allowed to develop to the blastocyst stage. The inner cell mass of the blastocyst containing the stem cells is then withdrawn. This, of course, leads to the death of the embryo. Cloning for the purpose of obtaining stem cells involves the same process. Instead of joining an egg and a sperm, an egg's genetic material is removed and replaced with the full genetic makeup of an already existing adult cell. After it develops to the blastocyst stage, the cells are harvested. One further twist in this area is the human parthenogenetic embryo or parthenote. Parthenogenesis (which literally means "virgin birth") involves stimulating an unfertilized egg to grow and divide like a normal embryo. Attempts are being made to correct resultant genetic defects after the stem cells have been harvested.

2. Fetal stem cells are obtained from aborted fetuses, specifically the tissues that will make up the ovaries or testis, which are considered totipotent.

The next three sources are considered nonembryonic sources or *adult stem cells* (even though two of them do not technically come from adults). At the present time, these are all considered to be pluripotent types of stem cells.

1. Umbilical cord blood contains stem cells similar to those in the bone marrow of newborns.

2. Placenta-derived stem cells are very similar to stem cells found in cord blood but are present in greater quantities.

3. Adult stem cells have been found in bone marrow, lung, pancreas, brain, breast, fat, skin, and other tissues as well as in tooth pulp. Initially, it was thought that these cell lines were only multipotent, but there is now evidence that they are pluripotent—which means, for example, that bone marrow stem cells may have the capability of becoming heart muscle cells.

The same company that developed Dolly, the world's first cloned sheep, is working on a process called de-differentiation of somatic cells—thus, a potential sixth source of stem cells. In this process scientists hope to revert adult cells back to their stem cell beginning.

## How Are Stem Cells Used?

Now with an understanding of the sources of stem cells, it becomes pretty obvious that we should reject any source of stem cells that involves the destruction of embryos for the same Biblical reasons we reject all forms of abortion. For the purposes of this article, we will not articulate those Biblical principles since they can be found elsewhere in this issue. Suffice it to say that because life begins at conception, the destruction of that embryo violates God's prohibition against murder in Exodus 20:13.

But what about adult stem cells? Since adult stem cells do not come from an embryonic source, it appears that there is no violation of Scriptural principles to obtain them. However, we need to look at the applications and uses of stem cells to complete the evaluation.

At the present time, there are five proposed applications of stem cells.

1. The first and most well-known use is cell therapy. This is simply the use of stem cells to repair damaged tissues in a living person from diseases such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, heart attacks, strokes, and others.

2. Next is the study of functional genomics, which would allow scientists to study the complex events of cell development.

3. Human cell lines derived from stem cells could be used to test new drugs before they are actually given to human beings, which could hasten their development.

4. Another possibility is using stem cells as the seeds for lab-grown organs for transplantation.

5. Last is gene therapy, which repairs and/or replaces defective genetic material that occurs as a result of diseases such as cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, sickle cell anemia, and hemophilia.

## How Should We View These Applications?

Since Christians must reject the use of embryonic stem cells, this discussion assumes that any application will use stem cells only of a non-embryonic source—all of which are pluripotent, not totipotent, stem cells. Cell therapy to repair damaged tissues is really no different than the current practice of using medicines or surgery to assist the body in repairing itself and is acceptable. A very common example is the bone marrow transplant (which contains stem cells) to an individual following chemotherapy to treat leukemia. Christians would have no issue, either, using stem cells as a research tool to study cell development and drug testing, as long as such research is done ethically within acceptable standards.

Growing organs in the lab as well as application in gene therapy requires much more careful thought and evaluation. Organ manufacturing is fortunately not on the horizon at present; however, decisions regarding the appropriateness and consequences of growing replacement body parts in the lab need to be made. Is it acceptable to repair the genes of a living person to overcome illness? How about genetic manipulation that would be inheritable? What genetic changes are acceptable—therapeutic? cosmetic? performance-enhancing? Is it right to splice human genes

into animals and vice versa? There are many questions that these two applications raise. Space here, however, does not permit the thorough ethical and Biblical treatment required to sufficiently deal with these issues, but Christian theologians and doctors must address them.

One particular argument by proponents for using embryonic stem cells needs to be addressed: "Because embryonic stem cells have the greatest potential, we should focus our research aggressively on them." But the facts do not support this claim! It is difficult to get pure embryonic stem cell cultures, and the cells are difficult to maintain. They are unstable, and it is difficult to control their differentiation. Use of embryonic stem cells has led to tumor formations, and they have shown but few successes in animal studies. Thus there is not one clinical application recommended for humans using embryonic stem cells at this time. Most scientists are now suggesting that in order for embryonic stem cells to work, cloning will be required. In contrast, non-embryonic stem cells do not have as many issues as embryonic stem cells, and are currently used in 45 different treatments, some of which are still in research.

I trust that this article has provided a better basis to judge stem cell research and apply Biblical principles to the topic. We really have only skimmed across the top of each issue, but I trust we have provided at least enough detail to provide a beginning framework. I do think it is important that we let our voices be heard in the scientific and political communities when it comes to such important issues as these, but we must also keep our focus. Our mission on this earth is to not change political policy, but to proclaim the wonderful news of the gospel Jesus Christ that can change men's hearts one at a time. May we faithfully occupy until He comes.

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Our collapse of moral standards and the blunting of our capacity for righteous indignation have reached the stomach-turning point. —Jenkin Lloyd Jones

There has been a growing preoccupation of our writers with the social sewers. —P. A. Sorokin

The people of our nations and the people of the whole world need to be gripped by the moral imperatives which grow out of the nature of God, by a sense of right, by principles of truth, and by ideals of decency. Nothing is more needed by this sinful world than a revival of simple goodness and genuine uprightness. —Clifton J. Allen

Morals without religion will wither and die, like seed sown upon stony ground or among thorns.—Anonymous

All moral obligations resolve themselves into the obligation of conformity to the will of God. —Charles Hodge

Religion, blushing, veils her sacred fires,  
And unawares Morality expires. —Alexander Pope

We cannot treat the human embryo as cheap and worthless without passing judgment on all human life, including our own. —Monica Furlong

I have a right to free speech, but not to shout “fire” in a theater. A person’s right to anything stops when it injures or kills another living human. Should any civilized nation give to one citizen the absolute right to kill another to solve that first person’s personal problem? —John Wilke

Both reason and experience forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. —George Washington

There is little praise for the consistently sexually controlled single. Too often, it is mixed with granulated pity or powdered condescension. Ironically, while discipline and self-control are encouraged and admired in scholarship, athletics, music and ministry, their absence is strangely excused in sexual matters. The secular myth has infiltrated the Christian consciousness; our sexual urges are overpowering and irresistible. . . . Chastity is a requisite of Christian singleness. Furthermore, chastity is possible. There will always be somebody to suggest such thinking is legalistic, unreasonable, and unlikely to succeed. My reply can only be: “When it’s bigger than I am, so is God.” —Rosalie De Rosset

What would God have done if Mary and Joseph had decided to have an abortion? —Unknown

Morality is not only correct conduct on the outside, but correct thinking within where only God can see. —Oswald Chambers

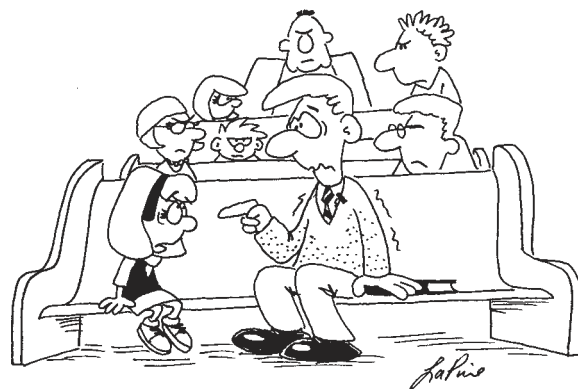
Sex is the ersatz or substitute religion of the twentieth century. —Malcolm Muggeridge

There is no getting away from it: the old Christian rule is “Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence.” Chastity is the most unpopular of our Christian virtues. —C. S. Lewis

No nation has ever made progress in a downward direction. No people ever became great by lowering their standards. No people ever became good by adopting a looser morality. It is not progress when the moral tone is lower than it was. It is not progress when purity is not a sweet. It is not progress when womanhood has lost its fragrance. Whatever else it is, it is not progress! —Peter Marshall

If we are tempted to ignore the great moral issues of our day, or dismiss them as “just politics,” we are betraying our biblical mandate and our own heritage. —Charles Colson

To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society. —Theodore Roosevelt



“Daddy, don’t yell at me. All I was trying to tell you was that your lapel mic was still on.”

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

## Need Some Empty Boxes?

Marilyn Janke

It's truly gratifying to see how easily family bonding can occur without any planning on my part. It happened to me just a week into the new year. One minute I was minding my own business upstairs in the kitchen, and the next minute, with snow drifting silently outside, I joined family members in the downstairs laundry room, standing side by side under a 100-watt bulb, squishing our feet in soggy carpet. (The first person to reveal to me the deep significance of carpeting a rental house laundry room will receive one gold star and a free trip to the dump to drop off the carpet.)

Though not on my List of Fun Things to Do on a Saturday Night, this was certainly a creative way to bring the family together. So, first on the agenda—clear the laundry room of anything on the carpet. A monumental job (if a dirty oven would have dropped from the sky at that moment, I would have gladly crawled inside and started cleaning). Suddenly, one daughter went to bed, sick. Another had a headache, but was drafted anyway. My son, two days from returning to college after the Christmas break, took over.

He spoke to the remaining family. "If we have to move everything, let's get this done fast. I'll hand you the boxes. Take them into the next room and stack them well." Unfortunately, he was talking to me, Queen of the Disorganized Ones. All too soon the family room burgeoned with haphazard piles of boxes, baskets, and bags, like odd, wind-blown sand formations found in a *National Geographic* desert scene. Not even the dog could maneuver through the mess. "Hey—what happened to stacking them well?" My son surveyed our lack of order. (Who was this twenty-year-old young man? Surely not the one who used to view room cleaning as life without parole.)

We moved the metal shelving units, the solid concrete credenza—also full—weighing in at about two tons wringing wet. (I'm sure it's made of wood, but it moves like a block of concrete.) We ripped up the soggy carpet, the soggy carpet pad, carried the soggy mess outside (to be dealt with at a later date), wiped up the floor with the last of the clean towels in the house (I know, they all should have been washed, folded, and sitting tidily in a cupboard somewhere, ready for special family times like this), and turned to the room that held the "important stuff" of our lives. ("Boys and girls, please find the oxymoron in that last

sentence.")

"Mom, you seriously need to get rid of most of this stuff. I've helped too many people move and have carried all of their junk out of their old house and then carried all of their junk into their new house. If you find out later that you need something you threw out, I'll buy it for you." (Not a bad deal . . . and my ticket to getting some new . . . stuff!) "Look at this—are you ever going to use them?" He gestured to a box of individually wrapped jars.

"Well, I might need them someday, if I ever decide to take up canning." Not likely to happen in this lifetime.

"What's in here?" He pulled out some brown and orange canisters that were cool in the '70s. He had a point. I lived through that "poly-era," and there is no way that stuff is coming back into my kitchen.

"What about these?" He hefted a plastic bin.

"Those are toys for the grandchildren when they come over," I said proudly.

He sifted through some old puzzles and stuffed animals. "My kids aren't going to want to play with this. If we need to, we'll just go out and buy you some toys. And I doubt that I'll bring my family back here some day, take them all down-

stairs, gaze fondly at the laundry room shelves and say, 'Here are our heirlooms! Here are all the things we couldn't live without, but they must remain down here, forever shrouded in cardboard!'"

"Here's a box for you." I handed him one with his name on it.

He peeked inside. "When am I going to need these old report cards? What about this birthday card—it doesn't even say who it's from!"

"I'm absolved," I told him. "My job was simply to save those things for you, until you became of age. I'm passing the torch. If you decide to throw them out, let the guilt be upon your shoulders." I was secretly glad to have one box gone . . . only 3,792 remained.

He rummaged again. "That's my wedding box—you're not throwing that out!" I put my soggy foot down on that one. "Those are letters and cards your dad wrote to me before we were married!" Also included—a 1977 issue of a bridal magazine, plus the remainder of those little rolled papers that you hand to all the guests as they file in.

*Time for an  
internal look.  
What kind of  
things need to  
be cleaned out  
of our lives  
this year?*



My daughter stuck up for me. "She has to save some things to hold on to good memories." This was the child who collected collections—collections of comics, plastic toys, etc. One day in her presence, I had made a desperate attempt to gain order over my clutter, and had cleaned out a "junk box." She fearlessly rescued a wad of red baby hair (don't know which baby it was since all four children are red-heads) and a three-inch piece of pew bow ribbon from our wedding. "You've got to keep these, Mom. You'll miss them if you throw them out." Guilt loomed—back it went into the junk box.

"Look at all these pictures, Mom. These you can keep. All you need to do is put them in new photo albums." (The ravages of kids, a flood, and many, many moves had almost destroyed our visual heritage.)

Catching the vision, I said, "Then I can display them in the living room like Grandma does!" My mother has her pictures organized in labeled albums by years, with historical accounts on each page. This might give you a small clue as to the state of the rest of her house. Maybe I was taking on too much.

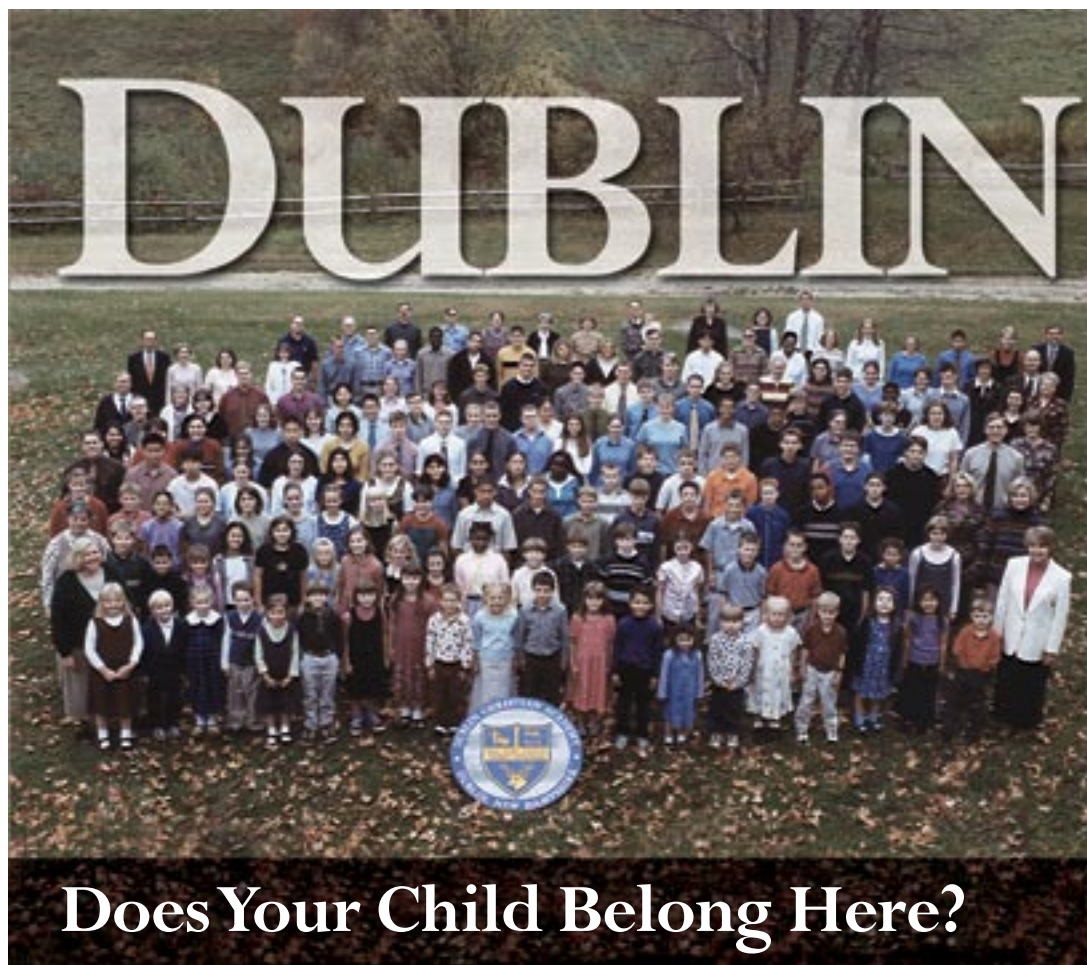
Time to quit. We stuffed all the boxes back on the shelves for another day, solved The Mystery of the Leaking Washing Machine, and went to bed. I will go back through the boxes. I don't know whether I can get it done all in one twenty-four-hour period, but I can at least do a little every day. If I have things that are so important, I need to get them out for others to see and enjoy. The

rest—well, do I really need them? Maybe it's time for a garage sale or a trip to Goodwill: give some other woman the privilege of storing it for me!

Time for an internal look. What kind of things need to be cleaned out of our lives this year? Maybe a box of "Me"—"me" always needing to be right, be first, or be noticed. Maybe a bin full of griping, sour attitudes, or an ungrateful heart? How about a sack of self-pity, through which we strive to gain attention? Do we really want everyone traipsing downstairs to see all of this hidden stuff? News flash: People—especially family and friends—already see many of our "hidden treasures" every day. Don't wait for someone to come along and tell you what's ugly and worthless. Let the piercing light of God's Word show you what needs to go, and what you can bring home to replace it (Phil 4:8, 9; Col. 1:10–12). The best part is . . . you get new stuff that you can use right away! Being right is OK once in a while, but why hog all of the glory for yourself? Let someone else have the joy of being right (Prov. 10:12; Eph. 4:2). Cancel your pity-party and have coffee (or a healthier beverage) with someone else who needs some special attention (Gal. 6:2). Talk about turning trash into spiritual treasure—you honor Christ, you bless others, and you receive joy in return.

Where do we start—your place or mine?

Marilyn Janke and her husband, David, have been missionary church planters in Canada for twenty-three years. You can read more of Marilyn's articles at [www.ribtickler.org](http://www.ribtickler.org).



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## Music for Evangelistic Meetings

Psalm 57:7 says, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise." Music plays a major role in our lives as Christians. According to Ephesians 5:19, Christians should be "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." A powerful, Biblical music program is essential in preparing the people of God for the proclamation of His Word. We must take utmost care in choosing songs that are in unity with the message of the Scriptures. Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." We must not use music based on emotions, hype, repetition, and shallowness to prepare for the preaching of the Word of God! Nor should the music be a crescendo that works people up into a frenzy. I've had someone tell me in all sincerity, "Well, brother, you should've been in our services last night! Our music program went on so long with shouting and crying that the preacher had no time to preach. The Lord was really in our midst!" This brother was earnest and meant well; however, the emphasis was wrong. It's always wrong when we exalt music above the preaching of the Word of God. In Psalm 138:2 David said, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." It is the Word of God that we magnify. Since music has such a vital part in preparing hearts to receive the Lord's message, I want to give several suggestions that I feel are helpful for evangelistic meetings.

First, I want to stress that the church pianist and organist should begin playing at least ten to fifteen minutes before the services begin. The music should be evangelistic and enthusiastic in nature. We read in Psalm 33:3, "Play skilfully with a loud noise." We want music that's not going to put people to sleep before the services begin. Nor should it be so bombastic that everyone wants to jump over the pews! Why do I stress this? Because I believe it helps prepare hearts for the coming service. Also, if possible, the choir could begin every service during the week with a theme song. When I was first saved in West Virginia, there was a weekly youth rally I attended every Friday night. The theme song was entitled "Christ for Me." That song has a special place in my heart because that youth rally helped prepare me to be open to God's future leading in my life.

Another important factor is the music director. His conduct and direction of the music program are absolutely essential in directing people's hearts toward the message from the evangelist. It is a privilege to work with a host of good music directors; their talent is of great value in the outcome of the service. A good music director must be careful about several areas of the service. First, he will pick songs that are evangelistic with a clear message. Many times a song leader will ask me what I'll be

preaching the following night so he can choose songs that will fit the theme of my message. Second, he will screen all of the special music for the meeting. I had an embarrassing thing happen in a meeting many years ago. Right before we were about to begin the first opening service, a lady approached the pastor at the last minute and asked if she could sing a solo that morning. This was the pastor's first service as new pastor of the church; he didn't want to offend her and reluctantly consented. The problem was that the lady was in her ninth month of pregnancy and was as big as a barn; and when she got up to sing, her song was entitled, "I Want that Mountain"! She just planted herself and belted it out. I just about fell off the chair trying not to laugh—she looked like she was carrying that mountain inside her! It was very embarrassing and the pastor couldn't stop apologizing to me. If he'd had a music director, that probably wouldn't have happened. These music men are worth their weight in gold when their whole ministry is focused on exalting the Lord Jesus Christ. Third, a good song leader won't preach for fifteen minutes when introducing the song; he will stick to his calling and simply lead the singing.

Last of all, the special music just before the message is very crucial. I would encourage the pastor or song leader to introduce the person or group that is to sing and inform the congregation that the speaker will follow. This way there will be no break between the special number and the message. Also, when the evangelist gives the invitation at the close of the sermon, the music director should be ready to lead the congregation as the evangelist invites people to respond publicly. I trust that these ideas and suggestions will help in honoring and exalting our Lord in evangelistic meetings.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at P.O. Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at [evangjsivn@aol.com](mailto:evangjsivn@aol.com).

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*Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD. The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion. (Psalm 134:1-3)*

Psalms 120-134 are known collectively as the Pilgrim Psalms. Each bears the subtitle “Song of Ascents,” probably denoting that they were sung by the Israelites on their travels to the great Jewish feasts up in Jerusalem (because of its topographical elevation, Jerusalem was always “up”). This series of psalms is devoted to an array of prayers and emotions connected with going up to Jerusalem for these national feasts. At just over forty words in English (twenty-five in Hebrew), this last of the Pilgrim Psalms is also the shortest of the Pilgrim Psalms. In fact, it is the second shortest of all the psalms; only Psalm 117 is shorter.

## Form of the Psalm

Psalm 134 is an antiphonal psalm, spoken or sung responsively between two alternating groups. In a modern version, the two voices will not be readily apparent as they are in the AV. Perhaps the greatest single loss in modern versions is that, in the interest of updating archaic language (the *thees* and *thous*), we lose an interpretative precision that the archaic language preserved. Notice the pronouns “ye” and “your” in verses 1 and 2. In the AV, these pronouns (along with “you”) *always* denote a plural pronoun in the original language. Notice “thee” in verse 3. In the AV, this pronoun (along with “thou” and “thy”) *always* denotes a singular pronoun in the original. Today we use “you” for both singular and plural; consequently, we have lost a very handy interpretative tool that would immediately indicate, in this instance, the antiphonal nature of this psalm. The “responsive” structure reflects a sentiment similar to Ruth 2:4. Boaz says to his reapers, “The LORD be with *you* [plural].” To which the reapers reply, “The LORD bless *thee* [singular].”

## Speakers in the Psalm

Who are the speakers in Psalm 134? Verse 1 addresses “servants of the LORD who stand by night in the house of the LORD.” The verb “stand” does not refer to hanging around; it is a technical term commonly used to denote priestly service (cf. Ps. 135:1, 2). The first two verses, then, address a class of God’s servants who minister in the temple—namely, priests and Levites.

Verse 3 voices the reply of these priestly “servants of the LORD” to the one addressing them in verses 1 and 2. “Thee” may indicate a reply to a single individual, or that the blessing they are wishing (praying) upon a group is to be applied not merely to all of them collectively, but upon each one individually. The switch from plural to singular,

# PSALM 134—FINDING

and the pronouncement of God’s blessing “out of” or “from” Zion suggests an exchange between departing worshippers (vv. 1, 2) and the priests who remain behind in the temple (v. 3).

## Setting of the Psalm

What are the priests doing there at *night* (v. 1)? From the beginning, the Levites were commissioned “to stand [*Hear that word again?*] before the LORD to minister unto him” (Deut. 10:8). Their duties were not only daily but nightly (Lev. 6:8-13). Various responsibilities were delegated to Aaron’s 38,000 descendents: 24,000 for the general work and maintenance in the temple, 4000 musicians, 4000 gatekeepers, and 6000 judges (1 Chron. 23:3-5). Priests were divided into 24 crews (courses) that rotated on a monthly basis. Priestly responsibilities were endless (1 Chron. 23:24-32). In Solomon’s temple, ten tables’ worth of showbread had to be freshly maintained and ten lampstands had to be fueled and kept burning without fail (2 Chron. 4:7, 20). Temple guards protected the treasures housed there by day and night (1 Chron. 9:27). Even the singers “were employed in [their] work day and night” (1 Chron. 9:33). All of this underscores the incredibly complex and unceasing busyness of temple ministry. *It was never done, never over, never finished*—not just repeated every day, but around the clock.

What, then, is the setting of Psalm 134? At evening, as the retiring worshippers leave or pass by the temple, they voice an admonition or encouragement to the priests remaining behind. In the wider context, as the *concluding* Pilgrim Psalm, the immediate image of evening pictures these pilgrim worshippers leaving the Jerusalem temple for the last time to return home at the end of a festival that they have traveled to as pilgrims. Whether this was a part of the official liturgy in the temple (something like the closing, responsive, mutual benediction between people and priests), or whether it was something that could be and was voiced spontaneously by departing groups or individuals, is not clear.

Whatever the case, its beautiful sentiment fitly closes this collection of Pilgrim Psalms, in contrast to the remarkably different mood with which they began. It is the difference between a mood of apprehension at the beginning of a pilgrimage and a mood of renewed confidence and joyful security as those pilgrims return back to their distant homes with their faith in the Lord fed and strengthened.

## Text of the Psalm

Verses 1, 2

“Bless the LORD . . . Bless the LORD.” The initial call is an exhortation and encouragement from the worshippers to



# CHRIST IN UNLIKELY PLACES

the priests to continue ceaselessly in the sacred ministry of honoring and exalting the Lord, of perpetually giving the Eternal One His due. As the intermediary between man and God, part of the priestly function was to “sanctify” or “purify” the worship of sinful man to make it acceptable to the Lord. To “bless the LORD” means to praise, but more specifically to acknowledge His blessings gratefully that protection, provision, and power for success come from the Lord. Notably, the request of the worshippers to the priests regarding blessing is exclusively God-centered. They do not say “Ask God to bless me,” but “Bless the LORD.” One lesson immediately apparent from the Psalms “is that worship is all about God and not about man” (Barrett, *Beginning at Moses*, p. 296).

“Lift up your hands” is a common gesture symbolizing the direction, importunity, and need expressed by prayer. The phrase “in the sanctuary” is one word, the adverb *qodesh*, and may mean either “in holiness” (cf. 1 Tim. 2:8) or, more literally, “toward/in the sanctuary”—that is, toward God since the sanctuary represented His earthly dwelling place. This is the exhortation/encouragement of the departing worshippers to the priests remaining behind.

## Verse 3

“The LORD...bless thee.” The priestly reply is a prayerful pronouncement of God’s blessing upon the worshippers. Since the priest ministered as the intermediary between God and man, part of the priestly function was to serve as the channel through which God conveyed and expressed His blessing upon sinful man.

The phrase “that made heaven and earth” reminds that He not only possesses all resources with which to bless, but the blessing follows His people (these are homeward-bound *pilgrims*, remember) wherever they may go or live because He is God everywhere (not just at Zion).

That God’s blessing should proceed “out of Zion” is a reminder that Zion is, nonetheless, the earthly seat of His presence, the place of blessing. But as the following psalm indicates (135:21), Zion is also the point from which proper praise to God arises (“Blessed be the LORD out of Zion”). Just as God’s blessing on the worshippers is rooted in and arises from Zion, their praise rises to God from Zion. In other words, *this center of priestly worship and sacrifice is the necessary ground of man’s entire relationship to Him and of His to man*. Why? It is God’s designated location for worship; the required sacrificial service that goes on there makes it special. (That’s why the high places were such an abomination to God—they bypassed the whole essential divinely revealed sacrificial basis of sinful man’s relation to God.) Zion was the mount of the temple with all its necessary sacrificial service that mended (temporarily and typically)

the relationship between God and man. And it was on that same mountain, only a little further away and outside the city walls, on which Christ suffered and died as the ultimate and final fulfillment of all those sacrifices.

## Christ in the Psalm

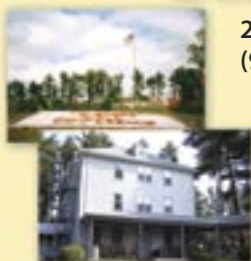
What does this 3000-year-old psalm, in its Old Testament setting of Israel’s temple with its Levitical priests and Jewish worshippers, have to do with me as a New Testament believer living in A.D. 2005? When you begin to reflect on the NT parallel to the OT relationship between the people and the position and ministry of the priests, this unlikely psalm suddenly begins to glisten with a Christological and soteriological beauty that is not initially apparent.

Psalm 134 is an eloquent reminder that even as the worshippers went home, the priests did not because the atoning ministry of the priests—reconciling a sinning people to a holy God—was not done. It was never done. It was perpetual, nonstop, around the clock. There was always something more to be offered, something to be repeated over and over again. Hebrews 10:11 echoes the same point—there were always priests “stand[ing] daily [and *nightly*] ministering” in the temple (*hear that word “stand” again?*). In reality, the worshippers *could* go home in peace and rest *because* the priestly work of sacrifice and intercession *continued* in their behalf.

Just like those OT pilgrims, we NT pilgrims can—on our way home from church, on our way to work from devotions, on our way to bed, and all our way to the grave—bless Christ our High Priest. His work is forever completed, its effects continuing night and day throughout life and beyond, reconciling us to God by the sacrifice of Himself. God’s continual posture towards me is to bless me from Zion, because that is where Christ’s priestly work, perfect and perpetual in its effects, was performed—and because my High Priest ever lives to make intercession for me (Heb. 7:25).

The application of Psalm 134 to the reality of Christ’s priestly work and its unceasing efficaciousness for believers is not an artificial reading of the NT back into the OT. It is the Psalms that first reveal the priestly office and work of Christ (Ps. 110). The Christological parallel is the best and highest application, and the worthiest one with which to end the Pilgrim Psalms. The atmosphere of this final Pilgrim Psalm communicates that our pilgrim journey of worship isn’t over. The duty and opportunity, the calling and privilege, of worship and praise and adoration and blessing is a lifelong one, and beyond. And the pilgrimage itself is possible because the merits of the finished work of Christ, our High Priest, on our behalf are unceasingly lifelong, and beyond.

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## Calling Them "Evil"

On February 8, 2005, Benedict Carey reported in the *New York Times* that forensic examiners are starting to use the word "evil" again to describe violent criminals. "Among themselves, a few forensic scientists have taken to thinking of these people as not merely disturbed but evil. Evil in that their deliberate, habitual savagery defies any psychological explanation or attempt at treatment. Most psychiatrists assiduously avoid the word evil, contending that its use would precipitate a dangerous slide from clinical to moral judgment that could put people on death row unnecessarily and obscure the understanding of violent criminals. Still, many career forensic examiners say their work forces them to reflect on the concept of evil, and some acknowledge they can find no other term for certain individuals they have evaluated." (<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/08/health/psychology/08evil.html?pagewanted=1>, accessed 2/9/05)

## Polygamous Homosexual Marriage

Several commentators have recently pointed to the next item on the agenda for homosexual rights groups: polygamous homosexual marriage (PHM). They are assuming that they can overturn the traditional, Biblical marriage through current

legislation and court rulings. After that, they will seek to legalize polygamy.

## Pornography on Cable

Adelphia Communications Corporation, the nation's fifth largest cable operator, has begun to offer the most explicit category of hardcore porn. According to the report in the *Los Angeles Times*, pornography is a \$10-billion-a-year industry. (<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-adelphia2feb02,0,7840216.story?coll=la-home-headlines>, accessed 02/28/05)

## The High Cost of Porn

The following excerpts are from a hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation by Dr. Mary Anne Layden, codirector of the Sexual Trauma and Psychopathology Program Center for Cognitive Therapy at the University of Pennsylvania on Thursday, November 18, 2004. Her testimony addressed "The Science Behind Pornography Addition."

"Research indicates that 70% of the hits on Internet sex sites occur between 9-5 on business computers. Research also indicates and my clinical experience supports that 40% of sex addicts will lose their spouse, 58% will suffer severe financial losses, and 27-40% will lose their job or profession.

"The terrible work life of the pornography

performer is often followed by an equally terrible home life. They have an increased risk of sexually transmitted disease, including HIV, domestic violence, and have about a 25% chance of making a marriage that lasts as long as 3 years.

"Research indicates that women who get breast implants are four times as likely to commit suicide as other women are.

"There are no studies and no data that indicate a benefit from pornography use. If there were a benefit, then pornography users, pornography performers, their spouses and their children would show the most benefit. Just the opposite is true. The society is awash in pornography and so in fact the data is in. If pornography made us healthy, we would be healthy by now." ([http://commerce.senate.gov/hearings/testimony.cfm?id=1343&wit\\_id=3912](http://commerce.senate.gov/hearings/testimony.cfm?id=1343&wit_id=3912))

## Death Threat

"We know where you are in America and we will slaughter you like the lamb that you worship." This was part of a death threat recently received by Ahmed Mohamed, a convert to the Coptic Christian Church. As a former Muslim, he is known for discussing his faith online with Muslims. ([http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=43255](http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=43255), accessed 03/16/05)

## Stem Cell Research in California

Last November, California passed Prop. 71 to enact a ten-year taxpayer-funded bond measure to fund stem cell research. This \$3 billion program is designed to act as an alternative "to federally funded research involving the use of human embryonic stem cells." The program is due to begin this May. Proponents of the measure said that California would receive a huge financial benefit from DNA patents and royalties through the program. The *New York Law Journal* called such claims "foolhardy and wildly optimistic." (<http://www.law.com/jsp/article.jsp?id=1108389942879>, accessed 03/15/05)

## Findings from the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

From the Department of Health and Human Services:

- In 2003 an estimated 19.5 million Americans, or 8.2 percent of the population aged 12 or older, were current illicit drug users. Current illicit drug use means use of an illicit drug during the month prior to the survey interview.
- Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug, with a rate of 6.2 percent (14.6 million) in 2003. An estimated 2.3 million persons (1 percent)



were current cocaine users, 604,000 of whom used crack. Hallucinogens were used by 1 million persons, and there were an estimated 119,000 heroine users.

- There were an estimated 2.6 million new marijuana users in 2002. This means that each day an average of 7000 Americans tried marijuana for the first time.
- In 2003, there were an estimated 19.6 million adults aged 18 or older with serious mental illness (SMI). This represents 9.2 percent of all adults.
- Adults who used illicit drugs were more than twice as likely to have SMI as adults who did not use an illicit drug.

(<http://oas.samhsa.gov/NHSDA/2k3NSDUH/2k3OverviewW.pdf>, accessed 03/10/05)

### STDs 2003

There were 1,247,034 newly reported cases of sexually transmitted diseases in the United States in 2003. Included in this list were new cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and chancroid. (<http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats/tables/tablea2.htm>)

### AIDS Cases

"In 2003, the estimated number of diagnoses of AIDS in the United States was 43,171. Adult and adolescent AIDS cases totaled 43,112 with 31,614 cases in males and 11,498 cases in females. Also in 2003, there were 59 AIDS cases estimated in children under age 13. The cumulative estimated number of diagnoses of AIDS through 2003 in the United States is 929,985. Adult and adolescent AIDS

## NOTABLE QUOTES

**A**ny being that is human is a human being.—The Ramsey Colloquium

**O**ur conviction about what is natural or right should not inhibit the role of science in discovering the truth.—British Prime Minister Tony Blair

**T**he real issue that truly divides us is whether embryonic stems represent a who or a what. In other words, are we talking about people or property?—Kelly Hollowell, Ph.D.

**I**gnorance is at both ends of science.—Blaise Pascal

**H**opefully, all reasonable people would oppose "harvesting" the healthy heart of a living but unwilling individual to save the life of one in need of a heart transplant. Is this any different from harvesting an unborn's cells to save another? I think not.—John D. Morris

**M**uch of our culture's elite lives without a working hypothesis of God. Assuming we dwell alone in the universe, they believe we must simply keep improving life until the next comet comes.—David P. Gushee

**D**oes our need to care for people who are terminally ill and to reduce their suffering require us to give physicians the right to end patients' lives?—Herbert Hendin, M.D.

**T**his is not, ultimately, about the alleviation of suffering in general; it is about the alleviation of our own fear of suffering.—Amy Laura Hall

**A**bortion on demand should have been a wake-up call, a reveille. Instead it seems to have become more comparable to the bugler's evening taps, and the church has responded by falling asleep.—Charles H. McGowen

**T**he prospect of government-sponsored experiments to manipulate and destroy human embryos should make us all lie awake at night. That some individuals would be destroyed in the name of medical science constitutes a threat to us all.—*Ethics & Medicine*, 1999, 15.3

cases total 920,566 with 749,887 cases in males and 170,679 cases in females. Through the same time period, 9,419 AIDS cases were estimated in children under age 13." (<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/stats.htm#hivest>)

### New AIDS Strain

On February 11, 2005, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene released an urgent warning about a new drug-resistant strain of HIV. This strain is associated with the rapid onset of AIDS. In response, Dr. Jay Dobkin, Director of the AIDS Program at Columbia University Medical Center, said, "This case is a striking reminder that the risk of getting infected with HIV has not gone away. In fact, risky behavior may be even more dangerous now since there is a chance of infection with a virus we may not be able to treat." (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/public/press05/pr016-05.html>)

### Codex Sinaiticus

According to the Russian News Agency, the Codex Sinaiticus—the oldest of the full extant manuscript Bibles—will be digitized over the next four years. At its completion, it will be available free for online reading and studies. A CD-ROM version will also be produced. ([http://en.rian.ru/rian/index.cfm?prd\\_id=160&msg\\_id=5457294&startrow=1&date=2005-03-10&do\\_alert=0](http://en.rian.ru/rian/index.cfm?prd_id=160&msg_id=5457294&startrow=1&date=2005-03-10&do_alert=0))

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

## From Exodus to Exiles in Eritrea

Pearson Johnson

As we resume our global journey westward, we find ourselves in northeast Africa. This region is rich in Biblical and early church history and culture. Though we think we are familiar with Egypt because of the Biblical accounts, in this article we will see a much different Egypt, along with its neighbors Eritrea and Sudan.

Egypt is a desert nation in northeast Africa split geographically by the Nile River. A third of the population lives in two cities: Alexandria and Cairo. According to tradition, the apostle Mark established Christianity in Egypt in the middle of the first century A.D. Christianity thrived in this region early on, and Alexandria was a center of Christian influence. Islam spread into Egypt, as it did into most of North Africa, and overtook Christianity as the dominant force in the region, and it remains dominant today. Coptic Christians presently residing in Egypt trace their origins back to early Christianity, but they are similar to the Orthodox Church in other countries.

Many in the evangelical community have converted out of a Coptic background, as well as some from Islam. Discriminatory laws coupled with the staunch Muslim society provide a harsh environment for the evangelical minority in Egypt. Kidnappings, beatings, and persecution are common, and conditions for ministry are severe. Evangelicals and Coptic Christians equally suffer under the hand of Islam. Brother Joseph Abraham, a missionary in England sent by Grace Church of Mentor, Ohio, was raised in Egypt and converted to Christianity at the age of 27. His father was a Muslim cleric in Egypt. Brother Abraham was forced to escape from Egypt because of persecution.<sup>1</sup> The Copts are complaining as well, as can be seen from a statement by Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenoudah III on March 16, 2004. He made a statement publicly condemning the kidnapping and forced conversion of Christian girls to Islam.<sup>2</sup> Pray for those currently in power, particularly President Mubarak, that religious freedom would be guaranteed for believers in Egypt.

To the south of Egypt we find another majority Muslim country—Sudan. Colin Powell recently described the situation in Sudan as genocide because of the region's ethnic cleansing. In the last couple of years over 2 million people have been displaced by the Sudanese government. Despite the government's denials and the apathetic response from foreign governments, the situation in Sudan may become the worst humanitarian crisis in the past 100 years. Many Sudanese have poured into Chad and live in makeshift refugee camps. Believers have reached out to these refugees, offering help and hope in spite of the instability of the situation and constant

threats of violence. Long-term ministry is sorely needed. Ministry in Sudan is difficult and challenging, but the recent events have opened up doors of opportunity for evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training.

Tucked between Sudan and the Red Sea is the country of Eritrea. Eritrea is a barren, mountainous, temperate plateau with hot desert lowlands along the Red Sea Coast. The country has no official language, but the spoken languages are Tigrinya, Arabic, and English. The population is 20% literate and mainly rural. Eritrea is strategically positioned along the world's busiest shipping lanes. Because of their strategic location, Eritreans have had constant tensions with Yemen and Ethiopia. As with other Muslim nations, in the last couple of years the government has been systematically persecuting Christians—both nominal and evangelical. In May of 2002 the government closed all of the independent churches and declared them illegal. Most of the missionaries that were in the country have left, and very few church leaders remain. In January and February of this year 214 Christians have been arrested. Some were arrested while praying in homes, others while meeting for services. Professor Senere Zaid of the agriculture faculty of Eritrea University was arrested for being a church leader. Some of the believers are placed in metal shipping containers that serve as cells. Many suffer insults and torture. Pray for the believers to be comforted during this time of trial and that God would grant freedom for these believers to worship.

The common factor for ministry in Northeast Africa is the Islamic context. There is an evident lack of missionary personnel in these nations. We must wonder if the lack of interest is due to an unwillingness to cope with the harsh physical and spiritual environment. The well-known missionary Samuel Zwemer once stated, "One might suppose that the church thought the Great Commission did not apply to Muslims." Not much has changed in the last 100 years. As Fundamental churches, we have a great challenge before us in Egypt, Eritrea, and Sudan. We need to focus on these countries, pray for them, learn about them, and send exploratory teams to evaluate how to do ministry in them. The power of the gospel once penetrated this darkened region. Do we have the faith to believe it can do the same in our day?

Pearson Johnson is Missions


Pastor at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan.

<sup>1</sup> [www.arabicbible.com/testimonies/joseph\\_abraham.html](http://www.arabicbible.com/testimonies/joseph_abraham.html).

<sup>2</sup> *Compass Direct*, March 16, 2004.



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## Meet a Chaplain

Chaplain (Lt Col) Michael Sproul's earliest memories were those of an itinerant minister's son. Seven of his first eleven years were spent traveling with his family in evangelistic meetings. On May 29, 1966, Mike realized his need of salvation. His parents prayed with him, and he received Christ as his Savior. In 1974 his father decided, in order to gain more stability, the family would place their roots in Phoenix, Arizona, while he continued to travel. The family joined Tri-City Baptist Church of Tempe. On October 12, 1975, under the preaching of Evangelist Phil Shuler, Mike surrendered his life to full-time ministry. He received his B.A. from International Baptist College and his M.Div. from Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary, Lansdale, Pennsylvania.

In June 1985 Chaplain Sproul married his high school sweetheart, Elma Phillips. From May 1988 until June 1991, Chaplain and Mrs. Sproul traveled in full-time evangelism. During those years, God blessed them with two children, David and Sara.

In July of 1991 Mike volunteered for service as a chaplain in the United States Air Force. He pastored churches on two Air Force bases for five years. During that time, the Lord blessed with over three hundred professions of salvation and two hundred baptisms. Also during those years, Mike graduated with honors from International Baptist College with a Doctor of Ministry degree. On July 11, 2001, Mike was installed as Senior Chaplain of the 161st ARW (Air Refueling Wing) at Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix. He currently holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He also serves as senior pastor of Tri-City Baptist Church in Tempe, Arizona.

## Chaplaincy Updates

### Chaplains home from deployment:

Army Chaplain (Cpt) Gary Fisher, after 382 days in Iraq, returned to his family in Germany on February 28<sup>th</sup>. The Fishers will return to the States in June and will be stationed at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina. Chaplain Fisher will attend the career course for chaplains for six months. In his last e-mail, Chaplain Fisher stated, "Beyond that, the Lord is holding the future in His hand."

Navy Chaplain (Lt) Richard Wiese returned home to his family at Camp Pendleton, California, after nine months in Iraq. A few days after arriving home, Chaplain Wiese was able to begin a thirty-day vacation with his family. After the vacation Chaplain Wiese will report back to Camp Pendleton to continue his ministry with the Marine Corps.

### Chaplains deployed:

Army Reserve Chaplain (Lt Col) Joe Willis was called to active duty in February and is now stationed in Honduras.

Air Force Chaplain (Maj) George Youstra Jr. wrote on March 6<sup>th</sup>, "Last Sunday we had eight people accept the Lord as their Savior. That was encouraging because our attendance had been down for a few months because of all the drills, exercises and people going on mid-tour leave. It is funny how the Lord knows when you need a little encouragement and sends it your way."

### Chaplains on the home front:

Army Chaplain (Cpt) Mike Shellman will be the speaker at the Leadership Banquet during the FBFI Annual Fellowship Meeting June 14-16 in Taylors, South Carolina. After the meeting, Chaplain Shellman will once again be deployed to Iraq for nine months.

Bob Ellis is the National Field Representative for the FBFI Commission on Chaplains. He is available to speak in churches, Christian colleges, and seminaries. He can be reached at 850.261.6647.

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## To Whom Shall We Go?

**Brad Smith**

I have been associated with some form of Baptist Fundamentalism since I was a child. I have grown up in a movement that has for some seemingly grown old. Some are saying that Fundamentalism has had its “day in the sun” and that it has outlived its purpose. Others have admitted that Fundamentalism has played a crucial role in American Christianity and will continue to do so in the future. I subscribe to the latter position, and so as far as I am concerned, if we ever needed the FBFI before, we sure do need it now!

I was “bred and buttered” in the Missouri-based Baptist Bible Fellowship, hearing often as a boy about the exploits of J. Frank Norris and reading columns from the mighty pen of Noel Smith. I entered into “the hotbed of Fundamentalism” in Hammond, Indiana, for my freshman year of college but then transferred to BJU and became acquainted with the World Congress of Fundamentalists and learned there about the pseudo-Fundamentalism of Jerry Falwell.

For all of this I am grateful. After I graduated from college, I found my niche with the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship and have stayed there for the past twenty-three years. The FBF has been my crowd—and will continue to be my crowd.

I will admit that none of these “schools” of Fundamentalism is perfect. Most of us know that Fundamentalism is an inexact science, since nearly anybody who subscribes to our magazine and pays to be published in our directory is warmly welcomed as a compatriot.

And there is in our movement an identity crisis of sorts, as we debate about our very name and purpose and can’t quite seem to always agree among ourselves on what our legacy is. For the past twenty years I have been hear-

ing from the “younger crowd” about the “sins of our fathers,” but I have seldom heard a convincing explanation of what those alleged sins were. In my opinion, the Fundamentalist battles I have firsthand knowledge about were fought quite nobly!

When I think of the faithful forebears in my life, I give thanks to God. The first man to introduce me to the FBF was Ed Nelson—back in the early seventies. In my life, his ministry was the first to really have a ring of authenticity to it. Through him I was exposed to men like Monroe Parker and Bob Jones Jr., who became almost instant heroes to me. Pastors like Wayne Van Gelderen and Frank Bumpus inspired me too.

But now what we might call that “greatest generation” of preachers has almost passed off the scene and left us perhaps a less colorful Fundamentalism—but one no less strategic. I believe that our movement is maturing and is in many ways improving. Our churches and schools are still strong. More Fundamentalists are being published. The overall quality of preaching and music is on the rise. Our Christian camps and leadership conferences are abounding.

But of course, still we are not perfect—and never will be. But I believe that we are still the best option available. I am reminded of the words of Peter in John 6:68: “To whom shall we go?” I feel the same way about being a Fundamentalist as I do about being a Baptist. What else would I be? And where else would I go? I do not know of a national fellowship of men and women who honor the Lord and are committed to His Word more than the people of the FBFI.

Show me a more sincere separatist body of believers who unite annually to re-enunciate the fundamentals of our faith and to clarify the

contemporary issues facing us, and I will investigate your claim. Show me a group of more earnest and humble souls who genuinely seek to please the Lord in their homes and institutions and I will join them.

Instead of avoiding the oldest Fundamental and Baptist fellowship in America, let’s recommit ourselves to it. The FBFI is worthy of our backing. This fellowship is Biblically based and balanced. It has a proven track record that has stood the test of time. The younger generation should be sure to avoid the disdain that contemporary Evangelicalism exhibits towards its historical underpinnings.

The FBFI is at the same time both narrow and wide enough to satisfy the most discerning separatist. We do not need to “reinvent the wheel.” We do not need rival fellowships that will spin a slightly different emphasis. We need to band together for mutual encouragement—because contending for the faith is a cause that is just and right.

In the past, we Fundamentalists have shown ourselves to be quite adept at picking each other apart. But it is quite another thing to promote the good that we can find in each other. First Peter 3:8 admonishes us to “love as brethren.”

Let us look for that which is praiseworthy in one another and find reasons to foster fellowship. While I might be able to think of a reason or two that I could separate from a brother, I choose to focus instead upon those things we hold in common. Go as far down the road with a man as you possibly can. On June 14–16 let’s all come together in Taylors, South Carolina, for the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

Brad Smith pastors Bethel Baptist Church in Schaumburg, Illinois.

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