

Christian Odyssey

Exploring Life and Faith

March 2006 Vol. 2, No 3



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Letters to the Editor

Comments on *Odyssey*

I received my copy of the new *Christian Odyssey* a few days ago.

It was great to see a WCG publication in color once again. So much more attractive and eye-catching. I found “Making History in Montana” and “Guarding Hitler’s Deputy” quite interesting since I like history.

I enjoyed all the articles, but I’m particularly excited about the “Jump Start” concept—allowing space for never-before-published writers to have a chance to be read. I think I may give it a try myself.

L.D.
Denison, Texas

This is probably not the ideal way to express my thanks to Mike Feazell for his latest article (“The Chink in Death’s Armor”), but thanks, nevertheless.

A longtime friend of mine died after a valiant, gracious fight with illness, and I’m having these waves of sadness. I know my sadness is selfish. I believe God’s promise, but I am weak. I inhabit

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The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity and space. We welcome your comments.

a human body with all of its circuitry. His timely article helps me the same way that fact-checking at a time of loss and doubt has always helped me.

P.L.
New York



Thanks for asking for involvement from us out here!

I am being brave as suggested in “Jump Start” in submitting an article. I have never been published, but am a devoted writer—to my journal—if nothing else!

C.L.
Missouri

I wanted to send a note saying how much I appreciate the new look of *Odyssey*. This is the first time I have actually read a church publication from cover to cover in years!

I especially enjoyed Joyce Catherwood’s article “The Bride’s Story”—very clever, very touching and one for the file. I would love to read more from her.

Thanks for making the readers feel ownership of the magazine and encouraging our participation. It helps to keep a scattered church a little more connected.

J.H.
Ohio

I found *Christian Odyssey*’s first issue to be good.

However, I did not care for the article “The Bride’s Story.” Accounts of historical events presented without clearly indicating they are fictional trouble me.

It is probably safe to assume that Christians familiar with the

We like to hear from you

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Bible knew this was fictional. Don’t assume this to be true for non-Christians, especially ones from other countries.

The blurring of the line between fact and fiction can be seen in the struggle currently taking place about the book *The Da Vinci Code*. Fictional stories can help to convey lessons, but make sure they clearly are portrayed as that.

R.P.
Ohio

We just received our copy of *Odyssey* today. It is a huge improvement over previous. I really like the varied columns like “Jump Start” and “Hmmm.” And, of course, it was good to see more from a feminine perspective—and maybe even a bit more in the future?

J.C.
Texas

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About our cover

The immediate crisis is over. The cameras have gone and the media move to the next big story. But destruction and despair remain. Months after last year's hurricanes devastated the Gulf, many families desperately need help, hope and encouragement. It is an opportunity to put faith into action. (See page 5.) FEMA photo by Robert Kaufmann.

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Hope and a future

By John Halford

I began my working life in a big department store in London, England. I was bored, frustrated and getting nowhere. One day, out of the blue, I was offered a new job.



It seemed too good to be true. It involved travel, more money and a future in one of Britain's most successful companies.

I put on my best (well, only) suit and went along for an interview in the company's London headquarters. I was ushered into an imposing conference room, where several prosperous looking executives were waiting to talk to me. From the start, things did not go well. I was utterly out of my depth, exposed as an immature and nervous teenager with high hopes but low qualifications.

After about 10 minutes, my inquisitors asked me to leave and wait in the outer office. Soon the phone rang, the receptionist said "yes sir," and with what I thought was a sympathetic glance in my direction, she got up and went into the conference room. The door had a pneumatic hinge and took several seconds to close completely.

In those few seconds I overheard snatches of conversation as the great men inside discussed my future.

It was not easy listening: "fellow's a bag of nerves" ... "no experience" ... "not really what we are looking for" ... "might have a low level position" ... "need someone more mature" ...

Then the door closed and I was left in misery. Moments later the receptionist emerged and announced politely: "Mr. Halford. I have been asked to tell you that we do not have anything available for you right now. But if anything comes up we will keep you in mind. Thank you for your time."

I was expecting it. Those snatches of conversation, heard through the closing door, had prepared me. I felt rejected, without hope or a future.

Gloom and doom

No hope and no future. What a tragic place to find yourself. But don't we all feel like that sometimes? We feel inadequate, spiritual frauds, unworthy of

our calling. We know we need to "do better" and get ourselves in "good spiritual shape," so that we have a better chance of "making it" before it is "too late." But sometimes it seems that the door is closing, and we feel ourselves as I did, sitting in the outer office, waiting for the inevitable axe to fall.

But just suppose that instead of those negative comments, I had heard: "seems like the sort of chap we want" ... "bit young, but he's eager" ... "got a way to go yet, but I think he can do the job" ... "definitely liked the look of him" ... "let's give him a chance."

How different I would have felt as I waited. That is how God wants us to feel. Far from the doors closing on our future, God is opening them. Or rather, Jesus Christ burst through them, blowing them off their hinges. He brought the news of the kingdom of God, of forgiveness of sin and reconciliation between God and his creation, and the astonishing news that "whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

Encouraging words

He hasn't told us everything he has in mind for us yet. But the snatches of conversation we do hear are encouraging: "I am come that they may have life..." "I go to prepare a place for you..." "In my Father's house are many mansions," "Father, I want those that you have given me to be with me where I am..." "Fear not, little flock, because it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom..."

It certainly sounds like we've got the job. We don't need to be good enough. No experience is necessary, except that of being a repentant sinner. Everyone who applies is acceptable, no matter what their previous record was like. Everyone can feel wanted—and needed.

So—since you have got the job, you may as well start immediately. No need to give notice. This world and its ways owe you nothing, while the kingdom is experiencing a temporary staff shortage. "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few," said Jesus. There is work to do now.

As we wait for the fullness of the kingdom, we can show our friends and neighbors that they too are loved and acceptable, and that they too can have hope and a future.

CO

Cleaning up Katrina

After the cameras move on

It is now six months since Hurricane Katrina inundated New Orleans.

For a few days, we all watched in disbelief as a major U.S. city suffered the worst natural disaster this nation has ever experienced.

A disaster like this gives the whole country an adrenaline rush. All our emotions are thrown into sharp relief—anger, fear, frustration, but also courage, compassion and generosity.

As the networks arrived to bring the misery into our living rooms, we opened our hearts, along with our wallets and purses, to help the victims. Then, once the vast resources of America swung into action to bring the situation under control, the cameras moved on.

The restless media diverted our attention to new crises, to other traumatic scenes of dramatic rescues and stories of courage and sacrifice. The trauma in the Gulf moved to our emotional back burners.

Unless you lived there.

Six months later, thousands of people still need help. Gerry Trennepohl, an associate pastor and biblical counselor, spent a week working with a group from his congregation, helping to rebuild the homes and lives of people in the Gulf. Here is his report.

By Gerry Trennepohl

We left Cincinnati on Christmas Day in five vans, one pulling a trailer loaded with equipment. After overnighting in Nashville, we arrived the next day at Tickfaw, about 50 miles north of New Orleans. This was to be our base.



Cincinnati mission trip workers with homeowner Bob Johnson (back row center).

We were joining 70 people from nine congregations to bring physical and spiritual help to our fellow Christians.

The first evening, Pastor Mike Horchak brought home the reality of the situation.

He explained the difficulty in communication after the storm. It was hard to imagine: no cell phone, no landline phone, no e-mail or Internet access, no newspapers, radio, television—all the means of communication we take for granted had gone.

How hopeless and alone the people must have felt. Their homes were not inhabitable, their familiar streets were strewn with debris and deserted, and their neighborhoods were destroyed. It was eerie—no people, no lights, no signs of normal life. An area

larger than Great Britain had been devastated.

We've seen pictures of this kind of disaster in the developing world, but it just doesn't happen in the United States. But it had, and our fellow Christians needed help.

Mud out

The city of New Orleans and much of the surrounding area is below sea level. It can normally keep its head above water through the massive pumping system. But when the 17th Street canal broke its banks, the operators were evacuated and were unable to return to the city to keep the pumps running. Some homes remained flooded for up to six weeks.

When the water finally receded, it left a covering of mud six

See *After the cameras*, page 6

After the cameras

Continued from page 5

inches deep. In the typical house, furniture, fixtures and walls were ruined. So the first step was to remove the mud—a process affectionately called a “mud out.”



Gerry Trennepohl strips frame of moldy drywall and insulation.

Then the contents of the home had to be removed and examined to see what, if anything, was salvageable. Sheet rock, baseboards, molding and everything down to the wooden stud walls had to be torn out and a disinfectant applied to remove mold.

Only then could the process of installing the electrical, plumbing, cabinets and drywall begin. That is, if the house was salvageable. Many were not.

Willing hands

Pastor Mike directed the crews, since he knew the people and their needs. In any mission activity, the people “on the ground” are in the best position to know who and how to help. We were coming in to

serve as the hands and feet of Jesus, showing concern and care. It added a spiritual dynamic to an otherwise exhausting physical event.

As we worked, the overall atmosphere of loss and trauma began to affect us. Television pictures can't convey that. You have to see it in person and talk and work with the people directly affected.

At times, even we, the encouragers, needed to be encouraged.

The local people tried to show a positive attitude. As Christians, they knew God loved them and cared for them. They knew their salvation was secure. They knew that faithful and faith-filled people need not suffer like “those who have no hope,” but the pain is no less real.

Walls again

One of our crews worked in the home of Sharon and Dave Huffman for three-and-a-half days. After our first day of work, Sharon and Dave began to see progress. On the first day, as we began to put in the new drywall, Sharon, with tears in her eyes, exclaimed, “I have walls again.” Something we take for granted had become a source of hope and encouragement.

The next crew from Cincinnati worked two days in Marie Jackson's house. It took that long just to remove the moldy interior walls, kitchen cabinets and garage walls. As we worked, Marie was trying to salvage photos, plates and other personal items. These were not just stuff. They were the precious memories of a lifetime.

As Christians, we know the physical is not all there is. But it

hurts to stand by helplessly and watch everything familiar to us hauled off to the garbage dump. But one thing can never be hauled away—love. The only thing that has permanent value is the love we share for God and one another.

That's what we need to remember “after the cameras leave.” What Sharon and Dave and Marie needed, months after the flood, was reassurance. Just some hope



Andrea Dunn removes damaged portions of wall. [Photos by Danney Richardson]

from people who cared.

As we left on Friday afternoon, we realized we would never be the same again. We had experienced a sense of loss in a way we had not before. The things we value so highly are now in a better perspective. We had a new appreciation for the value of kindness, compassion and mercy—for the power of love.

We realized that we could only make a little difference to the devastated region. But it made a big difference to us. We had given hope, and the experience had changed us forever. CO

Losing our evangelistic *but*s

By Mike Feazell

Have you heard the big evangelistic BUT? It goes something like this: “Yes, yes ... of course we’re saved by grace, BUT ...”

The big BUT always manages to bring up the rear in any discussion about grace. We can give unlimited lip service to “saved by grace,” it seems, but when the chips are down, we’d have a whole lot more “faith” in our salvation if we had a decent-sized pile of good works to point to.

And most of us are ready to get a little agitated on that point any time we hear somebody pushing the grace envelope a little “too far.”

“Sure, we’re saved by grace, BUT keep that up and you’ll go straight to hell.”

Huh?

What are we afraid of?

It’s as though we’re scared to death that somewhere, somehow, somebody might “get away with” something—something we might even wish deep down we could get away with, too. So we have to find ways to put the brakes on the grace train before it rumbles out of control, before people actually start to believe it, before they actually start to shed some guilt and quit fretting over whether God is going to throw them into hell for their failure to measure up to perfect behavior.

The Bible is pretty clear on the point. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that



no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Even our faith is a gift of God, not something we

add to the equation. And even our good works, such as they are, are God’s workmanship, not ours.

Paul asked the Galatians rather pointedly: “I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?” (Galatians 3:2-3).

So how did the big BUT get into the picture?

We’re all addicted, it seems, to the idea that in the matter of judgment God is pretty much like us—that he doles out kudos and prizes for good actions and curses and plagues for bad actions, that he holds grudges, that he keeps score of all our mistakes, and that he will “get us” in the end. That makes sense to us, apparently, because we routinely do it to each other, to our spouses, to our kids, to our bosses, our employees, our neighbors, our friends.

God doesn’t.

Just like Jesus

When it comes to harboring grudges and keeping score and retaliating, he isn’t like us at all. He’s like Jesus Christ. Exactly like Jesus Christ.

Jesus didn’t count up mistakes and hold sins over people’s heads.

He forgave. He forgave even his enemies, even the people who killed him. “Father, forgive them,” he prayed, “for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

Salvation isn’t geared to how well you behave; it’s geared to how much God loves you. And he loved you so much that he gave his Son to save you; he sent his Son not to condemn the world, but to save it (John 3:16-17).

Here’s the BUT we should be listening to: “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

You won’t find an extra BUT at the end of that one.

Yes, of course God will do something about your behavior too. In fact, he’ll come and live in you though the Holy Spirit and begin a lifelong transformation of you from the inside out. That means your salvation is entirely his gift from start to finish. You can trust him; not even your weaknesses and problems and sins can stop him from seeing you through to the end he has for you.

If there’s another “but” to reckon with, it’s this: It’s free, but you can’t experience and enjoy what you won’t accept. So why not accept God’s love and trust Jesus for your salvation? You’re safe in his hands.

Isn’t it time you stopped worrying about what’s going to become of you and hand over your life to him once and for all? He’s on your side, you know—and he always has been!

CO

A lesson in humility

By Alexis Huff

A mark of maturity is the ability to admit your mistakes and grow from them.

When we are young, the most natural way to learn is through trial and error. On my way to becoming the person I am now, I have had to destroy some of the old, unhealthy ways of thinking and acting that I had previously embraced. One of the turning points in my growth as a person was when I ran for ASB (associated student body) president.

Last year, as a junior, I participated in student government. I loved every minute of it. I learned a lot about how my school, and how government, in general, works. I made friends with new people and I felt like I really had a voice in decisions that were made about my school.

The responsibilities even of my low-profile job (I was the elections commissioner) made me feel important and useful to my educational community. I found myself admiring and envying our then-current ASB president, who became a good friend of mine. More and more, I began to think I could do his job; indeed, I began to believe I should be the one to do it next.

Despite all of the positive effects that student government had on me, it also encouraged some of my less attractive traits. Along



with my newfound confidence, came pride and even arrogance. I became convinced that I was obviously the best and only logical choice for ASB president for the next school year.

I was condescending toward many of my friends, suggesting that they run for office so that they could be on my cabinet. I allowed others to convince me that the job was as good as mine. I figured all I would have to do was run for the job and I would have it.

Since I was the elections commissioner, I thought I would have the inside track on winning my election. I figured word would have gotten around that I was running, so I wouldn't have to fear any competition.

Imagine my surprise when I noticed not just one, but two other competitors for the office. One of my opponents was a close friend; the other was the captain of the cheerleading squad.

The news that the cheerleading captain was running against me did little more than annoy me, but I couldn't believe that such a close friend would dare challenge me for something she knew I wanted so much.

We three campaigned hard against each other. The cheerleader had amazing posters. My so-called friend had a buddy of hers dress up in a banana suit and canvass the campus for votes. And I had an army of my friends passing out sashes and candy to the students. I spent hours think-

ing up new strategies and looking for loopholes in the campaigning rules to gain an advantage.

At last came the moment of truth on the election days. They were busy days for me, to say the least.

As elections commissioner, it was my job to call the winner for each office the night the election ended. I was beyond shocked when I looked down at the list of winners; everyone I had told to run for office won, except me.

They say grief comes in stages: shock, denial, anger, bargaining and acceptance. I went through every one of these stages after learning that I hadn't won. I couldn't believe that I had lost something I cared so much about.

When I had finally come to terms with not winning, I drew some pretty important conclusions about my life and myself. I learned not to underestimate other people. I learned that I would not always get what I wanted; sometimes I would lose, even if it were something I really worked for.

I also learned not to count my chickens before they hatched, so to speak. (In other words, not to invest emotionally in something before I had it.)

I came to the realization that not getting something I wanted didn't mean that life was over. Instead of being student body president this year, I had the





Photo by Design Pics

opportunity to join my school newspaper.

The most important thing I learned from the experience was that my personal worth does not depend on how many things I win or how many awards I receive. With that discovery came the knowledge that since my self-worth was not dependent on my accomplishments, I should not base the value of others on their accomplishments, either.

It became apparent to me how supercilious and bigheaded I had become, believing that only I could do the job justice. My mistake was not that I ran for office, the mistake was overrating myself and my importance. Losing that election was one of the most painful, important and revealing events in my life. CO

Bystander

The Syro-Phoenician Mother

(Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30)

By Joyce Catherwood

I was beyond desperate. My precious little girl was terrified and completely out of her mind. I tried everything. But nothing helped.

I had heard of the great Israelite healer, Jesus, and his miracles and how some were healed just by touching him. The Jews abhorred our people; so when word spread that Jesus had come to Phoenicia, I found it hard to believe he was really here. I had to find him. I searched everywhere.

Finally I found him. My heart filled with hope as I ran into the courtyard of the house where he was staying. Then I saw him. "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!" I cried and begged him to heal my baby girl. At first he didn't answer me.

I turned to his disciples, pleading with them to help me get through to Jesus. They quickly became annoyed with me and strongly urged Jesus to send me away. They seemed to read into his silence that he must have been irritated by me as well.

Finally Jesus spoke. So relieved that he had at least responded, I ran to him and fell at his feet in worship and prayed, "Lord, help me!"

He explained to me he was sent only to Israel and that I should realize it's not right to take the children's bread and give it to their little dogs. The children should be allowed to eat all they want first.

And I knew that. I knew he had been working miracles only in Jewish regions. I knew we lived in a spiritually dark and pagan corner of the world. But he was there, standing right in front of me. So, still kneeling before him, I said: "Yes, Lord, I know. But even the puppies eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table."

As I gazed up at him looking for even the slightest positive sign, Jesus smiled, obviously moved by my response. He told me I had great faith and my heart's desire had been granted! My daughter was healed! Overcome with relief, I thanked him over and over. Then I ran all the way home and found my little one sleeping peacefully. No more would my sweet little child's face be contorted with fear and anguish. I curled up beside her and wept tears of joy.

Jesus had crossed the border into our land to get away from tiresome arguments with the Pharisees. He didn't want anyone to know where he was. Even though in my desperation I had created a huge disturbance, divine pity crossed physical and racial boundaries that day as he reached out to me, an outsider. I received bread, not crumbs, from the master's table. CO

Where did the Hittites come from, and does it matter?

By Sheila Graham



“I always enjoy your articles,” a friend told me. “Why don’t you write anymore?”

I explained I had been working on a degree in religion for several years. The only writing I’d done was for my university coursework—about such subjects as where the Hittites came from. Papers only my professors would ever read, and only, I suspect, because they are paid to.

“Oh, I don’t know,” my friend said. “I think the Hittites might be interesting.” Well, oka-a-ay, I thought. Let’s see.

About those Hittites

Are you ready?

Even before my studies I knew the Hittites were an ancient people mentioned several times in the Bible. After Sarah died, Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah near Hebron from the Hittites for a family burial site.

But I was surprised to learn historians and archaeologists didn’t believe the Hittites ever lived in the Palestine region, and certainly not during the time of Abraham. At one time, some scholars doubted the Hittites ever existed at all, anywhere.

But after some significant 20th century archaeological finds, scholars now concur there were indeed such a people, but they were not the small tribes mentioned in the Bible. The Hittites were a major empire with a capi-

tal, Hattusha, located at Bogazkoy, about 100 miles east of Ankara in Anatolia, now part of Turkey, not even close to Palestine.

Well, I was determined to show when the Bible says Abraham bought a cave from the Hittites, Abraham bought that cave, and it was from the Hittites. My professor was amused at my resoluteness, but encouraged me in my efforts.

Hittites or bust

After extensive research, I had to admit archaeological finds so far have not confirmed a Hittite presence in Palestine during the period when Abraham lived (the second millennium B.C.E.). As far as archaeologists can tell, northern Hittite troops did not go farther south than Damascus. No neo-Hittite states (Hittites referred to in later books—1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles) have been found south of Hamath, so that also excludes

any territory in Palestine.

But, archaeological finds of Egyptian origin in Anatolia confirm records of the relations between the Hittites and Egyptians, powerful rivals on either side of Palestine. When the Hittites began extending their empire south into Syria, their successes caught the attention of the Egyptians. The two superpowers pushed each other back and forth for control of Syria and Palestine.

Isn’t this thrilling? Hang in there. I’m nearly done.

The Hittites led by Muwattilis won a major battle against the Egyptians and their king Rameses II at Kadesh on the Orontes River about 1300 B.C.E. Some years later a peace treaty was made between Rameses II and Hattusilis III.

Now here’s the interesting part. Archaeologists have come to realize the Anatolian Hittites and the Syrian Hittites are of the same peoples. Canaanite mythological



Tomb of the Patriarchs—built on the traditional site of the biblical Cave of Machpelah. [Photo courtesy www.HolyLandPhotos.org]

tales were also found incorporated into Hittite mythology. So these peoples were certainly not isolated from one another

Another possibility?

References to the Hittites in Canaan during Abraham's time could also have been the biblical writers' use of contemporary geographical terms. In other words, the Jews who many years later recorded these events in the Bible may have used the names of the people who occupied the territories during their own time rather than during Abraham's time.

All the Hittites named in the Bible have Semitic names. So if they were Hittites of the old empire or neo-Hittites, they had been assimilated into the Semitic culture.

Numbers 13:29 is attributed to an early biblical writer, who tells us the Hittites "occupied the hill country" of Palestine. And this agrees with the story of Abraham purchasing the cave of Machpelah from the Hittites.

So although I could not definitely prove from archaeology that the Hittites were situated in Palestine at the time of Abraham, archaeological finds do reveal the close relationships between the two ancient superpowers—the Hittite Empire and Egypt.

The Hittites and the Egyptians traveled back and forth, over or around Palestine, to do battle or to try to cement peaceful relations, depending on what rulers were in power. Small families of Hittites could have ended up in Palestine.

So I found the Hittites. But maybe by now you wish I'd left my discovery with my professors.

Does it matter?

Does it matter whether or not those people called Hittites in the

Bible were really Hittites? Does it matter if Abraham bought a cave from a tribe biblical writers many centuries later identified as Hittites, but which really were some other small tribe, with a different name?

What if archaeologists never find anything to prove conclusively Hittites were around during the time of Abraham or Joshua or the Judges? Or what if they do? Does it really matter?

God doesn't lie

It mattered to me once. I thought every word in the Bible, whether written in a poem or a psalm or a parable, was literally true and historically precise. If it were not, then could any of the Bible be trusted? I wouldn't allow myself to entertain such thoughts.

After all, the Bible is the Word of God, and God does not lie. I still believe that, by the way.

While I realize archaeologists' finds more often than not substantiate what is recorded in the Bible, I do not stake my faith on whether or not the Hittites lived in Palestine during the time of Abraham. The Word of God is inspired, but it was not written as a history textbook or a scientific journal.

The Bible was written to lead humanity to salvation in Christ Jesus, freedom from sin and death—not to give us a Hittite history lesson. There is power in the Word of God—power to transform your life and mine.

As the author of 2 Timothy says: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

God's Word was written to change lives for the better, and couldn't your life use a little changing? I know mine could. *CO*

In other words...

Room for us all

By James R. Henderson

Tolerance is in short supply these days, and we should applaud a good example of it.

When I first visited Ghana I noticed a proverb that promoted tolerance: "Not every room in the house is the same."

Each tribe in the nation is different, and we need to appreciate the diversity. Ghana has a favorable reputation in Africa—although tribal tensions exist elsewhere, the Ghanaian tribes, for the most part, live harmoniously with one another. They know how to live in the same house.

The proverb can be applied to many situations. Within the family, each member is unique, and that is acceptable. Our churches have individuals from various walks of life, and we need to value them for who they are and for what they bring.

Can this also suggest something about the greater body of Christ? That, although each denomination within the Christian house is not the same, we can tolerate each other despite the differences? Jesus said in John 14:2 that in his Father's house are many dwelling places, sometimes translated as "rooms." In other words there is space enough for us all. Space to be together and to be different.

Viewed spiritually, the proverb implies people are like different rooms in a house. All sheltered under one roof, each special, all for the glory of God. *CO*

Mary Jones & the first major worldwide Bible society

By Paul Kroll

Mary Jones was born Dec. 16, 1784 in the Welsh village of Llanfihangel-y-Pennant. From an early age, Mary longed to have a Bible in her own language that she could read.

Mary's dilemma was that it was well-nigh impossible for a Welsh child from a dirt-poor family to afford a Bible. Bibles were scarce and expensive in 18th century Wales. Nevertheless, over the years Mary scrimped and saved enough money from doing odd chores for neighbors to buy a Bible. Mary was now around 16 years old.



Paul Kroll

Mary's odyssey

She heard that a Rev. Thomas Charles in the town of Bala had some Welsh Bibles for sale. Bala was some 25 miles (40 kilometers) from her home. She gathered her savings and trudged the miles across the hills to Bala to find the minister.

Rev. Charles was forced to give Mary some rather bad news. Every copy of the Bible he had was already sold. Yet, he was moved by the diligence she had shown in seeking a Bible and handed her his last copy, which he had put away for another buyer.

Mary's goal of obtaining her own Bible and her meeting with Rev. Charles set in motion the creation of a truly international Bible society.¹ Rev. Charles presented the need for more copies of the Scriptures in Welsh at a meeting of the Religious Tract Society in December 1802.

Though the Tract Society was sympathetic about the need, they were not in a position to meet the demand. But one member, Rev. Joseph Hughes, suggested that "a society might be formed for the purpose [of distributing Bibles]—and if for Wales, why not for the Kingdom; why not for the whole world?"

On March 7, 1804, a meeting was conducted at the London Tavern in Bishopsgate, at which the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) was formed. Some 300

citizens from several denominations formed the society.²

The Society's work

The BFBS would be non-sectarian, and its governing committee was interdenominational. The members set as their goal "the wider distribution of the Scriptures, without note or comment." The Society had no interest in fostering any particular interpretation of the Bible. Its sole purpose was to provide people with easier and less expensive (or free) access to the Scriptures.

The BFBS was concerned with translating and distributing Bibles in all languages throughout the whole world. One of its first international achievements was the production of the Gospel of John in the Mohawk language.

The society provided missionaries with Bibles for people being evangelized. William Carey (1761-1834), missionary to India, was funded by the society in his translation work. The society helped Robert Morris, the first Protestant missionary to China, with a translation of the Bible into Chinese, and aided Henry Martyn, who was working on a Persian translation.

Satellites of the main society sprang up. In just 10 years, 60 other Bible organizations had formed. By 1907, the BFBS had distributed 204 million Bibles, New Testaments and portions of Scripture throughout the world. An international organization providing Bibles to people around the world had been inspired by the needs of one girl in Wales, Mary Jones.

The British and Foreign Bible Society is now more commonly known as The Bible Society. Its slogan is "Making the Bible heard." Its website is www.biblesociety.org.uk.

The BFBS marked its 200th anniversary in 2004 as it launched its Revised New Welsh Bible, harking back to Rev. Charles offering his last Welsh Bible to Mary Jones. The Bible Society distributed 256,548 Bibles, 68,985 New Testaments and 43,029 portions of Scripture in 2004.

The BFBS today works through a global alliance of more than 137 Bible Societies. These national Bible Societies are part of a worldwide fellowship called the United Bible Societies, formed in 1946. *CO*

1. Mary Jones died in 1864, in her 80s. We should mention that the story of Mary Jones and her Bible is a traditional one. Mary did not write down her own account, so over the past two centuries the story has been recounted with some variations. But the essentials are as they happened.

2. Various kinds of Christian organizations and societies made efforts to disseminate Bibles long before the British and Foreign Bible Society was organized, but these did not have the scope of nor did they achieve the international scope and lasting impact of BFBS.

Being there

By A.J. Walker

There are times when small acts of kindness have far reaching effects. I learned that one summer in the 1950s.



It wasn't until I started attending grade school that I began to understand that my family was "dirt poor." Mom and Dad did the best they could for my brothers and me, and they taught us to be happy with what we had.

By world standards, we were quite well off. We had shelter, food, clothing and medical care. There were some books and a few toys. Yet by small-town America standards, we lived well below the poverty line.

From age seven or eight, I spent most summer days playing behind my house. I ventured beyond the backyard, into the woods and onto the railroad tracks. (Mom didn't know about that.) I spent most of my time off the ground, dangling from the trees. I fancied myself the best tree climber in town.

Nature provided a great playground for us. Poor as we were, we had little and lacked little. However, something that we could have benefited from was a bathtub or shower stall. Bathing for us kids consisted of a few quick swishes with a wash rag. Not very effective or pleasant.

In grade school I remember a fellow student announcing rather

loudly that I should go home and wash my neck. I was humiliated and embarrassed.

Shortly before junior high school, two caring strangers contributed greatly to my life. The first was a person who anonymously paid my way for a week's stay at a Methodist summer camp. I never knew who that person was, but she or he was there for me and gave me just what I needed at just the right time.

I was thrilled to go, but I was extremely shy and withdrawn. Camp was in a remote area of Maryland, bordering the Chesapeake Bay. I remember huge white buildings surrounded by numerous small cabins scattered in the woods.

For the most part, my stay was wonderful. I was exposed to the usual summer camp activities, including Bible stories and songs of worship, which I loved. All the adult staff treated me graciously.

Not so wonderful was the way my cabin mates teased and taunted me. I was an easy target because I lacked an adequate understanding of social skills or how to properly care for myself. I was still more interested in climbing trees than in hygiene.

One day, a thoughtful counselor saw I was in need of help. Appar-

ently, everyone knew I needed a bath except me! I was escorted to the staff showers and introduced to the new world of indoor plumbing. The counselor explained how to control the water pressure and

temperature and how to bathe, and then she gave me my privacy.

It was glorious! For the first time, I felt completely clean, cared for and accepted. I'd been treated with care and with respect for my feelings. This small act of kindness of a camp counselor made all the difference in my

young life.

The memory of those two kind strangers from more than 40 years ago still moves me today. Had the anonymous donor not paid my way, I would not have had the opportunity to go to camp that summer. I might not have grown to love those Bible stories and songs of worship. I would not have met that caring counselor or experienced her gift of compassion. And I would not have learned from her how to share that gift with others.

Small acts of kindness can sometimes have far reaching effects. They certainly did for me.

*Articles for Jump Start should be about 450 to 500 words. We really like it when you send them as Word documents attached to an e-mail. Send to john.halford@wco.org.
CO*

The memory
of those
two kind
strangers
more than
40 years ago
still moves me
today.

Final Exhortations

A study of Hebrews 13:7-25

By Michael Morrison

As the author of Hebrews nears the end of his letter, he encourages the readers to be faithful to Christ. He also gives us hints about the situation the readers are in.



faithful to God if they participated in the meals that were part of synagogue life in the first century.

So the author responds: “It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by the eating of ceremonial

foods, which is of no benefit to those who observe such rituals.” He is concerned about spiritual health, not physical health. Our hearts are put right with God by grace, not by rituals.

“We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat” (v. 10). Here, “altar” is a metaphor for a place of atonement. In Jesus, we have a source of forgiveness that is unavailable to people who rely on old covenant methods of worship.

Accepting disgrace

The author notes a final similarity between the old covenant sacrificial system and Jesus. On the annual Day of Atonement, “the high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp” (v. 11; Lev. 16:14, 27). Similarly, “Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood” (Heb. 13:12; John 19:20).

Since Jesus died for us outside of Jerusalem, the author urges: “Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore” (v. 13). “Camp” is a metaphor for Judaism; the readers

should leave Judaism behind and accept the social consequences of following Jesus.

Why should we be willing to accept disgrace? “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (v. 14). This refers to Heb. 11:10—Abraham looked for a future city, one built by God. Since our hope is in the world to come, we look to Jesus and not to public opinion for approval.

How do we worship without old covenant sacrifices? “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Heb. 13:15-16). We worship God when we publicly confess our faith in Jesus, and when we do good to others, for that is what God wants us to do.

The author closes this paragraph with another reference to leaders: “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you” (v. 17).

Authority can be misused, and this verse does not mean that people should submit to unbiblical or selfish commands. However, church leaders do have the responsibility to “keep watch over” people, to be concerned about their

spiritual health. If they lead the people well, it will be of great benefit, but if members continually resist authority, they will miss out.

Personal requests

The letter ends, as many Greek letters did, with personal comments from the author: "Pray for us," he asks (v. 18).

"I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon" (v. 19). The word *restored* indicates that the author was once part of the congregation. He wants to return, but is detained in some way.

He adds his own prayer for the readers:

"Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (vv. 20-21).

He adds another plea: "I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you quite briefly" (v. 22). The

sermon could have been much longer, but the author has been as brief as possible.

He closes in vv. 24-25: "Greet all your leaders and all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings. Grace be with you all." We do not know whether he was writing from Italy, or to Italy.

When the author says "all" your leaders, and "all" the people, this suggests that the readers were in a city that had several congregations.

Yet the letter was written only to this one, probably because it had the people with the pressures and doctrinal questions im-

plied in the letter. It may have been a Jewish congregation surrounded by Gentile congregations.

No matter who and where the original readers were, the message of this epistle is clear: Jesus is our High Priest, who gave himself so that our sins might be forgiven, and he brought the only effective way for us to worship God.

Instead of looking to the old covenant, we should look to Jesus, be faithful to Jesus, and trust in him to bring us to eternal joy with the people of God. CO

In Jesus we have a source of forgiveness unavailable to people who rely on old covenant methods of worship.

I've been reading...

The Screwtape Letters
C.S. Lewis

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was one of the most popular Christian writers of the last century. He was the author of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, now in theaters.

His *Screwtape Letters* is a satirical collection of letters from a highly placed demon, Screwtape, to his nephew, Wormwood, a novice demon sent to tempt a newly converted Christian.



In a series of letters, Screwtape advises Wormwood on how to undermine the faith of his "patient," and thus reclaim him from the "Enemy" (God).

Each letter is a beautifully crafted description of how the forces of evil seek to subvert a redeemed humanity, turning them into beings that oppose God and reject his offer of reconciliation.

The correspondence between Screwtape and Wormwood is brilliant in its reverse theology as it explores the subtleties of temptation and the motives of the tempter: fear of punishment and the need to dominate.

Lewis shows the goal of the Creator as well: to bring humanity to himself; to transform us by his grace from "tools into servants and servants into sons."

Although written more than 60 years ago, *The Screwtape Letters* continues to attract thousands of new readers each year. Terry Akers. CO

Questions for discussion

- What "strange teachings" carry people away from Christ today? (v. 9)
- Does grace strengthen my heart, or make me less diligent? (v. 10)
- Did I leave a "camp" in order to come to Christ? (v. 13) What kind of camp or social group do others leave?
- Do I respond to leaders with respect, or skepticism? (v. 17)

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TEACHER: Winnie, name one important thing we have today that we didn't have 10 years ago.

WINNIE: Me!

TEACHER: Now, Simon, tell me frankly, do you say prayers before eating?

SIMON: No sir, I don't have to. My mom is a good cook.

There are none in the humanly "down" position so low that they cannot be lifted up by entering God's order, and none in the humanly "up" position so high that they can disregard God's point of view on their lives.

The barren, the widow, the orphan, the eunuch, the alien, all models of human hopelessness, are fruitful and secure in God's care. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*.

If I had to assign chief blame for the ongoing struggle between science and religion and the resulting erosion of biblical credibility, it would be to the leaders of organized religion. Gerald Schroeder in *The Science of God*, p. 9.

Youth would be an ideal state if it came a little later in life.

Herbert Henry Asquith

A man dies. Of course, St. Peter meets him at the Pearly Gates.

St. Peter says: "Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good

things you've done, and I give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in."

"Okay," the man says, "I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart."

"That's wonderful," says St. Peter, "that's worth three points!"

"Three points?" he says. "Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service."

"Terrific!" says St. Peter. "That's certainly worth a point."

"One point!?! I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless veterans."

"Fantastic, that's good for two more points," he says.

"Two points!?!!" Exasperated, the

man cries, "At this rate it'll just be by the grace of God that I ever get into heaven."

"Bingo, 100 points! Come on in!"

Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint."

Mark Twain

I don't feel old. I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap.

Bob Hope

Maybe it's true that life begins at 50, but everything else starts to wear out, fall out, or spread out.
Phyllis Diller

We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress.
Will Rogers

Want to enrich your personal walk with Jesus?

How would you like to increase your understanding of Scripture?

Learn more about God?
Deepen your prayer life?
Invigorate your personal Bible study?

Would you like to be better equipped for the Christian life?
Better equipped for service?

Ambassador College of Christian Ministry (ACCM) offers online learning opportunities that

enable you to study at your own pace, in a flexible learning mode.

ACCM also offers face-to-face courses via learning weekends.

The call to discipleship is also a call to lifelong spiritual formation—to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Why not see how ACCM can help you do just that?

