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Servant



TREASURE IN CLAY POTS

EMOTIONS

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editorial

The publication of this issue of 'Servant' represents a milestone in the development of the renewal here in Australia. During the Jesus '79 conference in Sydney, the Charismatic Renewal heard the call to die as an end in itself, in order that the Lord might usher in a new era in the history of His Church. *"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it does it bears much fruit"*. (John 12:24) In response to that call, this is the last issue of 'Servant' as we have known it. We are praying about a new publication, and at this stage, indications are that a new magazine will be published in 1980. We would appreciate your prayers and any suggestions etc., you may like to offer.

The articles in this issue focus on the divine and the human. The Charismatic Renewal has called the church to reflect upon the magnitude of God and His power at work in the world today. This dimension is intended by God, to be part of the normal church life, Geoff Strelan writes about this spiritual treasure that is canned in earthen vessels. Steve Clark offers some thoughts on emotions and their role in the Christian life. Helen Wade reflects on our need to daily die to sin and self, and give the Lord first priority in our lives.

Thanks to all our readers for your prayers and support during the past several years. We look forward to continuing growth and fellowship in Christ in the challenging years that lie ahead and pray that each of us will continue to listen to His call to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow after Him. Above all, we look forward to the imminent coming of Our Lord and pray that He will rule and reign in our hearts until His return.

Karl Brettig

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Editor.....Karl Brettig
Production & Layout.....Vera Connell, Ruth Brettig, Liz Zell
Illustrations.....Liz Zell
Photography.....Peter Jasprizza
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Treasure in Clay Pots

Two things have impressed me since becoming involved in Charismatic Renewal. One is the divine, supernatural work of God - the precious and unique treasure of His self-giving. The other is the obvious humanity and weakness of the people involved - the clay pots that hold the treasure.

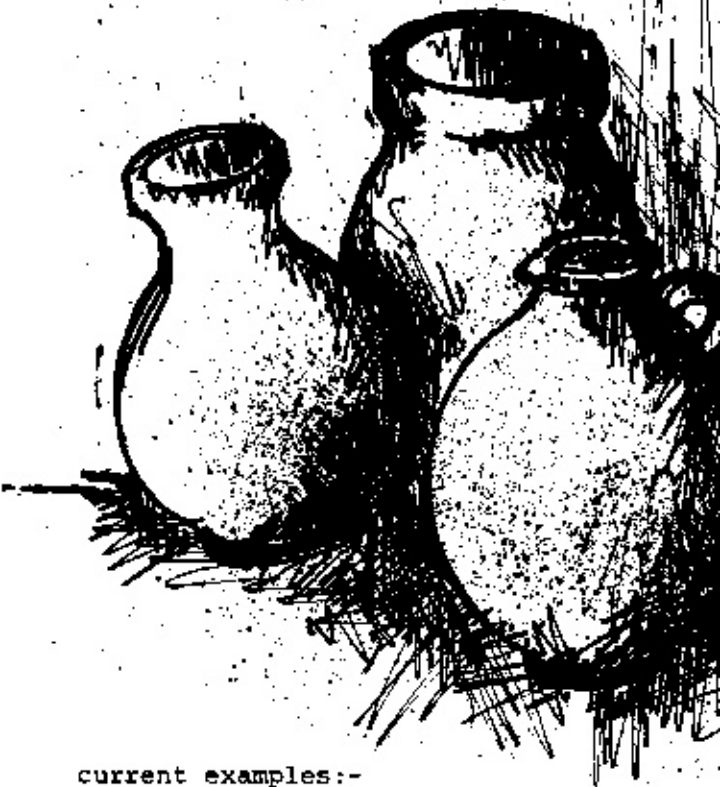
On the one hand I see the Spirit of Jesus guiding and directing, ordering and shaping, healing and refining, teaching and correcting, bringing life and freedom, revealing the reality of Jesus amongst us. And on the other hand I see people with their needs, emotions, logic and illogic, hopes and fears, revealing the reality of their humanity.

To many, this mixture of the supernatural and the human brings uneasiness. To me it is a source of great joy. For it reflects the very nature of our Lord Jesus. He Himself is both God and man, divine and human. As the Head is, so also is the Body!

Now Jesus is always fully God and man

Now Jesus is always fully God and man at the same time. He is not part God and part man, nor is He sometimes God and sometimes man. He is always both together. Theologically we speak of His two natures; but the reality is only One.

Almost every heresy in the Church down through the ages can be traced back to an attempt to emphasize either the divine or human nature of Jesus at the expense of the other. Here are a few



current examples:-

Scripture is both divine and human at the same time. It is not partly divine and partly human; nor does inspiration mean that it was totally divine without human participation; nor is it merely a human book which God uses. Scripture is both divine and human at the same time and you cannot separate the two. (Nor can you understand the union!)

Similarly in the Lord's Supper the bread and wine are not just human symbols of the Body and Blood (that is, just human), nor do they change into the Body and Blood (that is, only divine). Rather, Bread, Wine, Body, Blood, are inseparably divine and human at the same time. You can't understand that either.

Very personally, each Christian is at the same time both saint and sinner. He is not sometimes a saint, sometimes a sinner. Nor is he a sinner being transformed into a saint. Rather he is already now totally sinner (so says God the Judge) and totally saint, (says God the Saviour).

We need to accept this union of the divine and the human wholeheartedly. I fear the Church has kept the supernatural working of God at arm's length so that it is considered rare, rather than normal, in the life of the Church. But similarly the humanity of God's people has been considered a very private affair, not fit for the public life of the Body. This creates great barriers in the communication of the Gospel, for the Gospel is the news of how God has taken on our humanity!

Now what is human is not in itself sinful. Jesus was human but not sinful. It is human to have needs. It is not sinful to have needs. I need to be loved, I need to be accepted, understood etc. These things indicate our limitations as human beings, but they are not sinful in themselves. Similarly it is human to be tempted. Temptation is not sin. It is what we do with our needs and temptations that can be sin. If we give in to the temptation or have our needs met in a way which is not Jesus' way, that is sin.

So we need not be ashamed of our humanity. He works despite and even through our limitations! And yes, He works despite the sin which comes to wreak havoc amongst God's people. There are deceptions and wrongs, mistakes and falls. But in the middle of this sinfulness God is at work saving and redeeming. As long as the Gospel is being preached, He will work even if the presentation is surrounded with sin. Even an unbeliever may preach the Gospel and God will use it!

So preachers like Billy Graham and Rex Humbard do have their weaknesses, and even doctrinal errors. Yet God does work through them. We should listen with appreciation when the Church points us to the humanity and sinfulness of such ministries and not become upset or hostile over such criticism. Similarly, we in the Renewal Movement would readily acknowledge that we are terribly immature, inexperienced in the ways of God, guilty of many mistakes and so on. And yet He works through us. Again we will say that despite it's weaknesses and sinfulness God also is working through the traditional Church structures.

I want to get to some practical examples of how this union of the divine and the human works out in our daily living.

One precious truth which is again receiving emphasis these days is that God is our loving Father, and His people are therefore a family together. There's no question that this is a scriptural teaching. Yet we need to face the fact that this truth is meeting a human need which is prominent in society today. All around us we see the breakup of relationships, the lack of parental love, the isolation of individuals. There is a great need to belong and to be accepted. God answers that need by showing us that He is our Father and we do belong - to Him and to each other.

Some people will say then that this is only a psychological thing. We need not be afraid of that. It is psychological too, but it is rooted in God. It is a divine answer to a human problem. I'm quite content to have God as my psychiatrist. He knows me perfectly, it costs nothing, and He can not only show me the problem, but also cure me!

Similarly the 'thrill' you get out of meeting together with thousands of like-minded people at a public rally is very human, as are many of the emotions, and techniques evident. But this does not stop the Holy Spirit working through the Word which is proclaimed. In fact the Spirit will often use this humanity to prepare the way for His Word. The Word of God is not spoken into a vacuum; it comes through human beings to human beings. The Word becomes flesh again.

Let's acknowledge the humanity involved (and the possibility of a certain distortion of the Word as a result!); but we do not need to fear it. It is God's way of working. The treasure comes in clay pots.

Tongues is another example. Many people imagine this to be a gift whereby you just open your mouth and out comes this divine language over which you have no control. This belief often becomes a barrier in exercising the gift. But tongues is a very very human gift. We speak, we control it, and often it can seem a very mundane, ordinary way of speaking. And yet it is the Spirit of God in us, praying in words which we do not understand.

Similarly, with all the charismatic gifts. A word of prophecy, wisdom or exhortation may come to us directly at times. But we need to recognize and acknowledge that often it has been shaped by what we have been reading and listening to, by our own needs and desires, that we make mistakes, thinking it to be God when it was our own thinking. It's very difficult to distinguish here, between what is divine, human, and what is sinful. But that does not mean we should become so suspicious that we cease to exercise these gifts IN FAITH.

It will bring a certain caution however. God's Name is not to be taken lightly and we should be careful of saying "God told me...". When you say that to me I need some courage to tell you I think you are wrong. Let's respect the Body enough to say: "I believe God is saying ... What's your opinion (discernment) on that?"

In healing some insist that it is a totally divine work - therefore no doctors, no medicine, symptoms, certainly no lingering sickness. Others see it as almost totally human - God heals but only through doctors etc. The truth again is that healing remains a mysterious working of the divine in the human. We can't even make rules about the role of faith in healing because God keeps breaking our rules. (I strongly recommend Francis McNutt's book: "Healing")



Those involved in Renewal have a great responsibility to maintain absolute integrity in these matters. Tell it just like it is - be blatantly honest about sharing the way God deals with you and don't omit the human frailties involved. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. His grace becomes evident as we see our sinfulness. His love drives

Him to unite His Spirit with our spirits to declare that we are the children of God. He is not ashamed to call us 'brethren'. And He is still Lord despite us and, amazingly, through us.

This is God's secret: Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Geoff Strelan

* "A Story for You" *

I'd like to tell a tale of two brothers; a little like strangers who shared the same mother. Alike yet unlike. Different but the same. A sinner and saint who shared the same name

Brother One was greedy. He looked rather seedy. A tedious case. It showed in his face - complete lack of grace. A tart for his honey, he lived for his money. He thought money, bought money; worked each night and day for money.

Brother Two, a different man thought, "I'll live as best I can," and did. His lady was a lady. His God was his God. He tried to do good. His wife understood.

Brother One laughed, "You're not a man. You're not rich like me. How can you stand to live miserably; why does your wife stay? What has she got? How can you be content with your lot? You haven't my brains. You haven't my skill. How can my brother be such a dill? Your wife is not pretty. She doesn't dress well. Look at my woman. Isn't she swell!"

Brother Two smiled. Brother two shook his head. Brother two could have answered, but smile instead.

Brother One scoffed, "Is this my brother? This dumbo? This clown? I'll show him I'm better. I'll make him turn around. - Brother, I'm going to visit the King. Have you heard such a thing. I'll visit the King. He'll see that I'm handsome. He'll see I'm smart. I'll use all my charm and win the King's heart. Come with me, brother."

So they went ... Brother One bravely convinced of his welcome. Brother Two trembling with fear at the outcome.

Brother One boasted and bragged all the way, "I'm sure the King will ask me to stay. A King would need a man like me to keep his books and count his money. You are so silly he won't want you, but he'll let you stay if I ask him to!"

They reached the court. The door opened wide. Brothers humble and bold walked on inside. Brother One said, "Hello King. I've brought you gold. I'm clever with money. I'm sure you've been told. I'm glad to be welcomed into your fold. This is my brother. Dumb I'm afraid. Soft as a maid. He hasn't my brain. No, he hasn't my head..."

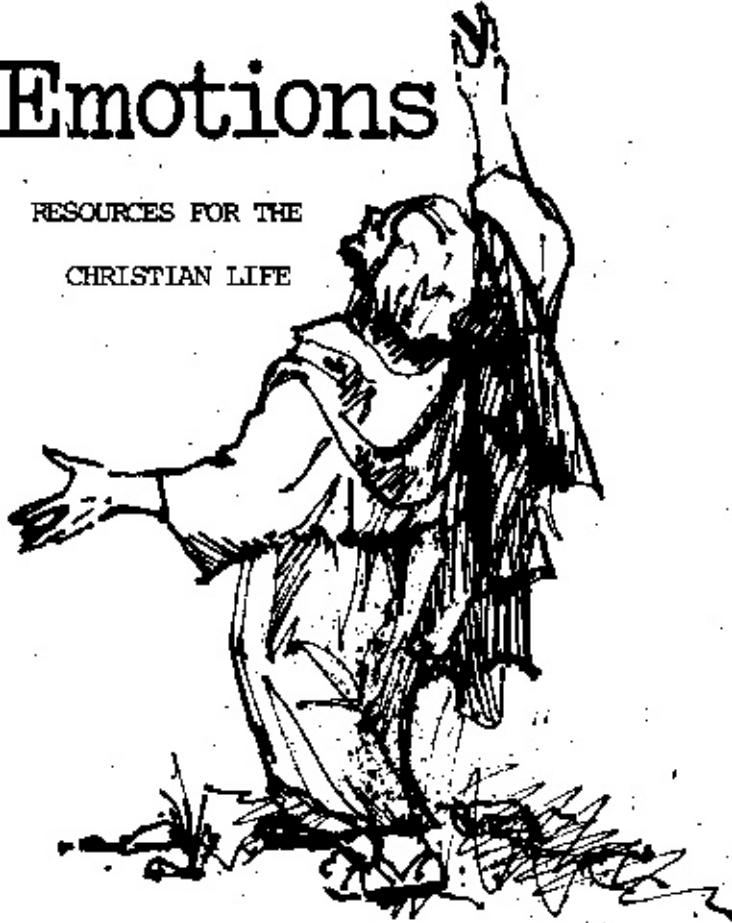
The good King was angry. The good King was red, "I deal in hearts. I don't want your head!" (Brother one felt scared). "I don't know you" - (One fell down as though dead).

"Oh! hello Brother Two". "Hello Jesus" Two said.

ROSALIE MUSTON.

Emotions

RESOURCES FOR THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE



Like us, Jesus could get excited about good news.

St. Luke tells of an occasion when the disciples returned from a mission and reported that evil spirits had been cast out and people had been healed. When he heard this, Jesus "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I offer you praise, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because what you have hidden from the learned and the clever, you have revealed to the merest children." (Luke 10:21)

Jesus did not turn to his disciples with a wise, understanding look on his face and say calmly, "Yes, that's very good news." Instead he did something a little undignified - he rejoiced. The Greek word means literally, "He leapt for joy".

The fact that Jesus is God did not put him above human emotions. He was "true God and true man," and as a man,

he experienced everything that is part of being human, including emotions. Repeatedly in the Gospels, we see him responding with real feeling to the situations he was in.

Bad news, as well as good news, made an impression on him. After Lazarus' death he came to Bethany and was met by Lazarus' sister Mary. "When Jesus saw her weeping, he was troubled in spirit, moved by the deepest emotions. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Lord, come and see," they said. Jesus began to weep" (John 11:33-35).

He knew about the resurrection - in fact, he was just about to raise Lazarus from the dead. But instead of commanding everyone to stop crying and rejoice, Jesus was moved with sorrow and cried. He responded in the right human way to a close friend's death and the family's grief.

Jesus' response to the rich young man also showed real human warmth. When the young man told the Lord that he had kept the commandments all his life, "Jesus looked at him with love and told him "...come and follow me" (Mark 10:21). The Lord even experienced fear, the same kind of fear that we sometimes do. In the garden of Gethsemane, "Jesus went down on his knees and prayed in these words, "Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done." And an angel appeared to him from heaven to strengthen him. In his anguish he prayed with all the greater intensity, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:42-44).

Despite his fear, however, he chose to lay down his life out of love. Emotions were a part of Jesus' spiritual life, but they didn't rule him. He was able to obey God regardless of how his emotions were going at any given moment. What determined how he did things was not how he felt but

his love for God and for his neighbour.

The Lord wants us to have the same mastery that he had, the same ability to handle our emotions in the circumstances of our lives. While most of us could probably look back over the last several hours and find good evidence that we are not yet like the Lord Jesus, this means simply that we are eligible for salvation. God gives grace to us in our need because it is his desire that the life and character of Jesus be formed in us.

SOME WRONG APPROACHES

The key to getting our emotions to work positively as they did in Jesus' life is to approach them as neither our enemies nor our masters, but as our servants.

Tiger in the basement

A farfetched little story illustrates one wrong way to relate to our emotions - regarding them as enemies. Suppose you were to come home one day and discover a tiger in your basement. You would probably be afraid; you would close the basement door and get a dresser against it as soon as you could. But that would not solve the problem. The tiger would begin to roar, and you would think, "Oh oh, what will the neighbors think? They're going to want me out of the neighbourhood as sure as anything if they find out I have a tiger in the basement." So if the lady next door asked about the roaring, you would probably reply, "Roaring? What roaring?" Meanwhile, your fear of the tiger would grow worse. "If it ever gets out," you would think, "it's going to tear up the house."

We sometimes take this "tiger in the basement" approach to our emotions. Perhaps we have a problem of uncontrollable anger; maybe sexual feelings make us feel guilty or have

always seemed out of control. We might feel afraid, guilty, or bitter about the way our marriage is going. Whatever the emotional reaction might be, it seems dangerous to us, and we want to close the door on it and hope nobody notices it. If somebody asks us, "Why are you so anxious all of a sudden?" or "Why don't you want to talk about your husband?" we tend to deny there is any problem.

This repression of our emotions is not the scriptural approach. Scripture teaches us self-control. Repression stems from fear of an emotion or situation: we want to submerge the problem as far as possible so that we won't have to deal with it.

Needless to say, repression does not work. When tigers are hungry they roar; so do repressed emotions. They can show up in hostility toward people, in an inability to get along with certain types of people, in bitter or anxious humour in feelings of depression or frustration.

Stern disciplinarian

A second way we can treat our emotions as enemies is the "stern disciplinarian" approach. We distrust our emotions, we suspect that they are up to no good, so we take a very strong hand with them. We clamp down on them. We're determined not to let them move an inch.

What happens if you're a strict disciplinarian in the classroom? To a certain extent you may be able to establish order. But sooner or later you will find yourself with some rebel kids. In fact, stern disciplinarians often have the worst discipline problems because they provoke a kind of rebellion. Often, if we relate to our emotions simply in terms of willpower and strict control, our emotions will rebel. Things can get worse rather than better.

The opposite approach - letting emotions be our masters - is very popular in American society today. One way this happens is through the "driftwood" attitude. It goes like this: "Yesterday I felt pretty happy ...this morning I woke up depressed ...there isn't very much I can do about it...maybe it will go away later on...maybe if I take a drink it will help...possibly something good will happen and I'll feel much better..."

A person with this attitude tends to be subject to moodiness and depression, to outbursts of temper, to fits of irritability, or other such things.

Amateur Psychotherapist

A second, more subtle way to let emotions run your life might be termed the "amateur psychotherapist" approach. "I don't understand what's going on inside of me," a person says to himself. "All these emotions are erupting within me. Why, I was driving along this morning and I saw this parking place and another car pulled in front of me - and I got furious. Why, did I get furious? Is there some hidden, awful thing in my life that I haven't discovered? How can I possibly handle missing a parking place until I've uncovered the real dynamics of my psyche?"

This approach has a "spiritual" variation. "What I need before I can live a Christian life is inner healing. If only somebody would pray over me, I'm sure I'd be able to see somebody get a parking place and it wouldn't bother me at all." The person looks for inner healing as the one thing that will get his life straightened out.

Clearly, introspection can sometimes be very good. Sometimes a psychological counsellor can be a great help. Certainly, inner healing can sometimes be exactly what a person needs. But we do not need to act as though some sort

of psychotherapy or inner healing process were the only key to our spiritual progress. If we take this approach, we become passive and are always looking for something to happen to us to remove our problems.

EMOTIONS - OUR SERVANTS

The Lord wants us to approach emotions with the knowledge that they are meant to be - and can be - our servants. He did not give us our emotions so that we could have emotional problems. Nor did he create emotions for our own entertainment. He gave us emotions to enable us to live and serve him as human beings.

Emotions are natural ways our bodies mobilize for action. Fear, for instance, is given us so that we will avoid danger. If we were without fear we might get into some big trouble. Anger can be very helpful - it moves us to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of what is right, it helps us overcome difficulties we have in doing what God wants.

For most of us there are ways emotions are not our servants: we get fearful at all the wrong times, our anger is irrational, our desires sometimes help us but sometimes are our greatest difficulties. But the Lord wants to teach us how to bring our emotions to obedience.

Our emotions will never be perfectly willing servants. But emotions can be changed so that they generally support us and obey us.

In a lot of ways, emotions are like animals; in themselves they are not rational. A wild animal does only what it wants to do, and therefore is almost useless to a human being. A whole stable-full of wild horses will not make a farm operate any better.

But wild horses can become servants,

they can be brought to obedience. They can be tamed. Taming does not mean taking the life out of them. An animal can be tamed while preserving all it's vigor and strength. But once it is brought to obedience, it can serve.

Even tame horses have to be handled; a person needs some lessons in controlling them. But there is a big difference between controlling something that has been tamed and something that is still wild - whether horses, or emotions.

THE LOVING RESPONSE IS PRIMARY

What can we do to get our emotions to function as servants in our Christian lives? The starting point is deciding to put the loving response first in each situation. The basis on which we act must be: What is the loving thing to do? We need to trust that God has given us the power to respond in a loving way. If we do this, our feelings will come along. Emotions become supportive when we do not put them first. When we do put them first, we find they do not move our Christian life forward.

Therefore, part of learning to deal with our emotions is learning how to handle the different relationships and situations in our lives. We need to learn what the loving response is in any given situation, so that we can make it the basis of our actions. We need to receive a great deal of the Lord's wisdom.

The corollary of deciding to act in love is recognizing ways that we are not yet doing so. We need to call sin, sin.

Someone who is touchy and reacts badly to things he does not like we sometimes describe as "very sensitive". We avoid looking at his behavior as sinful. We

say of someone who loses his temper easily that "he is freer to express his emotions than other people are". We might excuse the behavior of someone who gets up grumpy in the morning by saying, "that person just has a harder time starting the day".

But wrong actions and emotions will not change so long as we excuse them. The Lord wants us to acknowledge wrongdoing for what it is.

TAKE AN ACTIVE APPROACH

Scripture tells us in different ways that we must take an active approach to our Christian lives rather than passively waiting for everything to get better. We need to put off the old man and put on the new man, to



walk in the new path, to crucify the flesh and its desires (see Gal. 5, Col. 3). We ourselves must do some things if our emotions are to become supportive of our lives as Christians.

When we see something wrong in our lives, we need to say to ourselves, "I don't want that to be there, and from now on I dedicate myself to seeing that it ceases to be a part of me".

When we are at a "safe distance" from a problem, we might assume that we want to change. But when we come face to face with a particular fear or desire, we can discover within ourselves a resistance to change. Therefore an important step toward freedom is wanting to be free and deciding that the problem must change.

Finally, we need to learn how to exercise authority over our emotions.

St. Paul writes, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit"(Gal. 5:24-25). Sometimes we talk about putting to death the old man as something which should happen in the future. In a certain way that is true. But St. Paul says that those who belong to Jesus Christ have already crucified the flesh with its passion and desires. There has been a fundamental change. We have become new creatures.

Before us are two options: we can approach our Christian life knowing that there has been a fundamental change, that we have received the power to live the Christian life; or we can approach our lives as if we have not become new creatures, as if the power isn't there.

Probably most of us have some problems handling our desires and emotional reactions such as guilt, anger, and

fear. Some of these difficulties will be fairly easy to handle; some may have a very strong grip on us and will require special counselling from another person. But almost all of us have at least one problem that is "in between" - something fairly serious that we will have to struggle with for some time, but which will not call for special counselling.

We may be afraid of such a problem. We may be afraid to talk to anyone about it, or even to let ourselves be conscious of it. We may want to keep the tiger down in the basement. But the Lord wants to give us enough faith to look at something wrong in our lives and to say peacefully, "I have serious problem. But Jesus is Lord, and I belong to Him. He has made me a new creature. He will enable me to handle it".

This faith in the Lord is the key to solving the difficulties we have with our emotions. As we can probably tell from our experience, we do not become like the Lord mainly through our own efforts, but through living in a relationship with Him and with His people. We need a faith approach, not a willpower approach, to getting our emotions to serve our Christian lives. We need to centre on the Lord and what He will do for us, not on our own striving.

It is important for us to do the right things - to receive the Lord's wisdom, to repent of sin, to learn to exercise authority over our emotions. But these do not amount to a formula for self-change. Rather they are ways that we cooperate with the Lord, and His transforming power in our lives.

Steve Clarke.

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Notes from Los Angeles

It has been said that "a church without a mission is dead and a mission without a church is dead." Do we all have a clear vision of Christ's plan for us? Are we allowing the Holy Spirit to grow us up individually and as a body? Are we adding to God's church or are we just repairing fretting mortar and stone?

During a recent visit to Los Angeles, I saw two examples of real growth in the Body of Christ. The first one of these was a congregation called 'Church on the Way'. It has a vision not only to care and worship, but also to equip it's members to go and tell, to care and share and to be servants of one another.

This congregation had it's beginning in 1969 with families. The Church on The Way now has 3,000 members and five services each Sunday attended by 95 - 98% of the members. Great attention is given to their care and shepherding plan for old and new members. There are 120 home Bible study groups. Every Sunday each member is given a Bible study guide for the next week.

The Church on the Way has 20 pastors, 50 elders, 300 lay evangelists and

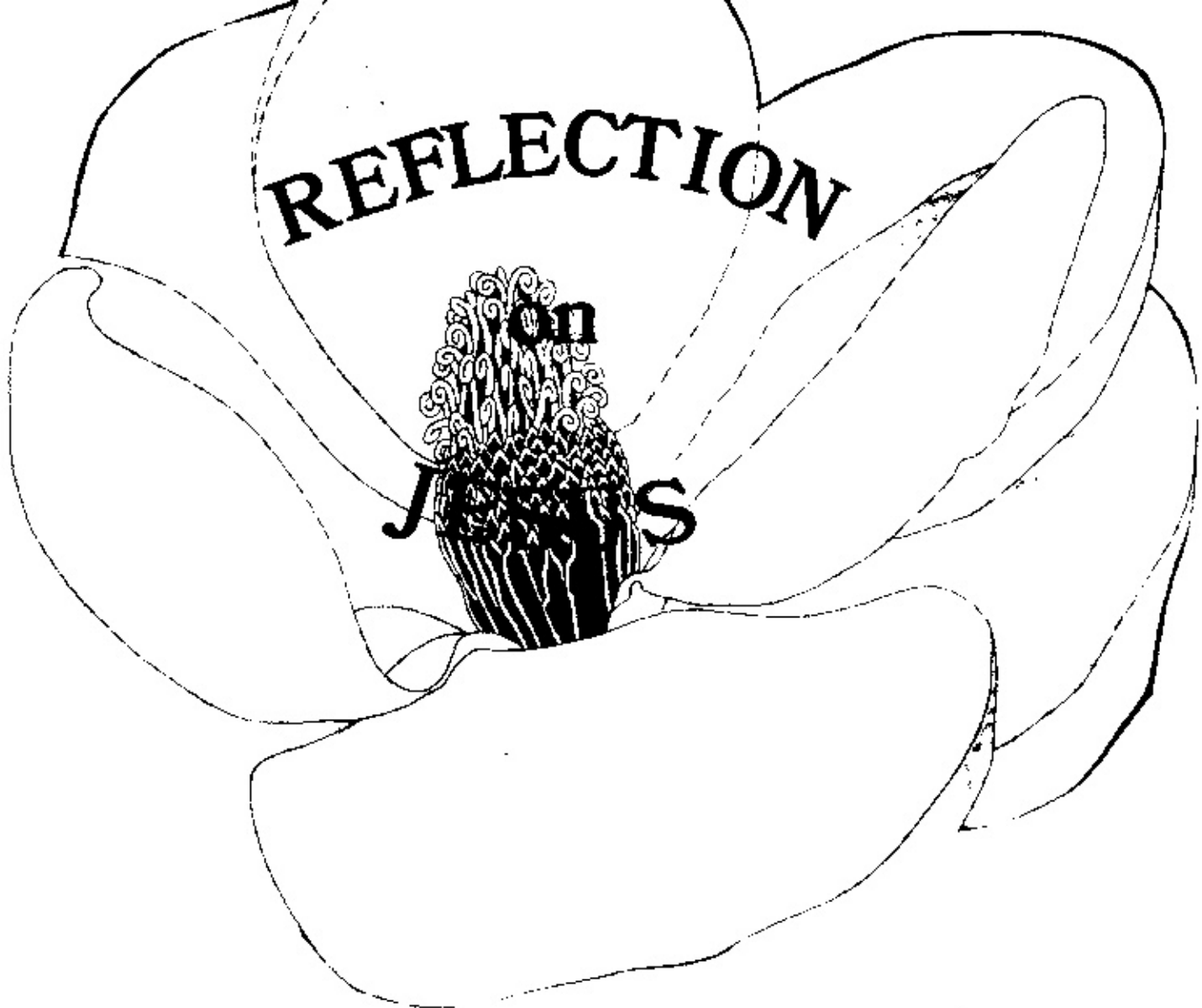
90 full-time staff members. Elders go through an initial 6 week training program. The congregation is increasing at the rate of 50 per month. The church has just completed massive land and building transactions to enable it to relocate and expand. They see the need to divide in order to enable more growth.

This church is mindful of the letters to the seven churches in Revelations 2 & 3, and it knows that there is still much to do and a lot of spiritual growth needs to occur. It is striving in Christ to become what it already is in Christ - a new creation.

Meanwhile, in another part of Los Angeles I visited a work known as Teen Challenge. In Los Angeles, as well as most cities these days, there is a tremendous need for evangelistic street work to be done. Converts from the streets come from the drug scene, prison or ordinary homes. They go through 30 - 90 day programs at the Teen Challenge centre. From there, they are invited to a farm training centre about 60 miles away. The farm is on 26 acres of land, and houses 60 people. There they learn trades and do farming. They take part in a Strict program of Bible study discipline teaching and are given various responsibilities. The guys have to learn five scripture texts per week. After completing their training at the farm, selected people are sent to Bible Colleges.

I was impressed with the scheme. Each house is autonomous and is supported by churches in the area. Teen Challenge has a success rate of 85%. There are 90 such houses throughout the world. I was slotted into the ministry and assigned one young lad who had just moved in. It was a good experience.

Doug Vogelsang



Do we, as God's children, love Jesus with all our hearts? Do we set Him above all else? Is He the focal point of our whole attention?

At times, maybe His work is, or at times His command to love one another is, but often I feel we lack that personal, direct, heart to heart seeking of Him.

Right now, I feel hardened in my heart and am distraught that I do not have this "first love" of Jesus. He is not my total priority in life. I do not seek Him at every spare moment. I

seek other satisfactions, for instance a good book, practising on the piano, cleaning my house, seeking a friend. None of these in themselves are wrong, I know, but when they take priority over Him and my time with Him, then they come under His condemnation, for it is disobedient to do anything else at all, if He is calling me to spend time with Him, no matter how right the other activity may appear.

There is a great conviction in my heart and a clear word within me that neither myself nor the great majority of God's children are truly "in love" with Him.

Some of us have been blessed by Him with the most remarkable gifts of His Spirit, but do we desire to spend much time alone with Him? Are not many of us glad when our "quiet time" is completed and we can "get on with the day"?

Don't many of us find that it is much easier to "feel" the Lord's presence and praise Him when we're in a group of praising people? How sad a marriage is when there is almost silence between a couple until they attend a party together, and both relate freely with others and hence can have some interchange with each other, sparked off by the general mood, the drink and the other friends. But it is not a true relationship of marriage. It has no depth, no edge - for as they go home again, after a time of discussing this and that person, this and that instance, their conversation runs dry and there is nothing to share of each other.

Is not this the same with us many times? We go to a meeting, maybe with a quick prayer on our lips, we gradually warm up and become enthused and by the end of the service are quite active. However, as we go home, doesn't this just quietly slip away? As we start to prepare a meal, or join in conversation, don't the old feelings, the old coldness creep back into our hearts? Yet we are the bride of Christ!

But I see Jesus, standing just behind us, calling our names, but we do not hear, and if do not heed, for we have "more important, more demanding things to do". So we keep our back turned on the lover of our

souls - and He is saddened and grieved, not just for Himself, but for us especially, for He knows that without this day's love relationship with Him, the judgement of God is upon us. "But I have this against you," says the Spirit to the Church at Ephesus, "that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent." (Rev. 2:4&5) If we look at the other comments Jesus makes about the Church at Ephesus, they are truly doing many good and right things including possessing spiritual discernment and acting on it. How many of us can match them? Yet they had no "heart to heart" relationship with Him.

I feel there is a great difference between doing many great works "for Jesus" and doing them "with Him". Deep within me, I feel the Holy Spirit is saying to His people this day - "You have lost your first love". We are caught in the flow of His Spirit. We are rushing here and there. We are drawn out by the problems and pleas of many, and gradually it becomes "our work in Him" instead of His work through us". There is a vast difference. I believe Jesus is calling all His people to come into a renewed, deep, very intimate relationship with Him, allowing nothing else to enter in. Remember, He alone is the way.

Satan would deceive us. As the Lord calls us aside, someone calls for counselling, or we remember a job not done. Yet if Jesus is not telling us to

counsel that person or complete that task, then we must come doggedly aside with Him. We need to ask Him to give us wisdom, discernment and a willing heart, for there is no higher call upon our lives than to come into His presence and relate only to Him. From here, He will send us forth Himself, with every instruction clearly laid out, and when the task is complete, He will call us back to that personal, intimate fellowship with Him.

Yet how often we keep going on and on one task after another, being literally "led by the nose" by Satan, by other's demands and by our own human desires or needs. It seems to me, that for an avid follower of Christ, the most effective thing Satan can do to disrupt that person's fellowship with Christ is to set him task after task of mercy, love counsel, giving of himself, his time and his money, and gradually distracting him from the first call on his life, to love the Lord, to abide in his Lord, to dwell in His love - for without this, without Him, we can do nothing, we are nothing. What a deception!

We shall be a "branch to be burned" if we do not live in His love, His personal, intimate love, not the general "love of God for all mankind". Remember, Jesus says, "every branch of mine" that doesn't bear fruit is taken away. (John 15:2) It is those of us who are already in Christ that are in grave danger. We must not be satisfied with our first or even third or fourth commitment to Him, but we must continue on and on in Him, every day, every moment, abiding in Him, dwelling in Him, responding swiftly to every word He whispers

to our hearts, every impulse of His Spirit. And we must seek Him whenever a moment comes. We must not look to fill our spare moment with self-satisfying tasks, no matter how reasonable it seems to be, but we must seek Him in that moment. We can trust Him to so order our lives and each day, that every task that needs to be done, is done, and done well, with joy and thanksgiving. Hence our lives will stream forth full of joy and so become a life full of praise to Jesus and of glorifying our Father. This can only happen when we are in love with Jesus and yearning for Him above all. Paul exhorts us "if then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ, in God". (Colossians 3:1-3)

Yes, the Lord will use us constantly while we are on this earth, but if we do not have this first love for Him, the bridal love, I believe we are in danger of being found in the category of those to whom Jesus said, "Not all who call me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father." (Matt. 7:21-23) Obedience is proof of love, not sacrifice.

May God have mercy on us, His children, and convince us by His Spirit of these things. May He grant us the gift of repentance and cause us to return to Him and and to seek that first love for Him.

Helen Wade.

RAGS TO RICHES

When I was about eleven years old, I dreamed that one day I would have incredible riches.

During the next few days I told my parents and my uncles and aunts that I was going to be rich. They all laughed at me and told me not to be silly because no-one in our family was very rich at all.

Since becoming a Christian I have learnt that God was trying to talk to me then about something much larger, even though I didn't know Him at the time. As I grew up, I became increasingly aware that there was more to life than I was being taught. I knew that there had to be more to it than going to school, to get knowledge, to get a good job in order to earn money and buy a house. That was a really stupid process to me and I knew inside that I was missing something.

Once I met a man who seemed to have all the answers. After two weeks of talking with him I found out that he was a Christian, and he prayed that I would become a Christian. God planted a seed



in me. Three or four years later, the Lord enabled that seed to grow. I really couldn't get away from what he had said. After that experience I tried to find fulfillment in bigger and bigger physical things. For me that meant bigger motor bikes. Somehow that didn't work. I'd get a bigger bike and start to think that I'd found what I was looking for, but after about two months, the bike would begin to get scratched and dented, and soon I'd be looking for another bike!

When I finally became disillusioned with motor bikes, I began to get involved with Divine Light and other eastern religions. In the end I realized that these religions were just words on paper, and a nice emotional feeling when people were all together.

In the meantime my whole life started to go down the drain. I became involved with marijuana, LSD and "magic mushrooms". I lost my secure job, and a friend and I decided to hitch-hike out of Newcastle with ten dollars in my pocket. We started heading for Queensland, but then we met someone who was going to Adelaide. We arrived in Adelaide without any money and spent a few nights at St. Vincent de Paul. There, we met a guy who said that he had a flat. He took all our gear into his car and said that he would pick us up later in the afternoon, after he had finished working. He never turned up.

We were left without any clothes, money or place to live. We called into a drop in centre, where we met a girl who took us in, washed our clothes, and got us back on our feet. Then my friend returned to Sydney and left me once more without any money, food, friends or place to stay. I started looking for friendship, and got involved with the Hare Krishnas and Divine Light groups again. But finally I got to the point of sheer desperation and thought that if there wasn't any God I might as well simply put a bullet into my head.

I screamed out in my mind, "God, if you're there, you'd better help me!" Then I met a young girl called Dianne Nitschke, who told me that Jesus is Lord.

"That's a lot of rubbish", I replied. We argued back and forth, up and down the street.

"Look, God is there," she said.

"If your God is real and not just words on paper," I finally replied, "then I want Him!"

"No you don't," she said.

"Yes I do," I answered.

I walked with her up into a coffee

shop. There, it was like God tapped me on the shoulder and I nearly fell over backwards. For the first time in my life, I felt God's Presence. My mind couldn't cope with that, so I went back downstairs. She followed me, and I finally became a Christian.

Not long after, I was down at the beach watching a sunset when I was overcome by the beauty and the glory of God. Then a strange language started bubbling out of me. I didn't know what was happening, but it felt good, so I kept doing it! This kept going for about two weeks until someone asked me whether I knew what I was doing. They told me to read the second chapter of Acts, so I went off and read it. It was only then that I realized what had happened to me.

Since that time, there have been some hard battles in various areas of my life, but, praise God, the Lord has done some incredible miracles in my life.

During the first few weeks, I stayed with some other Christians in a community house. I didn't understand very much. I thought now that I had become a Christian, other Christians were supposed to serve me like it says in the Bible. So I just layed around and had a good rest and waited for them to serve me!

One morning I got a rude awakening when they woke me up and told me I had to get up and look for a job. I thought that was all wrong, and those people really weren't very spiritual at all. I told them about what the Bible said about the greatest becoming the least. They weren't very impressed, and before long I found myself out sleeping in the park with the alcoholics again!

Some time later, a couple of other new Christians and myself decided that the church wasn't doing it's job

properly, so we went off and found an old deserted dilapidated house. There we set up a drug and rehabilitation centre of our own. We used our dole cheques to feed the people we brought in and didn't worry about contacting the owner of the house. My wife remembers visiting that place and finding one of the guys pulling up floorboards from one of the rooms in order to feed the fire in another room, while several derelicts were lying asleep on the floor.

Our faith was very young then, but we did have some good experiences. One aboriginal woman gave up drinking metho and has kept away from it ever since. Another guy we picked up came to the Lord and stayed on with us. Once a guy challenged us by saying that if God was real, then he ought to provide a meal for him. He'd been tripping for three days. We prayed with him right there and strode off to the pancake kitchen without any money. We met someone I knew there, who gave me a dollar. Then we went into a restaurant. We told the lady

in the restaurant that we didn't have any money and we'd just prayed for some food for the guy who was with us. It wasn't long before she came back with two large meals and two deserts! To this day, that guy still hasn't gotten over it. People in restaurants normally don't do that!

Over the past couple of years, the Lord has worked a lot of healing in my life. When I was involved in the bike scene, I came under the influence of witchcraft. We often used to have seances in graveyards. Since I have experienced deliverance from the oppression caused by these experiences and received prayer counselling, I have become a new person. Even though He is a just God, He is so loving and I'm really thankful for all He's done for me. He's opened up my understanding of things to an incredible degree, and if there is anybody out there who thinks that to be a Christian is to be non-thinking - you're wrong!

Graham (Bonnie) Gibson

South Australian News

The S.A. Committee of L.C.R. has decided to discontinue the regular monthly meetings that have been held in Adelaide since 1979. Those who have been attending these meetings are encouraged to become active in the existing prayer cells in their local areas.

Camp in 1980

A camp is being planned which will probably be held on the Easter weekend. People who have previously been involved in L.C.R., as well as others interested in growth in the Christian walk will be most welcome to attend. If you would like further details write c/- P.O. Box 179, Hindmarsh, S.A. 5007.

Rev. Doug Kuhl

Pastor Kuhl has accepted a call to begin a new ministry in Sydney. He will be working with Vision Ministries in establishing an outreach in the Eastern Suburbs. He is hoping to continue in fellowship with Lutherans living in Sydney, and will be accompanied by several co-workers from Adelaide.

news

Sunday Evening Fellowship

The Sunday Evening Fellowship group is continuing to meet at 122 Torrens Road, Renown Park at 7.00p.m. Quite a number of people have received Christ as their Saviour and Lord during the past months. A Seminar on "Growth in Christ" was conducted recently and it is hoped that more of these will be held in 1980. Pleast contact

Cassette Tapes on Repentance

A number of tapes on Repentance and Self-Awareness are available. The main speaker is Rev. Peter Marshall whose father was well known to most of us. This series will challenge you in areas of your life that may be impeding your spiritual growth in Christ. Write c/- P.O. Box 100, Upper Sturt, S.A. 5156.

" But the trouble soon begins again after conversion, and here lies the basic hindrance to continual revival. Continued revival is continued brokenness, but brokenness is two-way, and that means walls kept down as well as roof off. But man's most deep rooted and subtle sin is the subtle sin of pride: self-esteem and self-respect. Though hardly realizing it, while we are careful to keep the roof off between ourselves and God through repentance and faith, we soon let those walls of respectability creep up again between ourselves and our brethren. We don't mind our brethren knowing about successes in our Christian living; they can know if we win a soul, if we lead a class, if we get a prayer answered, if we get good things from the Scriptures, because we too get a little reflected credit out of those things. But where we fail, in those many, many areas of our daily lives - that is a different question! If God has to deal with us over our impatience or temper in the home, over dishonesty in our business, over coldness or other sins, by no means do we easily bear testimony to our brethren of God's faithful and gracious dealings in such areas of failure. Why not? Just because of pride, self-esteem, although we would often more conveniently call it reserve! The fact is we love the praise of men as well as of God, and that is exactly what the Scriptures say stops the flow of confession before men." (John 12:42,43.)

- NORMAN GRUBB

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