

JOURNAL OF AGGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

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Editorial Introduction

by Stephen Court

Greetings in Jesus' name, friends.

It is good to be back with another thick issue of Journal of Aggressive Christianity. We've got another feature for this issue: Fasting.

We asked several solid Christians to share their experiences with fasting, anonymously. The stories run the gamut from 24 hour fasts through 40 day fasts, from fasting name brands to fasting every other day. We expect that this kind of real life experience and advice will both inform and inspire, while at the same time, destroying the works of the devil, who has cloaked this whole godly discipline in mystery with accoutrements of fanaticism.

We're blessed to have an exclusive interview with Major Alan Laurens on "The Spearhead of the Kingdom of God." He is a powerful man of God whose story will encourage and challenge you, and, I trust, the Army.

We tackle the war. Captain Stephen Poxon drops his usual poetic reflection on this tense issue, oozing with Biblical influence. There is a major paper by Captain Charles Roberts on community that should provide guideposts for all of us seeking out the authentic, genuine, Biblical article.

We consider the prophetic words of the larger church in this issue, as well. Peter Wagner's words at a recent gathering of THE CALL are reprinted here with permission. He is one of the fathers of the North American Church and our own institution, The War College, is affiliated with the Wagner Leadership Institute. We also consider the words from respected prophet, Pat CoKing (the first postmodern name I know) and revivalist Todd Bentley.

Stacey and Wesley Campbell teach us more about the discipline of praying every day. This exclusive is from their new Regal book, THE PATHWAY TO SPIRITUALITY.

Phil Wall and representation from your editorial staff fill out this issue.

Please feel free to pass on the good news to your friends, so that they can be challenged by the contents. And for any really fast readers here who can't wait the two months before our next issue, drop in at Captains' Blog (armybarmy.com) for regular updates.

Enjoy the June-July 2003 issue of the Journal of Aggressive Christianity. May it speed us all toward world conquest.

FEATURE FORUM

Fasting: Eight Warriors share their experiences.

JAC FASTING FEATURE

The editors have asked eight solid Christians to confide to us, anonymously, their experience with fasting. Fasting has been the victim of effective attack by the enemy, who has sought to discredit it, excommunicate it, and make it obsolete. We're informing you of the all the details you wanted to know but haven't been told.

Read and be challenged.

David

When did you do your first fast?

My first fast was about 7 years ago when I first was rededicated to Jesus. I was a time when I was seeking a "testimony" of Jesus in my life. An experience that I could share to the unsaved of how Jesus became real to me.

What kind of fasts have you done?

I have fasted mostly from food(I drink water though).

How often do you fast?

I have fasted every second day for the last 2 years.

What is the best part of fasting?

Having the opportunity to have the Spirit of God be in charge of when I eat and not my flesh.

What is the hardest part of fasting?

The social aspect is difficult. When I'm with those who are not fasting.

What is the longest fast you've done?

The longest fast (days in a row) has been 7 days.

Why do you fast?

I fast to purge my soul (via the leading of the Holy Spirit). Also that my flesh would be trained to listen to the orders of the Sprit so that in times of warfare my flesh would not be a hindrance (trained to stand aside and let the Holy Spirit minister as He should chooses).

Have you any practical advice about fasting?

I feel that fasting should be accompanied with prayer so that the soul would be purged by prayer and the flesh purged by fasting to the gain of giving the Holy Spirit full dominion over these to other parts of what makes me a servant of Jesus, that His will would be done whenever and where ever He should choose to.

Renny

I did my first fast probably four years ago. I started out small, and am probably not some kind of champion in the fasting department. Even when I resume fasting, it starts out like 1-day, 3-day, the longest I fasted was 20 days, but that was a partial fast. It is so important not to set yourself up to fail, by trying some kind of extreme fast without some progressive practice.

Most people fast eating, abstain from certain foods, or utilize bread and water or juice to sustain health. There are other fasts: Catherine Marshall has a insightful article on fasting from criticism. In our home, we are on a prolonged fast from television.

Whatever fast the LORD puts me on, it is important to supplement with the Word and prayer during the times that the fast is on.

Pearson

When did you do your first fast?

In my first year as a Christian... tried a 10 day fast.

What kind of fasts have you done?

1 day everything

3 day water

40 day... 21 water and 19 juice

40 day... juice

Others <10

How often do you fast?

Only if the Lord asks

What is the best part of fasting?

Feel great... after 3 days

What is the hardest part of fasting?

Getting off any caffeine and praying while you fast as opposed to just fasting.

What is the longest fast you've done?

40 days

Why do you fast?

To be obedient. To allow the Lord to change me

Have you any practical advice about fasting?

Read Bill Bright's Booklet or Book

Wes

When did you do your first fast?

1989

What kind of fasts have you done?

1 day, once a week, 3 days, 1 week

How often do you fast?

AS feel needed.

What is the best part of fasting?

QT's.

What is the hardest part of fasting?

When you forget you are on it - the idea is not to not eat, but to spend the time when you would've eaten in meditation/reading/praying/praising.

What is the longest fast you've done?

7 days

Why do you fast?

I feel the need.

Have you any practical advice about fasting?

Start small

Sydney

When did you do your first fast?

While a camp staff member one summer. I went 1 day- it was hard! I believe the next morning was the first and ONLY time I got up for breakfast! :))

What kind of fasts have you done?

If you mean what kind of intake- mostly just water, but I have done some on juice. I find those easier and I can last longer.

If you mean what for- I've fasted for people to change their heart, God to speak & "just because."

How often do you fast?

Every Sunday AM I fast for our Sunday services. For our people to experience God's presence and hear God's voice.

What is the best part of fasting?

The connection to God and clearheadedness that comes.

What is the hardest part of fasting?

Duh- no food! :))

What is the longest fast you've done?

1 week.

Why do you fast?

I believe it adds a power dimension to your prayer. It's a way to show God how "serious" you are about a certain thing. Also to show Him I love Him.

Have you any practical advice about fasting?

Many people think you have to go a day, a week or more to make it an "official fast." I believe even 1 meal (fasted intentionally, not just because you missed it or can't eat) makes a difference. I think a regular weekly fast is very intentional and over time shows God you are serious.

If I start out not drinking anything at all through breakfast and lunch, I find it easier to make it. I drink water around dinner time and from then on.

Fasting is not a competition to see how long you can go. The focus is not on food or duration at all.

Bobby

When did you do your first fast?

Highschool

What kind of fasts have you done?

24-31 hrs. no food, but I do drink water (and chew gum).

How often do you fast?

I've been working on once a week- 24hrs.

What is the best part of fasting?

I realize I spend a lot of time eating, so I'm able to spend more time praying and reading instead.

What is the longest fast you've done?

31 hrs.

Why do you fast?

Helps me to focus on building my relationship with Christ as well as others around me. Also, provides more time for doing this.

Have you any practical advice about fasting?

Enjoy. It's a gift not a burden.

Sally

20 years ago my father lapsed into a coma following heart surgery and wasn't expected to live (according to the Doctors) more than a few weeks. My response was to fast and pray every Thursday for my father's recovery. I also invited others to pray with me. After some time I invited the acting DC of the day to join us at my father's bedside for a prayer of healing and this also was advertised and people requested to pray. 6 weeks later my father walked out of hospital and went home. He continued to experience some health complications but he was spared another several months which was a precious time for us. Didn't Jesus say that sometimes only certain things can be brought about by fasting and prayer? I believe that this was the case in relation to my father back then.

On an up to date note each year a number of our folk join in a citywide prayer and fasting season during Lent. We pray for the revival in the City but also in our Corps. There is no doubt that we have seen a greater response to the mercy seat when we have been really committed to this time. It's time we all got serious about this prayer and fasting thing.

Smith

My first fast was in March 1998. It was a juice and soup fast. The presence of God in those days was unlike anything I had ever experienced before in my life, or since. Though His presence was so raw, new and refreshing, I can say that it was overwhelming having Jesus dwelling in power in me day after day. The notes in my journal state, "late afternoon, the Lord impressed upon me very strongly that I was to commence fasting." Before it began I had no sense as to how long. Within the following week "the Lord impressed upon me several times the #40 concerning my fast. I stepped out in faith and never looked back. I KNEW that I was to fast 40 days and He revealed that He would enable me to."

In week 2 I asked if I could use a vitamin supplement such as "Boost" or "Ensure." Again His voice was strong, telling me "no" repeatedly! Then into my head He added a phrase from Isa. 41:10, "...I will uphold you..."

note:

The previous account may seem implausible. Even highly suspect, given that my first fast was an extended one, let alone dangerous, if entered into flippantly, without God's grace and without knowing crucial precautions. I would never advise a believer entering into a fast lightly. Suffice to say, I cannot adequately articulate the power of God in that day. His presence consumed me. He was so strongly compelling, His voice so clear, His Spirit so convicting, that I could not disobey and have peace. Almost all fasting I have done has been led by a clear call from the Holy Spirit.

The kinds of fasting I have been led to do are 40 day juice fasts, a 21 day fast, a 3 day water only fast, a 3 day no water/no food fast, fasting from sleep, from listening to music in my car and at home, from wearing expensive 'name brand' clothing, etc....

The Lord is usually very specific and being a relational friend He revealed the reasons why I was fasting either before or during my fast. For instance, I fasted from music because He told me that I was relying too much on the ability of others to worship Him. My habit was to plunk a tape into the player upon getting into my vehicle. The Lord stated He wanted me to sing praise to Him without helps. It was a fresh teaching. It was clear. It was undefiled worship. And it transformed my relationship with God.

Usually I only fast when the Spirit tells me to or when the Lord places a strong call upon the Church to corporately fast.

My reasons for fasting are still self-centered.

I have a long way to go in expressing true, pure, intimate love for Jesus through fasting.

Fasting is not FOR the believer. It is not about what the believer gains. It is worship unto God.

It is an expression of love for the One who saves us, keeps us and promises eternal life.

What can I give to the One who has given me life and saved me from eternal death?

How can I repay the Lord for all He has done for me?

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Psalm 116:15

Amen!

The best part of fasting is not the eating when its all done! That I know for sure. Albeit, the ordinary foods in life taste miraculously delicious when you haven't eaten in a while. The best part of fasting is that God becomes a much closer friend. There is a "connectedness" with Jesus that I have not found in other responses of obedience.

The hardest part of fasting depends on the fast. For instance, the most difficult fast has not been the longest fast. The 3 day no water/no food fast was the most gruelling, humbling, heart-exposing fast I have ever done. Far more so than my 40 day fasts.

Why?

Because, through it the Lord revealed the desires of my heart. Every time my throat became parched I craved a sip of water. Even in the short time of 3 days, it was surprising how much the craving consumed my attention. I learned how much my heart longed for water more than the Lord. But in dealing with my cravings the Lord also graciously turned it around to demonstrate how I can long for Him as the deer pants for the water. Psalm 42:1,2

Another difficulty in fasting is dealing with mis-informed individuals who think that fasting is harmful to one's health. If one walks in arrogance concerning the physical ramifications then I would agree.

However, I have personally discovered that God's grace has been so powerful that I have required far less sleep, I have had physical strength that is supernatural, my mind has been much more alert and most importantly, my spirit has been on track

with God's Spirit. Moreover, the Lord has opened up wonderful witnessing opportunities with those who have inquired while at a meal together.

Another difficulty is walking wisely and humbly. One pastor I knew went on a 40 day fast and told his whole congregation about it. He felt they needed to know so that they wouldn't invite him out to dinner unnecessarily. His intent may have been good but I don't believe this was a posture of humility as fasting should really be on a need to know basis. The exception for this is the corporate fast.

I fast because Jesus loves me and I love Jesus.

I fast because the Holy Spirit commands me.

I fast because my prayer life has been revolutionized by obeying the Lord's call to fast. I hunger for more of the Lord.

In scripture Jesus speaks about fasting stating, "...when you fast," (Mt. 6:16) providing believers with an expectation of fasting. And in Lk. 5:35

Jesus states very clearly, "...the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."

We are in those days. How can we ignore the direction from the One we follow?

Fasting advice:

Try it. It is not as difficult as is often heard in mis-informed circles that crave the flesh! If fasting from food, don't listen to the stomach growls at the end of the first day. It is not an excuse to reach for the cookies to tide you over! You will make it but you have to die first. Friday (death) comes before Sunday (resurrection).

It's about death. If you can't die, you won't be able to fast. But there is good news. You are not alone in the venture. If the Spirit is leading you into a fast you have the power of the resurrected Christ enabling you to say 'yes' to Him and 'no' to whatever you are fasting from. The song phrase states "...His grace has no measure, His power no boundary known unto men..." His Word shakes dead religion off us by providing this foundational truth, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who calls us by his own glory and goodness." 2 Peter 1:3

Never consider an extended food fast unless you have either sought some type of fasting guidance from those who have walked this journey before or you have a very clear word from the Lord that He has confirmed to you. An extended fast (20-40 days) can lead to serious health problems or even death if one does not end the fast by heeding appropriate eating guidelines. Here are some great practical helps to fasting:

The Coming Revival - Bill Bright

Celebration of Discipline - Richard Foster

Hunger for God - John Piper

Fasting can:

- stimulate a new found love for Jesus
- bring great glory to Jesus
- revolutionize your walk with Jesus
- be a tool to open up the Word of God like never before.
- cause your prayer life to become very exciting
- cause revival fires to erupt, igniting other believers
- allow new ground to be gained for the kingdom of God
- allow you to pillage the devil's kingdom (remember, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.
- greatly enhance deliverance ministry
- be intercession for others who are weak, asleep or unsaved
- be a powerful weapon in the hands of Jesus
- be an enjoyable sacrifice unto the Lord

An interview with Major Alan Laurens

A JAC exclusive

Biography of Alan Laurens at end of article.

Exclusive interview with Major Alan R. Laurens

JAC: Major, please tell us about your experience of salvation and sanctification?

AL:

For me it was in March 1948, (I was eight years of age) I made my commitment to Jesus Christ as I confessed my sin and need of the Saviour, claimed forgiveness of sin and knew I was washed in the Blood of the Lamb. (An interesting point is that the the Grandson of the Cadet of those days who led me to Christ is now my Corps Officer)

In 1955 in a meeting where Senior Major Allister Smith was the preacher I claimed the Sanctification of life through the Holy Spirit. This gave me a new realisation of God's presence and power and the need to follow the Lord in a fearless way of obedience to Him in my life's call of ministry. (editors note: Allister Smith is one of the Army's famous holiness teachers)

JAC: You are gifted for prophetic ministry. Can you tell us how that started and how it works for you, please?

AL:

The experience of being baptised in the Holy Ghost came in the year 1976, I was in a very difficult personal situation and was preparing to throw away everything I had of some earthly value, when I went to share with a friend (as a last resort) he prayed with me and laid his hands on me asking the Holy Spirit to come upon me. This prayer had been prayed over me when I was four years of age by my Grandmother, here I am now 36 years of age and the same prayer being prayed once again. It seems impossible to put into words the gentle yet powerful way God came upon me in His Holy Spirit. I did, by the way, end up on my back on the floor, something I did have problems with in my life- I did not understand why this should happen- but the Lord was working in my life His purposes and plan.

It was some twelve months later when I was praying for a young couple the Lord clearly spoke to me about the way these folk should walk and it was if I was being commanded to tell them many things about themselves and what the Lord required of them in details that were very personal and yet lovingly bestowed

I must admit that I was overwhelmed myself when I realised what had been spoken to them, but it was not of me, I believed it was of the Lord and proceeded, the outcome of it was that both the young folk accepted the message as from the Lord and were obedient... today they are radiant and burning servants of the Lord.

In this ministry I seek the leading of the Lord and follow very carefully the moving of the Holy Spirit in my words. I also advise those to whom I minister they have the word of prophecy checked by some other servant of the Lord or wait for the conformation of the word to them.

JAC: What are some of the problems faced by leaders who minister in the prophetic today?

AL:

I believe the most difficult problem is the fear of the Prophetic and also the lack of understanding of this ministry and gift. I often meet with the belief that this ministry of the Holy Spirit was for the days of Pentecost only and is not for today. There is also a fear of, "I

don't have it why should it happen through others, sometimes of lesser rank." There is also the problem of the prophetic word not happening because of disobedience and then the blame comes back to the messenger.

JAC: You've been privileged to witness many signs and wonders. What effect does these have on you, on fellow believers, and on unbelievers?

AL:

To have seen with my own eyes the healing of our retarded son, born with Down Syndrome and declared brain dead, we were told he would not live to see his three month birthday. We last February celebrated his 35th birthday. He is well and is a winner of Special Olympic Gold, silver and bronze medals in athletics, and swimming. He is a real blessing to us and to see how God has work in healing, as parents we are overwhelmed and take this as a basis of our faith to believe the Lord can still work miracles.

I have seen people who are deaf receive hearing, cripples who for over twenty years have not been able to stand straight and tall by the power of God I have witnessed their bodies begin to straighten and as they walk begin to walk with strength and then run and jump.

For me this only continues to confirm the Lord is able to do abundantly more than I can ever think or sometimes understand and strengthens my faith to ask and receive from Him making sure He received the glory and honour due to His Name.

I have seen many of my brothers and sisters who have been somewhat sceptical of the power of God and the miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit, change their view and begin to ask God for the gifts and for the blessing He longs to bestow upon those ask in faith. For the unbeliever this is a shattering experience to see God at work in power and might. There have been those for which I thank God who have turned from darkness into light, and there are also those who have run away and still live in their doubt and misery and powerlessness.

The Word is still true and effective: To as many as received Him to them gives he the power to become... the sons of God.

JAC: What are the highlights of your officership?

AL:

The privilege to point poor sinners to the precious Blood, to lead men and women and boys and girls to Jesus Christ and to stand with them and to declare the enemy Satan has lost through the Blood of the Lamb.

I see the effectiveness of the leading of the Holy Ghost in the life of our founders William and Catherine Booth, that we can walk in Power and to walk in their leadership still in these days of obedience and faith in Christ;

To be prepared to say "NO!" to man and "Yes!" when I see that the Lord is directing and leading His Army to deeper depths of effective Evangelism and worth in the world;

To see some land and to declare this land and property belongs to the Lord and then to stand on this land and see a new Salvation Army Hall being opened with many people coming to faith in Christ on the very spot that was once barren soil;

To hear young men and women say there is not hope for them, but still prepared to listen to the Word of the Lord, and then to see His love being lived in the lives of those who declare they belong to Christ... and the miracle of life saving grace being flowed over these very people who discover there is life for a look at the Crucified One and accept Jesus as Saviour and see the miraculous change in their lives. Hallelujah!

These are the highlights that occur again and again. Of course to have the confidence that I am where God wants me to be and doing what he daily is leading me to do in His strength and might.

JAC: Who are your heroes?

AL:

William and Catherine Booth because of their obedience and faith in the Lord... thus this Army of Salvation to which I am privileged to belong in Christ.

My Grandmother (an officer of The Salvation Army now Promoted to Glory) who led me to see the Power of God in her life was possible by my acceptance and obedience to receive.

Colonel Mina Russell who revealed to me the Power of Prayer and the possibility of all things working for good to those who love the Lord.

General Eva Burrows, with whom I work so very closely and share often, to see her great love to people and who reveals the Power of God in her life to be an overcomer. Her humility and strength as a servant of the Lord able to discover the plan of God for her and His people. She is my inspiration and strength as a servant of the Lord. She lives what she declares!

JAC: What is God teaching you these days?

AL:

To simply trust Him and to walk in His will and purposes He reveals to me. I am discovering His word is truly a Lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Nothing is impossible to Him and as His child I am not just required to wait to meet Him in the sky to benefit from His riches in Glory but I am enjoying them here and now. He gives me truly daily strength for daily need. As I get older and as I grow deeper in Him, I am discovering more and more of His power to face the foe, to not be fearful but to overcome in an aggressive manner by the Power of the Holy Ghost and the power of daily prayer. He is teaching me to give more and more of myself to Him as I discover more and more of His power in my life.

JAC: What has changed the direction or the speed of your life? That is, what events have impacted you in life-transforming ways?

AL:

My encounter with God in 1976 certainly changed my understanding and belief in God for the positive, but it did not stop there. I have daily learnt that to keep going means to keep a close relationship and constant vigil of my spiritual life with Him. (I have learnt that because whilst I have not followed His leadings it has not always been the case!)

To hear and witness the ministry of Stephen Court and Danielle Strickland in these days has been an inspiration to not slow down but to keep the up pace.

To know the "Zoe" of power in my life and to speak out with the "Ruach" of the Lord.

The constant sense of wanting to please man has been often the cause of my downfall and when I have come again to be reminded through the Word of God, and writings of such men as Smith Wigglesworth and Samuel Logan Brengle (I am still an old timer) they give me a boost to get up and go again.

The Aggressive Christianity Conference held in Melbourne in 2002, was an experience where God was able to renew my energies for Kingdom work and I thank Him for this privilege. (editor's note- to listen to preaching from ACC visit armybarmy.com)

JAC: What suggestions have you for Salvationists who are eagerly desiring spiritual gifts, especially prophecy?

AL:

Firstly to seek the Lord with all your heart and soul and mind... to make sure your daily spiritual experience is kept with great vigilance. Move with those who already experience these gifts and to observe them as you seek the Lord to bless you according to His will and purpose for your life.

With the respect to those in authority over us, we should not allow man to get in the way of what God has for us, so with every ounce of strength seek what the Lord has, ask and ask and ask Him again to give you bountifully from His store house and then use the gifts He gives you. (If you don't use gifts you will lose them!)

Dare to be dangerous, not so much different! The gift of prophecy must always be tested and confirmed it is not a 'self own' gift. Attend courses and conferences that have a positive aspect about them... not just sitting listening but call for the demanding area of action and claiming the power of God for such action.

JAC: What books have influenced your life?

AL:

The Bible of course. The works of Catherine Booth and the writings and sermons of Smith Wigglesworth earlier in my life have blest and instructed me.

The inspirational writings and sermons of C.H. Spurgeon. I find inspiration and strength from Keith Miller's writings and also the inspirational writings of Major Chick Yuill.

Philip Yancey, What's 'so amzing about grace?"and "I was just wondering" Tommy Tenney, "The God chasers" "The God catchers", Tommy Tenney has written a marvelous devotional book --"Experience His Presence."

I have just completed reading an incredible book by Charles Colson, "'The Body" and feel that this book is a call for Christians to become dangerous for Christ. I believe Salvationists should be dangerous Christians.

JAC: How can we, in The Salvation Army nurture the prophetic in our midst?

AL:

Firstly we must be prepared to pay the cost! The teaching of Pentecost and the Power of the Holy Spirit is not just to be spoken about but to be put into action without any fear. There must be almost as Brengle suggested "A School of Prophets" where we are taught to discern to the voice and leading of the Lord and to encourage those people both officers and soldiery to minister within the gift of the prophetic. Within our meetings we need to be aware that the Lord has a special powerful message for those on whom He places his hand and to declare it to them in a personal, careful manner. Prophetic ministry must be taken seriously, it is not a stage act, and on every occasion as I have stated before along with the Apostle Paul have these words tested. The prophet of the Lord is one who is "full of the Holy Ghost" and no other requisite will do. (editor's note: The War College, starting in September, features a course called Extreme Prophetic, and hopes to fill 'The School of the Prophets' mandate)

JAC: What exhortation have you for Salvationist JAC readers around the world?

AL:

Remember we are an Army, and Army of the Lord! not a back street Club where anything will do. The Lord raised us to move the world and to change the world for His Kingdom- nothing less will bring Him glory.

We are not called to be "Boothites" we are called to be followers and witnesses of Jesus Christ. However, the ministry and the call that came upon William Booth is as powerful and needed today as it was when he went and said, "Go for souls and go for the worst!"

I believe the Lord does not expect us to be outspoken, but he does call us to speak out!

I also believe there is great benefit in learning about our past history as long as we do not fall in the danger pit of staying in the past. We must be a "Movement for the Lord", not wallowing in our past but moving forward, remembering that if we really are Marching to Zion we must influence thousands and thousands to march with us... it is very lonely marching on your own!

I pray with great earnestness that all our people will be filled with the Holy Ghost and that we will be aware that as soldiers we must fight the fight of faith.

The battle is the Lord's and we have at our disposal the full armour of God. So use it, do not be just partly clad. Otherwise we will only be in danger of being hit by the enemy. Our task is to go out and win in the Power of the Holy Ghost.

JAC: Are there any last 'words'?

AL:

I am very much aware that we are a Called people, called by the Lord, called by our name, called to serve the present age and I know that in these days I am seeing a move of the Holy Spirit in the lives of many of our people to be equipped with Spiritual weapons for a spiritual war. I sense that the Lord is placing his hand on The Salvation Army in preparing it to stand once again as a vessel of His Holiness and to be spearhead for the Kingdom of God... Be strong! Wait on the Lord and be of good courage and the Lord will add His grace and His blessing on His Army as Christ is our inspiration and Christ our great reward. Hallelujah!

Thank you for the privilege of sharing my heart and spirit with you and yours.

MAJOR ALAN R LAURENS Biography

Born in Collingwood (a suburb of Melbourne) Victoria Australia (February 1940) into a family where mother and mother's parents were Salvationists, Alan's grandparents were Officers of The Salvation Army. When Alan became a Salvationist he began the 5th generation.

At the conclusion of the 2nd world war his parents were divorced and he was then raised by his mother and Grandmother, his Grandfather being Promoted to Glory at the conclusion of the War.

Coming to a life changing decision in accepting Jesus Christ in 1948 at the age of 8 years Alan began a life of following Jesus Christ as obediently and closely as possible.

Learning early in life that Prayer was a Kingdom Power and the reading and learning of the Word of God was his spiritual nourishment this basis of living has been kept and is growing every day to this very day.

Entering the Officer Training College (Courageous Session) in 1958, Alan was commissioned in 1959.

During the training days he met Cadet Valma Gilley who is now his wife and life partner for 41 years. They were married in 1962.

Of this union there are four children, (2 girls and 2 boys) and six grandchildren (4 boys and 2 girls) Alan and Val's eldest daughter is the editor of The Salvation Army "Kidzown" The Young Soldier.

Appointments have seen them in service in Corps, Social Work, Children, Youth and Aged care, Divisional and Territorial Headquarters appointments in Public Relations, Red Shield Appeal Directorship, Family Stores, Alcohol Rehabilitation work and administration, Hospital Chaplaincy for ten years with 2 years in Oncology chaplaincy and spinal care work (Alan was the first Officer in the Australia Southern Territory to acquire the Diploma of Clinical Pastoral Education) Volunteer services administration, Field Training of Cadets and currently serves as the Chaplain to Retired Officers.

Alan also currently assists as the driver to General Eva Burrows (Retired) and is the Chairman for the Australia Southern Territory Missionary Fellowship and the President of the Victoria Chapter of The Salvation Army Historical Society, also serving on the board of the Territorial Historical

Commission for Australia Southern Territory.

Alan has been privileged to have attended a Brengle Institute in 1978 and also other training and leadership conferences and courses.

With his wife Val the privilege of attending as delegates the 1990 and 2000 International Congresses were a thrill of their lives.

Alan has also had the privilege of travelling and visiting many countries of the world and observing the Army's work on an International level.

Alan is very well respected in other denominations and is often called to speak at other church gatherings and is often invited to lead such things as Holy Spirit courses and camps and conferences as well as sharing in leadership and participation within The Salvation Army areas of ministry.

Alan has a heart for God and a great compassionate love for people and a zeal that desires for men and women and boys and girls to come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and to know the touch and power of God in their lives through the experience of Holy Ghost power.

The Lord has been pleased to use Alan through his gift of humour and as a drawcard to many who hear him who catch the Word of challenge, and He has given to Alan the privilege of seeing many people commit their lives to Jesus Christ who then themselves discover the Joy of the Lord is their strength.

Give to Jesus Glory
Proclaim Redemptions wondrous plan
And give to Jesus glory!

EARLY MONASTIC COMMUNITIES: ANCIENT/ FUTURE CELLS FOR POSTMODERN CHRISTIANITY

Charles Roberts

“Just sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything...”

Abbot Pambo, “Saying of the Desert Fathers

A disciple once came to Abba Joseph, saying, ‘Father, according to as I am able, I keep my little rule, my little fast, and my little prayer. And according to as I am able, I strive to cleanse my mind of all evil thoughts and my heart of all evil intents. Now, what should I do?’ Abba Joseph rose up and stretched out his hands to heaven, and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire. He answered, ‘Why not be totally changed into fire?’”ⁱ

Isn't it amazing that even after God captures us, we are beckoned to go forward in our white-hot pursuit of Him? In the historical process of identifying the divine pull on human consciousness, which is the Kingdom of God, cleansing movement after cleansing movement have commenced, toward the end of “perfecting” the pursuit of God. The monastic movement has been one of the important cleansing movements, fashioning the time-honored means of grace and ushering in revival to the Church during critical periods of history.

It is hoped that through this brief investigation, we will look at some of the fore parents of the monastic movement namely Antony, Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius, some of the basic praxes of monastic life, and some practical suggestions for creating intentional communities in this putative postmodern world. The reason why I say Pomo is but a fallacy is because many of our deconstructionist friends track their hectic schedules on PDA's and travel on large metal bird-like creatures called airplanes, both accommodations dripping with modernity! However, it is hoped that we will take a brief look at some of the tenets of postmodernism and apply the salient features of monastic community, in order to create an effective vehicle to communicate and propagate the Gospel.

I believe that the best of the monastic movement can teach us much about returning to what I call a “creational rhythm” within the community of faith. I recall reading an interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury speaking about his personal re-creation of spiritual rhythm in this way: silence, contemplation, meditation, prayer, study, work. Recovery of this rhythm is a needed cure to the anomie that is prevalent in this world.

RENOVARE founder Richard Foster reminds us ***“The post-modern person is addicted to haste, hurry, hustle. And the addiction shrivels our soul. Our desperate need today is for a time-full life. When we are fractured and fragmented with ‘muchness’ and ‘manyness’ we cannot experience a time-full life. When we chaff under the ‘slowness’ of our microwaves and our computers it becomes nearly impossible for us to obey the divine Whisper...Time...time and space...time and space and stillness...these are the tools God uses to build a patient endurance within us.”ⁱⁱ***

The best of the monastic movement helps humans recover a sense of place; even the anchorites were able in a spiritual sense to recover a set of mutually understood and accepted set of personal relationships. Monastic communities were efficiently able to restore roles, functions, contexts, and social contracts in a time that the burgeoning cities were unable to do. The “rule of life” within a monastic community lovingly imposes a holy obedience to develop the capacity for such patient endurance, the gift of God granted to individuals within the community of faith. And doesn’t it ring true that humans require such loving imposition, given that Church history is replete with movements promoting a fleshly antinomianism within an artificial dualism?

The best of the monastic movement can also teach us about the exigencies of revival, the need for “one accord”, one of the requisite elements indicated in the establishment of the infant Church. Monastic communities operated under a “rule of life”, with mutual compliance to an established set of guidelines for prayer, silence, contemplation, reading, study and work, albeit in varying degrees for different communities over the various periods of history.

The worst of the monastic movement can teach us valuable lessons from its leaders indulging in the seven deadly sins, spiritualizing the same, promoting of both personal gain and political expediency.

Beginnings

“Even when carrying out needful tasks, keep meditation inwardly and keep praying. Thus you can grasp the depths of divine Scripture and the power hidden in it, and ‘pray without ceasing.’” Abba Philemon (late sixth century)

In the quest for an authentic spirituality, the early church had already received instruction in the role of our Messiah, Jesus Christ in His introduction of the love of God as both an attitude and activity, which connects us to the reality of God in connection to our outer experience in the community of faith. We will see some of the Scriptural underpinnings, as well as some of the fore parents of monastic community. Some are listed below:

- 1) **The New Testament attests to the concept of community:** The phrase “one another” is used 60 times; this indicates a mutuality of love and service among the believers from the first century that is reflexive and cyclonic.
- 2) **We have the mind of Christ:** His words are spirit and they are life (John 6:63) Through “the memoir” of Christ, we can reflect on His life and ministry.
- 3) **Pure in heart see God:** That through purgation, God can be witnessed through the senses and spiritual means.
- 4) **Mary and Martha as classical examples of action and contemplation:** Jesus indicated that Mary “has chosen the one thing that is better”; that even in the midst of great and urgent activity, focusing our energies on the face and life of Jesus is more desirable.
- 5) **Mt. 22:37-39—Heart:** the seat of all desire, soul: love God with every aspect of our being; strength: devote of our energy to serving God; mind: learning how all we know and understand is related to God
- 6) **Pauline corpus:** phrase “in Christ” occurs 164 times; implies intimate union;

- Identity with Christ is paramount
- 7) **1 Cor. 14:15:** pray with the heart, pray with the mind also, engaging all the senses.
 - 8) **John: nature of agape love originates in God;** no desire for its profit–almsgiving, service are performed without reciprocation; **role of the logos as light-bringer** (cf.1:9; 3:11-12; 6:44-45; 7:16-18; 26-28; 9:4; 10:14-15; 12:46-50; 13:31-17:26, emphasis on knowing God. This kind of knowing depends on intimacy, concentration, and dedication. The end of love and light is union.
 - 9) Ignatius of Antioch (circa 110 BC) shared of the communal identity of all believers in Christ. Introduces for the first time the concept of mystical union: ***“Ignatius, who is called Theophorus, to the church in Ephesus in Asia, blessed with greatness through the fullness of God the Father, predestined before the ages for lasting and unchangeable glory forever, united and elect through genuine suffering by the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ our God....”***ⁱⁱ

Springs in the desert

Prior to the 4th century, the ideal exemplar of heightened Christian spirituality was that of the martyrs. Beginning with Stephen, (Acts 6:8-8:8), martyrdom had become a prize attainment for the devout Christian, a testament to mature spirituality, and a vehicle for evangelical expansion. For even to this day “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”. The martyrs, though erroneously considered “super-Christians” do indeed show us the cost of following Christ, and fulfill Jesus’ prophesy contained in Matthew 24:9-14. Theirs and the examples of the ascetics are held in the highest regard. Of particular interest is the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity, who prayed with the saints that her unborn child would be delivered with dispatch, so that she would have the divine privilege of execution. Further, the asceticism of the era influenced later laws on clergy and widow celibacy, all factors influencing the coming monastic tableau.

After the empire-wide persecutions under the reigns of Decius, Valerian, Diocletian and Galarius had ceased, and Christendom had been given respite from persecution via the 313 Edict of Milan, and more firmly established under the rule of Constantine, moral laxity stemming from the state-decreed mass conversions to the new religion of the empire served to drive some souls away from the world to find a deeper religious experience. There were thousands of pilgrims who left the cities to avoid persecution, living an ascetic life. The addition of some changes within the clergy like the rule of celibacy in the late 3rd- to early 4th centuries also stimulated the monastic movement; the chief forerunner of monastic spirituality was Antony (c.250-350), as recorded in Athanasius’ memoir of him. Antony, after having been raised in an affluent Christian family in Egypt, was left to raise his sister after their parents died. While he was in church, he heard the command of Jesus given to the rich young ruler: “If thou would be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou would have treasure in heaven, and, come, follow Me.” Antony did just as Jesus said, leaving his sister in the charge of some devout women, and living in a cave in the Egyptian desert. After numerous encounters with extreme privation, and intense spiritual battles, he emerged for many as a new hero for Christian spirituality. Listen to Athanasius’ account “14. And so for nearly twenty years he

continued training himself in solitude, never going forth, and but seldom seen by any. After this, when many were eager and wishful to imitate his discipline, and his acquaintances came and began to cast down and wrench off the door by force, Antony, as from a shrine, came forth initiated in the mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God. Then for the first time he was seen outside the fort by those who came to see him. And they, when they saw him, wondered at the sight, for he had the same habit of body as before, and was neither fat, like a man without exercise, nor lean from fasting and striving with the demons, but he was just the same as they had known him before his retirement. And again his soul was free from blemish, for it was neither contracted as if by grief, nor relaxed by pleasure, nor possessed by laughter or dejection, for he was not troubled when he beheld the crowd, nor overjoyed at being saluted by so many. But he was altogether even as being guided by reason, and abiding in a natural state. Through him the Lord healed the bodily ailments of many present, and cleansed others from evil spirits. And He gave grace to Antony in speaking, so that he consoled many that were sorrowful, and set those at variance at one, exhorting all to prefer the love of Christ before all that is in the world. And while he exhorted and advised them to remember the good things to come, and the loving-kindness of God towards us, 'Who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all', he persuaded many to embrace the solitary life. And thus it happened in the end that cells arose even in the mountains, and the desert was colonized by monks, who came forth from their own people, and enrolled themselves for the citizenship in the heavens.'^{iv}

According to Latourette, the life of Antony served to birth of two types of monasticism: the eremitical or anchorite life, and the eremitical community, where monks had individual dwellings, but lived sufficiently close for fellowship and spiritual direction.^v Antony discovered a four-fold spiritual path: conversion, withdrawal, purgative struggle, and transformation, with the ultimate life goal of *apatheia*, or the mastery of self, world and destructive thoughts. Prayer, privation, penitence and work were the discoveries along that path. Ross Mackenzie tells us of some important discoveries that Antony made that would serve this era well on its way to reconstruction. The era in which Antony lived can be characterized by moral and religious decline, the rapid cannibalization of the empire through mass military expenditures, and the development and establishment of what could be considered "civil religion." Leaving this scene behind Antony made three important discoveries in Mackenzie's view: *solitude, truth and vision*. These discoveries of Antony would have come from his daily routine of prayer, reading of the Bible, fasting, and meditation on the life of Jesus. Mackenzie explains that solitude or a regress from the spheres of society (house, brothers, sister, father, children, land; cf. Mk 10:29) "is a summons to an *evangelical anachoresis*", or as he expounds, "an ingress into the reality of God's rule that is present in Jesus of Nazareth."^{vi} Truth is the discovery of encountering "one's own demons", by mortifying the flesh and submitting to God alone. Vision is the result of the context and embrace of the desert: a greater union with God that results in the ability to know His voice (John 10:4), and do what that voice commands. Some modern followers' social action genes would recoil at the prospect of regressing from the world, leaving it to itself to self-destruct. Reconstructionist essayist Rousas John Rushdoony, when speaking to honoring the

name of the Lord, contends that the degree to which each sphere of society fails to recognize the sovereignty of God is an indication of its true profanity.^{vii}

In the post-Constantine era, as today, we must consider the value of leaving the world to commit one's highest and best energies to focus on God, Who alone can save.

Even Mother Teresa, who engaged the disenfranchised of Calcutta with such love and potency, saw the inestimable significance of affiliating her mendicant order, the Missionaries of Charity with a contemplative one, thereby crafting a convergence of faith and practice, action and contemplation. Nevertheless, history proves that even Antony could not practice solitude without interruption from the seekers, the curious, and those receiving the miraculous gifts from God springing from Antony's entreaties.

Another scholar and father of monastic spirituality is Gregory of Nyssa (331-396), whose most famous work, *The Life of Moses*, outlines Moses' life as a model of the soul's journey to God. Employing an allegorical interpretation of Moses' murder of the Egyptian, Gregory says: "Moses teaches us to take our stand with virtue as with a kinsman and to kill virtue's adversary. The victory of true religion is the death of idolatry. So also injustice is killed by righteousness and arrogance is slain by humility."^{viii} Gregory is focusing on the *theoria*, or spiritual meaning of the text, a classic 4th century practice, exemplified by Origen a century earlier. For Gregory, Antony, and Jesus, the image of the desert is always a place of trying and testing, struggle and purification. Gregory speaks a period of divine darkness, after being arrested by divine light. The incomparable ineffability of God comes as a blinder to the normal senses, a trans-rational experience; the light of the bush is where God encountered Moses, and the darkness of the mountaintop is where Moses encountered God^{ix} (cf. Ex. chap. 3, 20 & 21) Looking at these two lives, and their brief treatment here, it becomes clear that asceticism and contemplation are not mutually exclusive praxes in a heightened Christian spirituality, but essential and conjunctive. Although there are two "ways": the *via negativa* and *via positiva*, it would seem that the seeker who visits both paths would come to the same reencounter of the divine light and darkness as Moses did, in Gregory's view.

Looking briefly at Evagrius (345-399), and his scholarly way of treating the monastic life, we see that his *convictus* experience (using Eliade's terminology) began with a divine encounter with illness, a consequent of his early dalliances with sinful living. While living in the monastery of Rufinus and Melania, Evagrius confessed his lasciviousness, and Melania made him take a vow of asceticism, and escape to Egypt. He made true to the promise, and in a few days he was healed. Evagrius wrote a three-volume work called, *Monachikos*. The first of the three volumes, entitled *Praktikos*, outlines the severity of the eight deadly thoughts: Gluttony, Anger, Greed, Envy, Pride, Lust, Indifference, and Melancholy. The purpose of *Praktikos* is to identify the way in which humans wrestle with thoughts, which stir up passions that have never been ordered properly. According to Evagrius, the proper ordering of these thoughts comes from ascetic practices, contemplation of the physical world, and contemplation of God, which has as its goal *apatheia*, or freedom from inner turmoil. Abba Evagrius said, "Sit in your cell, collecting your thoughts. Remembering the day

of your death. See then what the death of your body will be; let your spirit be heavy, take pains, condemn the vanity of the world, so as to be able to live always in the peace you have in view without weakening. Remember also what happens in hell and think about the state of the souls down there, their painful silence, their most bitter groanings, their fear, their strife, their waiting. Think of their grief without end and the tears their souls shed eternally.

"But keep the day of resurrection and of presentation to God in remembrance also. Imagine the fearful and terrible judgment. Consider the fate kept for sinners, their shame before the face of God and the angels and archangels and all men, that is to say, the punishments, the eternal fire, worms that rest not, the darkness, gnashing of teeth, fear and supplications. Consider also the good things in store for the righteous: confidence in the face of God the Father and His Son, the angels and archangels and all the people of the saints, the kingdom of heaven, and the gifts of that realm, joy and beatitude. "Keep in mind the remembrance of these two realities. Weep for the judgment of sinners; afflict yourself for fear lest you too feel those pains. But rejoice and be glad at the lot of the righteous. Strive to obtain those joys but be a stranger to those pains. Whether you be inside or outside your cell, be careful that the remembrance of these things never leaves you, so that, thanks to their remembrance, you may at least flee wrong and harmful thoughts."^x

Again, "the two realities" of asceticism and contemplation are two movements linked and woven together, serving to provide us with a feast of spiritual nourishment.

It is especially amazing to think that this way to worship and serve God, even with its extremes, sprung up like streams in the desert, independently yet with an order, throughout Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Asia, North Africa, Gaul and Italy. With these common threads, an admixture of *via negativa / positiva*, in hand, these and other fathers of the monastic movement give us much grist for the mill of postmodern spirituality. Monastic praxis at its best is conservative in its theology, if not always in real-time application, as we have seen with the excesses during the Babylonian Captivity. But its origins are conservative, if not always orthodox. In his seminal work, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, Dean Kelley challenged the Church to retain its seriousness and return to first things. He cites the revival movements of the Benedictines, Cistercians, Franciscans and Jesuits, all led by men of fresh vision, and all depicted by him as *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* that infuse new vigor into the life of the Church. Their direct responsibility to the Pope and not the local bishopric increased the level of commitment on the part of their adherents and the level of demand by increasing the level of seriousness. The usual reaction to this radicalized faith is the *domestication of the ecclesiola*. (As exemplified by the 1226 Franciscan division over the ownership of property.)^{xi} The other reaction is the expulsion from *ecclesia*, which happened to Peter Waldo at the conclusion of the Third Lateran Council in 1179.

So, if what Kelley has said is true, that little churches within the church can inflame the larger group into revival, then new communities of "little churches in the desert" can again be turned into fire and turn away from the "do and do" of the modern church, provided that they truly return to seriousness and learn from and avoid the pitfalls of the past. And, I would posit that 4th century monastic living could peacefully coexist within postmodern society. Cloning the anchorite life gives

postmoderns a mystical arena for seriousness, within an atmosphere of intellectualism, feeding their hunger for transcendence. Madeleine L'Engle writes this about her children, and ours: "They have a passionate need for the dimension of transcendence, mysticism, way-outness. We're not offering it to them legitimately. The tendency of the churches to be relevant and more-secular-than-thou does not answer our need for the transcendent. As George Tyrrell wrote about one hundred years ago, 'If man's craving for the mysterious, the wonderful, the supernatural, be not fed on true religion, it will feed itself on the garbage of any superstition that is offered to it.'"

The postmodern worldview operates with a community-based understanding of truth. It affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth is dependent on the community in which we participate. Further, and far more radically, the postmodern worldview affirms that this relativity extends beyond our *perceptions* of truth to its essence: there is no absolute truth; rather, truth is relative to the community in which we participate. On the basis of this assumption, postmodern thinkers have given up the Enlightenment quest for any one universal, supracultural, timeless truth. They focus instead on what is held to be true within a specific community. They maintain that truth consists in the ground rules that facilitate the well being of the community in which one participates. In keeping with this emphasis, postmodern society tends to be a communal society. Monasticism, most especially the eremitical kind, offers such radical community with the focus on the enduring Truth, Jesus Christ. If this kind of community is not offered, postmoderns will settle for the community of Legion.

Postmodernism poses certain dangers. Nevertheless, it would be ironic—indeed, it would be tragic—if evangelicals ended up as the last defenders of the now dying modernity. To reach people in the new postmodern context, we must set ourselves to the task of deciphering the implications of postmodernism for the gospel.^{xii} Postmoderns can attach themselves to the Christian gospel, as long as it is communally lived out and validated by a rule of life that matches the societal setting. Leonard Sweet has a "rule of life" in his book *SoulSalsa* that matches this century, but has connections to the monastic fathers.^{xiii} He calls the 21st century Jesus-follower a "soul artist", and suggests praxes like: "Mezuzah your universe", or sacralize ordinary time. Another rule is "Brush your tongue": take care with information, which is reminiscent of Catherine Marshall's fasting from criticism.

The transforming power of the gospel, the faith "once delivered to the saints." is best expressed in communal living and serving (cf. Acts 2:42-47), lived out in the desert, within simple rules of life, instead of the individual-decision, need-based "hot tub" salvation exemplified in the modern North American church. The fathers of monastic spirituality spur us on toward the mark of a higher calling.

Over 1800 years ago, Antony and thousands of others entered the desert to avoid these same pitfalls. To the desert, to the waterless places with new intentional communities we must needs go. These communities will need to deal with technology differently, as did the mission group from Rockridge United Methodist Church in Oakland, Calif. This group bought a lot in the inner city, rebuilt seven new units for the 22 people in their group, retro-fit water-on-demand water heaters and solar panels into the design that provide nearly 85 percent of their energy needs.

Children have common play, and families have common meals. The group organizes art shows and block parties for the community. One of the units is a “transition house” for mothers working off welfare. Kids in the group go to local schools; parents volunteer there. Describing this praxis as “representing the *shalom* of God” and “*whole-life discipleship*”^{xiv} Tom and Christine Sine believe that the first call of the gospel is to incarnation, while not ignoring evangelism or social action. It seems that incarnating the Gospel in whole-life discipleship gives community members permission to earn the right to speak to neighborhood members’ concerns around soul and service.

That faith “once delivered to the saints” is timeless and enduring, except its vehicle for propagation has fallen upon hard times. Listen to the voice of a clarion call to change (parens mine):

“In hard times, religious systems are challenged to retrench and reflect on their own customs. Perhaps as critical as the work of evangelism is to the life of the Church, part of its present-day mission is to probe the nature of the relationship between the quotidian practices of American preacher and parishioner, and the Manichean logic (disconnect) of Western supremacy (modernity) and capitalist accumulation. To what degree do our lifestyles, cultural habits and social aspirations inform tendencies that legitimize the interlocking dynamics of crass materialism, American chauvinism and Christian triumphalism?”^{xv} To the desert, we must needs go.

Endnotes

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Harbinger of Shalom

Stephen Poxon

***“Come, Holy Spirit,
Fill us with love,
So that differences caused by economic and social injustice
May be removed.
Fill us with your Spirit of justice,
So that we can fight against poverty and exclusion.
Come, Holy Spirit,
Giver of peace,
Use us in a world which is polarised,
Where hostilities and violence have erupted
Between people and communities
Who were at peace but now distrust each other.
Harbinger of Shalom,
Fill us with your Spirit of tolerance and solidarity,
So that mutual respect may be established,
In the name of Jesus Christ
Who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.”***

John A'lohan Rozu,
United College of the Ascension, Bangalore, India.
(From 'No Easy Peace' Methodist Prayer Handbook 2002/3)

Ali, so the BBC news bulletin tells me, and shows me, lies on a rough bed somewhere in Baghdad, minus both his arms, minus, now, his pregnant mother and his siblings. Ali's family, when they were still alive (just a few days ago), had the misfortune to live close to an Iraqi military installation, hence the sudden arrival of a coalition missile that destroyed his stripling arms and his family in its blistering wake. Ali looked to be about the same age as my six-year-old daughter; a little boy whose chest skin was horrendously scorched and whose image has now become nationally famous as 'collateral damage'.

What sort of demon persuaded Saddam Hussein that it was even remotely acceptable for key military installations to be built, on purpose, near to the homes of people like Ali? What dread Satanic influence possessed Saddam that it would be a good strategic plan for the likes of Ali to have to live where the missiles and bombs were sure to be aimed?

Rumour has it that Saddam has long since believed himself to be some kind of reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar - bent on power at any cost, utterly ruthless,

bloodthirsty, partly insane, unspeakably evil. Hussein, the modern Nebuchadnezzar, the media tell us, delights in dropping his victims (political opponents, lovers of democracy) out of airborne helicopters while they are still alive, rejoicing as they plunge to their deaths. President Saddam, we are told, likes to watch video recordings of his victims being tortured, deriving sadistic pleasure from re-playing their screams and torments over and over again. Way, way beyond politics, into fearsome realms of sinister perversion and dark evil.

And so, given that, can we even begin to start to move towards any kind of theology of war? Theology being the knowledge of God (or at least, what little knowledge of God we have), we may need to commence, in this instance, with what we know of God in his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar (for Nebuchadnezzar read Nero/ Ceausescu/Stalin/Hitler/Mao/any tyrant).

There is no doubt about it - God gave Nebuchadnezzar so much time to get his act together, one could probably be forgiven for thinking that God was going to let him off the hook for ever. Not only does Nebuchadnezzar issue a decree that his image of gold is to be worshipped (Daniel 3) - taunting and provoking a jealous God almost beyond endurance, we might imagine (see Exodus 20:4,5) - but he compounds his vain evil by having the God-fearing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego thrown into the furnace (Daniel 3).

That the Lord tolerated Nebuchadnezzar and his outrageous behaviour for such a length of time is perhaps our first theological clue, for we see here a prototype of amazing grace and stunning mercy. Our knowledge of God could easily start here, if we wanted to know what he is like - truly, we notice, a God who delights in mercy (Micah 7:18), a God who is (*remarkably*) slow to anger (Exodus 34:6, italics mine), and a God characterised by patience (2 Peter 3:9). Any moves towards creating a theology of war must take this sort of God into account.

And yet, for all that mercy, Nebuchadnezzar was eventually brought to book and thoroughly humiliated. Daniel 4:28-33 gives us the rather bizarre account of the proud and mighty king being reduced in status to that of a mad cow; a pathetic, soggy figure chewing grass and unable even to trim his nails. Truly, those whose pride the Lord can no longer ignore/tolerate, he will humble (Proverbs 3:34).

This begs the question; is there any space, in a theology of war, to imagine that God might have allowed coalition forces - even in all their brutality, even with their mixed motives and a confusingly inconsistent *raison d'être* - to bring about the humbling of a self-styled latter-day Nebuchadnezzar? Dare I suggest that God's patience with Hussein finally ran out (see Exodus 34:7b)? Would it really be such misplaced theology to contemplate the possibility of God using the shocking and awesome might of coalition forces to topple the lunatic Saddam? Am I wrong to think that it might just be possible? God hates the wrongdoer (Psalm 5:5,6). In the name of consistency, therefore, any moves towards creating a theology of war must also take this sort of God into account.

Quite remarkably, Nebuchadnezzar Mk. I, the grazing ex-monarch, comes to his senses, somewhere in the middle of a field, we presume, and is restored both to his throne and his sanity (and, we hope, for his sake, a decent haircut). What an incredible, phenomenal turnaround! If ever we doubt grace, we need to read Daniel 4:34-37 through time and again. The one-time blasphemer is now pleased to worship. The one-time greedy recipient of praise and glory is now only too pleased to transfer and deflect all praise and glory to his new-found God. We ought to read aloud this story in our meetings, every time we prepare to sing '...the vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives' (SASB 22). 'There's mercy still for thee', we sing (SASB 253). There certainly was for Nebuchadnezzar; mercy that flowed as the blood and water flowed from Jesus' side (John 19:34) - not trickled or oozed out reluctantly, but flowed. Any moves towards creating a theology of war must take into account a God who can restore against the odds.

Restore Saddam Hussein? Make a God-fearing convert out of an infidel? Turn a child of Satan into a child of God? Well, either we believe the words of our songs, or we don't.

Or does Saddam refuse to budge? Must the oppressor of thousands, over many decades, now be forcibly removed from power, because there is no hope of repentance? Is that God at work, through President Bush and Prime Minister Blair? Or is it blasphemy even to think such thoughts? What would Ali make of a God like that? Is God liberating Iraq, and calling time on Hussein? Is there mercy for the oppressed behind the bloodshed, the bullets and the bombs?

An A4 sized poster displayed in the window of a neighbour's house infuriates me. It reads, 'Bush, Blair and the CIA, how many kids will you kill today?' It strikes me as a lazy, opportunistic venture into armchair politics, and I am infuriated because I have never once seen any posters in the windows of that house decrying the mass slaughter of Kurdish men, women and children by Saddam and his henchmen. Could God let that continue when diplomacy was patently - repeatedly - failing the innocent?

I hate and deplore war. If Jesus is the Prince of Peace, then I must assume he does too. And yet, if armed conflict brings liberation, one cannot deny that by that token, logic suggests even war might include an element of good. If a failure to act means that thousands more remain oppressed as victims of torture and tyranny, for years to come, and continue to die while we continue to talk, then we have their blood on our hands.

Ali's life will never be the same again. What would I say to him, should we ever meet? What could I possibly say of God to a boy whose young limbs have been sacrificed for a chance of freedom? Would he even want to know?

*God of all,
We pray for the world in which we live,
Your world and ours,
A world in which there is no easy peace.
We recognise the anger and tensions,
Between North and South,
Rich and poor, Christian, Muslim, Jew and Hindu,
Black and white, East and West,
Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox, gay and non-gay, young and old,
Fundamentalist and liberal, male and female.
Yet you are God of all,
And call us to work for justice, love and peace.
By your grace enable us to follow the vocation of the cross
Which earths your love in our world and in eternity.
In the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.*

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A New Spiritual Era

Pat Coking

Note: The tape "A New Spiritual Era" which also includes a teaching on: "Is Experience Orientation Valid" is available on our web site at www.the-war-room.com or by phoning our toll free order number: 1-866-765-3423.

"This generation is seeking for something they can live for -- something they can die for.."

All around us today we see people increasingly intrigued by and hungry for spiritual things. An emphasis on materialism, career, and education in our society has, for the most part, left the masses feeling empty and longing for purpose in life. The youth of today are generally fearful of the future and yet are longing to give themselves to something meaningful. They often feel powerless next to the shakings around them. As a result, the masses are turning to a variety of things that they hope will grant them a sense of security. Some have turned to drugs in an attempt to experience either a feeling of empowerment or an illusive rest from all the pressures that invade their peace. The drug scene with its smorgasbord of choices has left many in this generation broken, disillusioned, and without hope.

Others are attempting to find their well being through sexual fulfillment. Sexual promiscuity and confusion in sexual orientation have increased greatly in these days partly due to the fact that people are longing for deep and meaningful relationships. Instead of this goal and desire being realized, many have been left shipwrecked, wounded and violated.

This generation is seeking for something they can live for or something they can die for. Education, family, career, material security, sexual fulfillment, church life, and escapism through the drug scene have all fallen short in satisfying the deep inner cries resident in most hungry hearts. As a result, we are seeing a growing emergence of spiritual hunger and awakening.

Signs of this transition are everywhere

Consequently, we have now entered an era of transition. Signs of this transition are everywhere. Many books and movies today have a spiritual theme. The music industry is promoting sounds of the spirit world. New Age doctrine has infiltrated the education system, the medical profession, the political realm, and the business world. Spiritual super-heroes are being introduced through various medias, drawing affections and imaginations towards deliverers who promise release and relief. Children's programs, cartoons, and games are often supernatural in nature. Satanic, occult, and new age groups are growing dramatically as they continue to introduce hungry new converts to the spirit world. Where is the Church in the midst of this counterfeit uprising?

"We need to 'learn to discern'..."

Over the years, I have witnessed a great deal of fear and resistance in the Body of Christ concerning spiritual language and supernatural activation and experience. It is imperative at this critical hour that we dedicate ourselves afresh to seeking the face of the Lord and to becoming familiar with scriptural teaching concerning the spirit

realm. It is vital that we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into heavenly perspectives that we possibly have not been comfortable with up to this time. Some of these insights will be introduced initially with a measure of wrestling and resistance in the hearts of believers. We need to learn to discern. In John 3:12, Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, saying, *if I have told you of earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you of heavenly things.*

"...Increased appearances of Jesus, angelic visitation, traveling in the spirit....."

We will be hearing increased numbers of testimonies regarding believers engaging in spiritual experiences such as those we read about in the Bible. Appearances of Jesus, angelic visitation, traveling in the realm of the spirit, throne room experiences, dreams, visions, trances, and miracles, signs and wonders will be occurring much more frequently. There are spiritual insights that will be introduced to the Church in the coming days that up to this time our *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.* (1 Corinthians 2:9) Paul continues in verse 10 to say that the Lord will reveal these things to us by His Spirit. In John 16:12,13, Jesus said to His disciples, *"I have many more things to say to you but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."*

The church needs to lead the way

It is vital then that we, the Church: honor and submit to the Holy Spirit, diligently study the Word of God, discover what is rightfully ours in Christ, and lead the way into this new era of awareness of spiritual sensitivity and Kingdom reality. How will we ever learn to discern the counterfeit if we are not familiar with the "real thing"? How will the unsaved ever embrace the truth if they only know the false?

One Savior, One Lord, and One Glorious and Eternal King

There is one Savior, one Lord and one glorious and eternal King -- Jesus Christ the righteous! His ways are unsearchable. His glory is magnificent. His power is unparalleled. His love is unending. His wisdom is beyond comprehension. Oh, what a truly awesome God we serve!

Valid spiritual experience and enhanced spiritual sensitivity are awaiting believers in this hour. May we become comfortable with Biblical terms and concepts such as: third heaven, throne room, heavenly places, angels, living creatures around the throne, rainbows, glory clouds, heavenly colors and gems, spirit transport, dreams, visions, and heavenly fragrance. The Lord desires to open our spiritual eyes and ears to see, to hear and to understand things that we possibly have not even dreamt of yet in our wildest imaginations. His Kingdom is vast and magnificent, full of every good thing, and He wants us to explore and experience this realm with Him.

Worship, emphasis on the Word, submission to the Holy Spirit, and faith...

Extravagant worship and focus on Jesus, emphasis on the Word, submission to the Holy Spirit, and faith are essential foundations for all spiritual Kingdom encounters. We will definitely need to live from a heavenly perspective in these last days. There will be great turmoil and treachery in the earth, but we, the glorious Church, are seated in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 2:6). We are to live our lives from a different viewpoint than those without Christ. We are to be a people who are focused on the heavenly and the divine. We are to set our affections upon Him! He is the sole object of our worship and our trust. *"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1).* Oh, that we would truly be such a people!

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You are a History Changing Generation

Peter Wagner

I believe that here in the early 2000s we have entered a dramatic turning point in our nation's history. God, of course, is the One who will redirect history because the times and the seasons are in His hands. But I declare that the human beings whom God has primarily chosen as His delegated agents to bring about these radical changes in history will be the members of what I like to think of as "Generation Z," an unbelievable generation whose destiny has been shaped by Ground Zero.

As I look back over my 70-plus years, I can recall only three truly historical flashpoints. These are one-time events that have become deeply and permanently engrained in the minds and hearts of entire American generations. These flashpoint events were so significant that virtually every one alive at the time they occurred can remember exactly where they were physically when they first heard of the event. One is Pearl Harbor. I can still see the living room I was in with my parents when President Roosevelt's voice came over the family radio informing us of "the day that will live in infamy." I was 11 years old.

The second event was the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Yes, I can remember where I was, but I must say that for me it was not particularly a life-shaping event. Nevertheless, for a whole generation, the one after mine, it was, indeed, their equivalent to Pearl Harbor.

The third event was Ground Zero, nine-eleven of 2001. For the generation whose destiny was being molded at the time, a generation which cannot remember either Pearl Harbor or the Kennedy assassination, this has become a defining historical point. That is why I sense that God sees this generation as "Generation Z."

Now, let's look at the Bible, specifically Hebrews 11:3. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." There are a couple of New King James terms here that need clarification. First "worlds" does not refer to physical territories or astrological phenomena, but rather to "ages" or "seasons." Secondly, "framed" by the word of God means "set in order" like a chiropractor sets your bones in order if they have been displaced. It means that God takes a hands-on responsibility for getting the components of history properly aligned at the proper time.

How does God do this? He follows the pattern we see over and over again in the Bible. He chooses certain human beings as His agents to make things, like setting historical seasons in order, happen. His primary agents for doing this are apostles. That is why the same Greek word for "framed" in the Book of Hebrews is also the word for "equipping" in Ephesians, as in "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12). Who is responsible to make this happen? The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, according to the previous verse, Ephesians 4:11. And among these five, apostles are first in order (see I Cor. 12:28).

A major role of apostles is to "set things in order" as we see in Titus 1:5. Therefore, apostles can be thought of as divine chiropractors, so to speak, for setting historical seasons in the order which God has ordained.

Now back to "Generation Z." Ground Zero occurred in 2001, the same year in which the government of the church, led by apostles, was recognized by the wider body of Christ as being initially in place. It is unlikely that this is a mere coincidence. I am bold enough to declare that our nation has definitively entered a new chapter which, in future history books, will be referred to as the "New America." The "Old America" ended with Ground Zero, and God's agents to bring in the New America are those who now belong to Generation Z.

The difference between the Z Generation and those shaped by Pearl Harbor and Kennedy's assassination is huge. This is not just another typical generation gap, it is nothing less than a historical hinge point. "Z" is the last letter of our alphabet. We are now at the end of an era and entering a new season of history. God is now ready to frame this world, as it says in Hebrews, with a dynamic, Spirit-empowered generation of history-changers.

It was a divine assignment for those of us, the parents and grandparents, to produce this generation physically. We did our job. But I now declare that it is our solemn and continuing responsibility under God to prepare the way spiritually for Generation Z. This Call event is our divine assignment to impart, stir up, empower and activate the divine anointing, no-the divine "hyper anointing"— for Generation Z to fulfill its destiny and to usher our nation into this new chapter of its history.

As I said, the biblical government of the church is once again coming into place. Currently the recognized apostles are, by and large, members of the Pearl Harbor and Kennedy generations. But now is the time for the apostles of the Ground Zero generation also to arise and to be recognized by their fathers and grandfathers.

The strategic hinge point of history in which we find ourselves is no time for complacency. This is not the day for a few more average Christians. Generation Z will not be remembered as one of those lukewarm generations, neither hot nor cold. No! Now is a time for radical commitment. It is a time for 21st Century Nazirites to rise up. It is a time for uncompromising holiness and extravagantly biblical lifestyles. The most dangerous place on a highway is the middle of the road. Mediocrity is not the wave of the future. God has called the Z Generation to be a boundary-breaking, sold-out, revolutionary generation of history makers!

God, I take the apostolic authority that You have entrusted to me and I hereby declare that the divine destiny of Generation Z as a history-changing generation will be fulfilled. I decree that any and all obstacles designed to prevent this by Satan and his forces of evil will be demolished by the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. I nullify all schemes of the enemy. In Jesus' name, I now impart to the members of the Z Generation here at The Call a hyper-anointing for ascending to God in worship,

descending to the earth in war, and igniting an unquenchable fire of revival whose flames will burn hotter and hotter until the people of all nations lift their hearts together giving praise and honor to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Amen!

Praying Every Day

Stacey & Wesley Campbell

So why don't we pray? Our not-so-original excuse is: I have no time! Not so long ago, *Time* magazine ran a cover article entitled, 'America Is Running out of Time!' While it's true most people feel like they have no time, if we are honest, we have to admit that we have the same amount of time that Jesus had- 24 hours a day. Assuming the ancients are right when they say, 'You learn to pray by praying'; and assuming that God knows that our spirits are willing, but our flesh is weak, God qualifies the general call to prayer by setting it in time and space. We are safe to say that throughout Scripture, the Bible commands us to discipline ourselves to specific times of daily, focused, Bible prayer as we shall see.

Praying According to Custom

A most interesting question is, 'How did Jesus pray?' Did He have a structure? Did He use rote prayers? Did He pray every day? Did He sit, stand, walk or lay down? Can we know what He said? Can we know how Jesus prayed?

Contemporary Christianity tends to overlook the fact that Jesus was a man born in time and space, and was like all the other men born of women, in the sense that He was a living, breathing human being. As a man, Jesus spoke Aramaic, dressed the way all the other Hebrews dressed, and followed the customs of His time and place. It is recorded that 'the parents brought in the child Jesus [to the Temple] to do for him what the *custom of the Law required*' (Luke 2:27, emphasis added). Luke goes on to say that, 'When he [Jesus] was twelve years old, they went up to the [Passover] Feast, according to the *custom*' (Luke 2:42). When Jesus began His ministry, 'He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, *as was his custom*. And he stood up to read [the Scriptures]' (Luke 4:16, emphasis added). The reason it says, '*as was His custom*', is because Jesus observed the customs, practices and rituals of the Law. This is also true concerning the custom of Jewish prayer?

We know that Jesus like all other Jewish boys would have grown doing what all other righteous Jewish boys did 'praying' three times a day. In *The Prayers of Jesus* Joachim Jeremias writes:

The three hours of prayer in particular were so universally observed among the Jews of Jesus' time that we are justified in including them in the comment 'as his custom was' which is made in Luke with reference to Jesus' attendance at Sabbath worship (Lk. 4:16). (p. 56)

What's more, Jesus' whole life would have been shaped around these set times of prayer, as the tradition of daily prayer long pre-dates His birth.

The practice of daily prayer may have begun as early as the days of Moses. Everyone knows that Deut. 6 '*The Shema*', became the central passage to all of

Judaism. Rightly, the people understood that the command given in this passage was the core of Yahweh worship, and out of it, everything else extended. Again Jeremias says that:

It is probable from the last words of this injunction, '*and when you lie down, and when you rise*', that the custom of beginning and ending each day with the confession of the one God derives. (p. 57)

From there it was only a small jump to begin including prayers after the recital of the creed.

When the leadership baton was passed to Joshua, God gave him specific instructions as to how to lead the people. In the opening verses of Joshua's call, God said:

'Do not let this *Book of the Law* depart from your mouth; *meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*'

(Joshua 1:8 emphasis added).

A summary of the primary commands taken from Joshua 1:6-9 might be the following:

Don't be afraid to obey and trust God. You will be able to do this if you meditate, that is, recite the Book of the Law (the Holy Scriptures) to God (the direction of the meditation) *day and night* (every morning and every night). If you do this, then you will be able to do what I say, and I will bless and prosper you.

Or paraphrasing this into a single sentence, we could interpret the command as: The power to obey and trust God will come when you . . . pray the Bible . . . out loud . . . to God . . . every day!

A quick scan of the prophets demonstrates how they understood Deut. 6, and Josh. 1:6-9. David said that he meditated on the Law 'day and night' in Psalm 1, David understood that these daily meditations were a sacrifice to God. He sang:

May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice (Ps. 141:2).

He had it exactly. The parallelism is plain; prayer and worship- *the lifting up of our hands*- is *our* daily, morning and evening offering. David was saying that this prayer is my incense; this worship is my sacrifice. And, since the people were not allowed to go into the tent to offer up sacrifice with the Levites, what they could do was take part in daily prayers. As early as 1000 B.C. daily prayers were on the way to becoming the people's sacrifice.

The prophet Daniel carried on his habit of daily prayer to a point of obsession, as he refused to break his habit of praying three times daily, even under the threat of death by lions. The chronicler says:

Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before (Dan. 6:10, emphasis added).

After the exiles began to return from Babylon in 539 b.c. most scholars believe that it was Ezra who finally institutionalized the practice of daily prayers, accompanied with readings from the Torah. From that time on daily prayers became normative in the Jewish culture (c. 450 b.c.). Thus by the time of Jesus He along with every other righteous Jew, were praying set prayers every day.

The evidence from the New Testament is that the early disciples not only accepted the tradition of *day and night* prayer, but also reinforced it. The last verse of the gospel of Luke reads:

And they stayed *continually* at the temple, praising God (Luke 24:53, emphasis added).

And again:

And they were *continually devoting themselves* to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and *to prayer*. And *day by day continuing* with one mind *in the temple* (Acts 2:42,46, NASB, emphasis added).

The obvious question is what were they doing '*daily in the temple courts*'? Jesus said they were praying. With fury, he thundered:

My house [the Temple] will be called a *house of prayer* for all nations (Mark 11:17, emphasis added).

The temple was the place *to pray* (Luke 1:10). The Early Church was not celebrating or 'gossiping the gospel' in the Temple courts. No, they were *praying* daily and continually fulfilling the customary hours of prayer. Luke is keen to point out:

Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, *the hour of prayer* (Acts 3:1, NASB, emphasis added).

Without a doubt, the apostles *continued* to observe the set hours of prayer (Acts 6:2-4).

Today virtually no one equates the call to *continual prayer* (see Acts 1:14; 2:42,46; 6:4 Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2:13; 5:17; Heb. 13:15) as a call to regular, daily prayer. Again, Joachim Jeremias says:

When Paul says that he prays '*continually*', '*without ceasing*', '*day and night*' and '*always*', we are not to think of uninterrupted praying but of his observance of the regular hours of prayer. The phrase '*to be instant in prayer*' (*proskarterein* Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2) is to be understood in a similar way, for *proskarterein* here means '*faithfully to observe a rite*' (as in Acts 1:14; 2:46; 6:4). (*The Prayers of Jesus*, p. 77)

I would submit to you that daily prayer is not just a good idea, the latest program or most popular Christian fad. Daily prayer is not just something that the really committed intercessors do. No, daily, regulated prayer is the pattern established by God so that the first commandment stays first place. It is true we learn to pray by praying, and it is this prayer that lifts us up to be able to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind.

Of course, some fear that if they pray at scheduled times of prayer- when they don't really feel like it- it could become phony or legalistic. And yes, while that is possible, the alternative is that if you don't pray until you feel like it, you most likely will not pray

at all- and it won't long until you're cold and dead. Why? Because flesh so rarely feels inspired, and the more we miss a stirring, the less they come. The duller we are, the more dull we become. In the end, it will not be a stirring that calls us to prayer, but a crisis. No, I would sooner be as Smith Wigglesworth, who used to say, 'I begin in the flesh and I end in the spirit'.

Today, go ahead and start praying 'in the flesh', and do it everyday. Experience bears out that we are usually moved by the Spirit when the Spirit is already moving in us. So, even if you don't feel like it, throw restraint to the wind, book a time to pray, and then enjoy meeting with God . . . everyday!

*This article on 'Praying Every Day' is condensed from Praying The Bible: The Pathway to Spirituality,
by Wesley and Stacey Campbell.
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More Rhetoric Please!

Phil Wall

Phil Wall (CEO of SIGNIFY, A Leadership And Personal Development Company, bsignificant.com)

(Although this article, used by permission, was originally written for a business leadership audience, it easily applies in the spiritual realm)

The political world of the UK was recently stirred by the words of the Conservative party leader Ian Duncan Smith. Aware that he lacks the charisma and stage presence of the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, he sought to assert his authority by declaring "Never underestimate a quiet man!".

His point was a fair one. Powerful stage charisma is never the guarantee of success nor long term impact, however, the debate raises an important issue for leaders to consider. How important is it for those in leadership to be able to communicate powerfully?

A quick review of history shows clearly that many of the great leaders of current and previous eras were powerful orators who inspired their followers with their words. They brought hope to the despairing, vision to the directionless and clarity to the confused. For example, the words of Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech live on, etched forever on the minds of those who heard them. Powerful communication has always been important for leaders who wish to take others to new and dynamic places.

What is true for leaders in politics is also true for those who lead corporately. The capacity to communicate clearly and dynamically is a powerful asset for corporate leadership. This is especially important in the context of a challenging market. The endemic uncertainty of these times requires regular clarification from those of us entrusted with leadership. Our job is to create communities around words, gathering people afresh around the core vision and values of our organisation. This being the case, it is amazing how little time is spent training and preparing leaders for verbal communication.

It hasn't always been so. The Classical Greek and Roman traditions had a strong emphasis upon learning oral speech and gave classes to young aspiring leaders in how to make powerful verbal presentations. There emerged a class of professional 'rhetors' who made their living teaching the finer points of oratory, delivering 'rhetoric'. The meaning of this word has changed somewhat over time and has come to mean something very different to its original.

Far from being shallow and superficial speaking, it represented a very strong tradition most powerfully articulated by Aristotle. Contrary to his mentor Plato, Aristotle taught the value of rhetoric which he described as "Špersuasive languageŠa way to knowledge". This he broke down into three categories of rhetorical proofs - *logos*

(logical argument), *pathos* (passionate and emotional), and *ethos* (strength gained from the credibility of the speaker).

A cursory glance at many leadership contexts around the corporate and political worlds should demonstrate how desperately we need a lot more genuine ' *rhetoric* '.

So this would appear to be bad news for Mr Duncan Smith. However he, and the quieter leaders he represents, can take heart. One of his predecessors once fainted from nerves when giving a speech to his class in school. Yet that same man, when his country had no arms to protect themselves against violent aggression, armed them with the power of his words - Winston Churchill was truly a man of powerful rhetoric.

So great advice from history would be to invest in the power of your spoken presentation, get some communication coaching, practise in your mirror, video the practice, get some feedback from those you trust - join the school of the 'rhetors' and give your people the rhetoric they need and deserve.

Phil Wall

Pilgrim's Progress

Stephen Poxon (*with apologies to Bunyan*)

“...And all the time the Lord went before them, by day a pillar of cloud to guide them on their journey, by night a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel night and day. The pillar of cloud never left its place in front of the people by day, nor the pillar of fire by night”

(*Exodus 13: 21,22, New English Bible*).

“Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land...

Let the fiery cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through...”

(*William Williams*).

One of my favourite Salvation Army songs, to which I was introduced by none other than General John Gowans at Westminster Central Hall, London, a couple of years ago, is No. 383 in the Salvation Army Song Book; “*Songs of salvation are sounding...*” I like the tune, I like the note of praise that is resonant throughout, and I like the sequentiality of the words in that they tell the gospel story in a nutshell.

What appeals to me most, though, through all of that, is the penultimate line of the chorus; “*Sinners to Jesus now clinging*”. These are truly marvellous words, and I would go so far as to say that they describe exactly what the Christian Church is, so far as I understand it. That is to say, for all our pomp and ceremony, this is what we have always been, and this is what we need always to be – a bunch of sinners, clinging to Jesus for dear life and any hope of glory. What say we abandon the signs and noticeboards outside our churches and have new ones made up with those five words painted on them? What say we agree on a massive, national, ecumenical order of some fresh notepaper that is headed,

“*The Christian Church: A Bunch of Sinners to Jesus Now Clinging*”?

For me, the appeal of those words lies in the reminder of our daily need to abide in Jesus, both individually and corporately. The Lord said, in John 15:5, “*Apart from me you can do nothing*” (NEB). I have no dilemma in re-phrasing those words as “*Apart from me, the Christian Church can do nothing*”.

Outside of his mercy, we remain utterly lost and dead in sin (*see Ephesians 2:1-10*). Maybe The Salvation Army's Lieutenant Commissioner Arch Wiggins understood something of our state of absolute dependence when he wrote, “*Thou canst the breath of man bestow or canst behold* (*see also Psalm 104:29*). In other words, we can't even breathe by ourselves, without God's grace!

What a starting point in our pilgrimage that is – the realisation that we are unable to inhale without help! As individuals, we cannot take in oxygen and release carbon dioxide unless God decrees it so, breath by breath. Arguably more importantly, as an organism, the Church cannot absorb any of the breath of God without first

acknowledging its need of same. The lungs of the Church remain flat and lifeless unless we plead with God – *sinners clinging to Jesus, you see* – for him to breathe life into us. Job knew full well the life-imparting qualities of God's breath (see *Job 27:3 & 37:10*) – not to mention Adam! (*Genesis 2:7*), and the Church at large must be similarly aware, and careful to practice deep breathing all the time.

Exodus 13:17-22 gives us the account of the Israelites departing from Egypt. They move from one place to another, from Egypt through the wilderness towards the Red Sea, from Succoth to their camp at Etham, all the time following the guidance of the Lord as revealed in instructions to Moses and as shown by the cloudy and fiery pillars.

Throughout their journeys, they remained utterly in need of instruction, and grace abounding was theirs as God saw fit to manifest the pillars (or "the Angel of the Lord" – see *Exodus 14:19*) to lead and direct. Who is to say that such help will not be given to every church or individual if it is sought? Who is to say that the Church need be without such thrilling intimacy with The Divine Navigator? In our planning, in our deciding, in our goings out and comings in, I have to believe that we too can experience a level of care and control that will see us safely through our wanderings.

I took my little boy to see a collection of fleas once. They were long since dead (one hopes!), and encased in glass as part of a large collection of insects, scorpions, spiders, butterflies and moths.

Being a voracious reader, I bid young Alistair remain still while I read the accompanying notes about the history of fleas, and was astonished to discover that the little creatures only started to become a problem for humankind when cave people took to settling down, and establishing permanent homes. Until that time, man had been relatively untroubled by flea bites. To paraphrase the official information at the flea exhibition, it was only when men and women decided to stay put that the parasites moved in! Apparently, our more nomadic ancestors came and went without a bite to report.

Is this not some kind of parable for the people of God? All the while we keep on the move – following the pillars, as it were – we can expect to live adventurous lives of exciting holiness and obedience. When we think we know best and choose to stay in one place (because it's more comfortable, as were the caves), we can expect to have our lifeblood sucked out of us.

If God is calling his people (you and me) to follow him, here, there and everywhere, then follow we must, for parasites find it much easier to feed on and irritate that which is stagnant (for which read dying). It might not be comfortable to follow a moving God (in fact it will probably be extremely uncomfortable at times, according to *Matthew 8:20*, in which we read of a transient Jesus), but if the alternative is to abandon his leadership and huddle ourselves away in our little caves of personal preference and routine, then I don't see we have any choice. We follow,

and live, or we go our own ways, and slowly but surely, the life that we have drains away.

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The Power of Concentration

Robert Marshall

(This is part two in a series by Captain Robert Marshall)

Don't be alarmed! The power of concentration will not lead to psycho babble. It will not cause you to take leave of your Wesleyan theological perspective. Conversely, the power of concentration demands your full mental focus, in order that you might gather the most concise and pertinent information to be interpreted at a later time.

In short, this second step in our three part process is perhaps the most critical. One could say, the interpretation that is, the preach, bible study or understanding will only be as good or thorough as what one gathers.

To be sure, everyone enjoys hearing a good preach or bible study. However, few are willing to invest adequate amounts of "time" in concentration or meditation of God's word. Said another way, the benefits of concentration are sweet; but not many can endure long enough to reap the fruit.

Are you ready for the challenge? Let's begin. Let me be candid here, there are several steps within this second step. The first few are quite easy. First, begin by listing all key terms. This should take no longer than 15 minutes. In my bible study small group, we worked in pairs to achieve this. We worked with Mark 4:35-41. Stop reading at this point and open your bible to the aforementioned passage. If you can, partner with someone to look for key terms. In this passage, the key terms are all important terms associated with what happened to the disciples before, during and after the storm.

O.K.! Our group came up with these key terms:

- 1.) The other side (vs 35)
- 2.) Leaving the multitude
- 3.) A fierce gale wind.
- 4.) In the boat.
- 5.) Filling up.
- 6.) waves breaking over boat.
- 7.) Asleep on cushion.
- 8.) Do you care.
- 9.) We are perishing.
- 10.) He rebuked wind.
- 11.) Hush be still.
- 12.) Wind died down.
- 13.) Why are you timid.
- 14.) How do you have no faith.
- 15.) They became afraid.
- 16.) Who is this.
- 17.) Even wind obeys him.

How did you do? May be got some, maybe all and more; But even if you got none the first time, be patient with yourself, it's your first time. Remember "Rome was not built in a day."

The next step is to locate the key verse. The key verse is the verse the signals a huge change in the chain of events. In this passage I would be inclined to choose vs. 39. Allow me to give you several reasons. First of all, verses 35-38 must be considered background leading up to a life changing event. It is not life changing that Jesus invited his disciples to go with him to the other side. Nor is it life changing to know that other boats were with them on the sea when the gale wind began to blow and the wave threatened to sink the boat. Not even the fact that Jesus was asleep on a cushion at the ship's stern is life changing! However, it is life changing to know that Jesus can speak to inanimate objects and they immediately obey his command! It's also life changing to know that the Lord won't rebuke you for calling on Him during times of despair! So I am inclined to choose vs. 39 as the key verse because it is life changing.

Step three requires that you list the theological terms. A theological term is a term dealing with God and his relation to the world. In this particular passage, It is a bit tricky to spot them. However, they are there. I'll list them but with a caveat. A good student of the bible must remember that even pronouns count as terms. Therefore, with one exception, this passage possesses four theological terms. They are: He, Him, Himself and YES, Teacher. Additionally, it should be noted that theological terms also separate God from man. Notice when we refer to God, all the pronouns and titles begin with capital letters. This reminds us that the Lord even in the flesh was not a mere man or an ordinary teacher. He was God man and the Supreme Teacher.

The final step in concentration is to compare and contrast.

Let's take another look at Mark 4: 35-41, and we'll compare and contrast it with Jonah 1 and Psalm 121. The idea here is just to give you a glimpse what this process looks like. The real work will begin when you sit down and look at the passages for yourself. Start by taking a piece of computer paper and folding it so that you have three columns. The first column is labeled Main Passage/Events (Mark 4) The second column is Similar. The final column is Dissimilar. In the first column list the events in chronological order. We came up with:

- 1.) Command to go to the other side.
- 2.) Crowd left behind.
- 3.) Jesus taken as he was.
- 4.) Disciples rebuked as wind and waves were rebuked. (You get the idea)

Next, take the Chronological Events from the main passage and compare them to another biblical passage that possesses similar events. Example: Jonah 1, both

disciple and Jonah left people behind. Both Jesus and Jonah were asleep. Neither the disciples nor the crew recognized the spiritual authority of Gods men on boat. The result of both storms glorify God. In Psalm 121, both the disciples and Psalmist knew where their help came from. The Psalmist and disciples came to recognize that "He" would not allow harm to come upon them.

Now it's time for you to go to work! Look at these passages and find other similar things. Under the category of dissimilar the procedure is the same. However, let me lead you through an exercise we did in class. We intended to be very specific here, so we looked at the theological terms. Here's what we found. In Mark 4, the theological terms are pronouns which are in second person and the odd pronoun relates to an vocation. However, Psalm 121 lists nouns such as maker and Lord; which refer to an office and a title. In Mark 4, Jesus spoke and quieted the storm, but in Jonah 1 the men tossed Jonah overboard to quiet the storm. The more prayerful you are in considering the similarities and dissimilarities in scripture, the deeper your appreciation will become for how Great our God is! Here's your chance to shine, so produce some sweat!

Don't be alarmed, there is a lot to absorbed! However, if you just hang in there, I promise your Wesleyan Theological perspective will dramatically improve. While the power of concentration is perhaps the most critical step and will require your full mental focus, the benefits to your relationship with the Lord will far exceed any amount of time you could ever invest in study.

Remember, everyone enjoys hearing a good word; but very few are willing to sweat before they taste the fruit.

The Lord keep you until next time.

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Stephen Court

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