



LEADERSHIP

A Teaching Newsletter of Pastor Gregg Johnson and The Mission Church Ministry Staff July 2001

The Mission Church 4101 Rt. 52 Holmes NY 12531 U.S.A.
845.878.3380 fax 845.878.3316 email@missionchurch.com

www.missionchurch.com



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Called to Unity; Part 1

Pastor Gregg Johnson

"That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one. I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." John 17:21-23

In the church today there are many fanciful notions of unity that look good on the surface, but do not reflect the true scriptural model. To the undiscerning and biblically illiterate, these have been welcomed as standards to reach for but can actually have the reverse effect of bringing frustration, division and even death to the body that embraces them. Therefore, in attempting to define unity, we must first clarify what it is not and expose the imposters.

WHAT UNITY IS NOT

Unity is not Uniformity

Unity does not mean we all look the same, sound the same and speak the same. That is uniformity—conforming to one person's ideas and personal preferences. The body of Christ allows for individuality in expression and personal liberty as long as these remain within the bounds of biblical morality. Leaders must be careful not to judge those who have different tastes or styles as being evil simply because they don't "like" or understand them.

Paul said it like this, *"For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand."* (Roms. 14:2-4) Clearly, Paul did not believe that unity was achieved by forcing everyone into uniformity. Rather, he implied that true unity is attained by accepting our brothers along with their differences and tolerat-

ing those things that we may not personally choose for ourselves.

For Paul, unity is not a matter of homogeneity, but of harmony. Christians are not all to be alike, but they must find ways to integrate their differences into a symphonic whole—to create a singleness of spirit, of identity and purpose whose unifying center is Christ.

In short, we are to resemble a symphony—skillfully uniting music from a variety of different instruments. We may play different notes from the person sitting next to us, but our variety and diversity will create a more magnificent sound than

"The mark of community—true biblical unity—is not the absence of conflict. It's the presence of a reconciling spirit."

if we were all on the same instrument, playing the same note. In a symphony—as in the body of Christ—unity exists amid diversity because we all follow the same musical score: the will of God.

Unfortunately, the church is often less likely to harmonize with those who are different. *"We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another."* — Jonathan Swift, 17th/18th century English satirist. People who prefer a unique style of worship music can be labeled as carnal and others who may not pray a certain way as unspiritual. Those who don't have an effective evangelistic gift might be considered backslidden and those who do are thought to be self-righteous. The fact is that people are as different as churches are. Some prefer tradition and liturgy while others want a more contemporary, energetic style. Forcing uniformity only creates animosity and division whereas unity draws people together by encouraging the acceptance of differences.

While we are not called to conform into the image of one another, we are called to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This is the core issue that decides unity—are our gifts, preferences and cultural styles being used in way that glorifies God and edifies His body? If so, then we need only to recognize that God has accepted and blessed our uniqueness and we should as well.

Unity is not Unanimity

In 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul says, *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no*

divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." While this implies that there should be a "oneness of purpose," it does not imply that there is never disagreement. In fact, healthy unity allows for respectful disagreement as demonstrated in the following notions.

1. Unified people can disagree without being disagreeable. In Acts 15, there was a debate over how much Mosaic Law gentile converts should be required to keep upon conversion. Some believed they should be circumcised and others thought they should be free from any requirements. After prayer and teaching, they arrived at a conclusion that not only preserved unity but strengthened it by demonstrating how to disagree without allowing animosity or a contentious spirit to develop.

2. Unified people can agree to disagree. There will be times when the people of God, led by the Holy Spirit and committed to a common goal, cannot agree as to ways and means. It is in these times, out of respect for one another and a spirit of love, we must simply accept that we have different opinions, respect those opinions and move beyond them. In essence, we are agreeing to set aside our differences and focus on our agreement rather than win a debate or force the adoption of our preferred view. In Acts 15:36-41, Paul and Barnabas had a contention over John Mark's fitness for the ministry. In fact, the disagreement became so "sharp" that they parted company. While it appears that a divisive spirit came between them, this could not be the case. Such a disposition would be hypocritical and a blatant contradiction to Paul's own writings (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 2 Cor. 12:20). Paul and Barnabas both felt strongly about their positions and when each realized they couldn't convince the other, they "agreed to disagree" and gave each other leave to do what they felt right without condemnation.

3. Unified people are not stalled by disagreement. It should be noted that striving for unanimity can actually weaken leadership. While unanimity is not unreachable, leaders should not "hold out" for it. Some leaders believe that if everyone is not in agreement with a proposal, then it must not be God's

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The Discipleship Network; A model for home fellowship groups

Gerard D'Ambrosio

A few years back the leadership of our church realized that too many people in our church family were feeling disconnected. We took a survey, which confirmed our concerns. From this The Discipleship Network (TDN) was born.

TDN is a ministry of home bible studies within the Mission Church. It has a twofold purpose. First to bring together members and nonmembers of our church in fellowship. And second to disciple new believer and challenge more mature Christians, in understanding The Word of God.

Some people believe that all they need is to read their bible and pray and they will grow to be the committed Christians that God wants them to be. Absolutely, we need to read God's Word and to pray, but without fellowship we are missing a key piece to the puzzle of truly understanding God. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." What are these verses saying? Basically that we need each

other. Of course we need time alone with God, but we also need each other. We need someone to "bounce" things off of, someone to tell us that we are swaying off course. Sometimes we are so close to a situation that we cannot see the whole picture. We need someone on the outside who can be objective to be able to tell us where we are going. Sometimes we need someone to be accountable to. I can easily rationalize away all sorts of behaviors. Thankfully I have a loving wife and well-grounded Christian friends who will let me know (in no uncertain terms) if I am straying off course.

Lack of accountability is, I believe, a major problem in the Christian church today. Unfortunately all of us know of, either on a local level or a national level, brothers in the Lord who have fallen to temptation into sin. Many times this could have been avoided if there was some sort of accountability in place for these men when temptation struck.

For the past few years The Lord has placed on the hearts of Pastor Gregg and the leadership of our church to be

One of the most powerful tools of the devil is to isolate people.

more accountable to each other. This has been accomplished by meetings, social get-togethers and what Pastor Gregg calls "leadership huddles." These "huddles" are monthly meetings that he has with small groups of leaders in our church.

They are not like meetings where we discuss church business. They are more on a personal level, about our families and our jobs and what kind of pressures we are feeling. While these huddles are no substitution for being in prayer and in the Word, they do reinforce our walk

and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

So why isn't going to church on Sunday enough? Why do I need to go to a Home Group? Sunday morning service is a time for corporate worship and corporate teaching. There is nothing like getting together on a Sunday morning and worshipping God with 200 other people! Or sitting in an assembly and hearing a powerful Pastor Gregg- Holy Ghost message.

A couple of years ago a bus load of men from our church went to Washington, D.C., along with almost one million other men, to a Promise Keepers event. It was incredible to see all those men praising and worshipping God. I can't describe the feeling that came over me when we began singing worship songs, all these men from all over the country worshipping our God with one voice. As great as that was, it would be impossible to fellowship with all those men on this side of heaven. Fellowship requires a more intimate setting, a smaller group where there can be an exchange of feelings and thoughts, where we can strengthen and encourage each other. You can't get that with one million people, you can't get it with 200 people, you can't even get that with 25 people. Galatians 6:2 says "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." This takes time spent with each other to

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with The Lord and keep us accountable.

I think one of the most powerful tools of the devil is to isolate people. When I was in college, I used to play lacrosse. We had what we called an "isolation" play. If one of our offensive players was mismatched with his defensive opponent, this play would be used. Running the play was very simple. All the other offensive players would go to one side of the field leaving a one on one situation on the opposite side. The opposing defensive player would have no back up, no one to help him if our player was to get by him. This is what Satan tries to do to us. Get us out there by our selves and slowly pick us apart.

Hebrews 10:25 says "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another:

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will. As a result, they abandon the issue or "table it" and "wait" until there is "unity." If what they mean by unity is "unanimity," then they are mistaken. In essence, all this does is give control to the minority by defeating a proposal if even one person opposes it. Further, it neutralizes leadership by unfairly hamstringing those leaders in the majority. If unanimity was the precedent established for decision making, then Peter may have never taken the step of faith to preach to the gentiles in Acts 10 & 11, Paul would have never journeyed to Jerusalem in Acts 21:11-14 and Mark may have never been restored to the ministry in Acts 15:39; 2 Tim. 4:11. Rather than unanimity, which calls for the majority to acquiesce to the minority, we should operate in a submissive spirit which calls for the minority to submit to the majority in a supportive and cooperative manner

Unity is not the absence of Conflict

Bill Hybels, Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois said, "The popular concept of unity is a fantasy land where disagreements never surface and contrary opinions are never stated with force. We expect disagreement, forceful disagreement. So instead of the 'unity,' we use the word 'community.'" He then goes on to stress, "The mark of community—true biblical unity—is not the absence of conflict. It's the presence of a reconciling spirit."

A "reconciling spirit" takes responsibility for resolving differences. It doesn't sit back and say, "It's not my fault. I am the one who has been hurt here. The other person is wrong and should come to me with an apology." Instead, the reconciling spirit takes the biblical high road of conflict resolution; it takes the initiative and says, "What can I do to resolve this conflict and be reconciled to my brother?" This means going directly to the person with whom you're in conflict with a humble spirit and expressing your commitment to walking in love with him or her. This is what Jesus meant in Matt. 5:23-24, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the

altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

Secondly, the community that has a "reconciling spirit" has a standard of "reverse accountability." If

It must be noted that conflict is a part of being healthy. Very often, situations arise that if not confronted can infect the body with disease.

some offended individual is circulating a bad report through the body in an effort to join others to their offense, the members will stop them mid-sentence and say, "I think you're talking to the wrong person. Please go to the individual with whom you're having this conflict and try to resolve it in a God-glorifying way." This is similar to what Paul commanded in Roms. 16:17, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."

Conflict is often necessary to maintain good health

It must be noted that conflict is a part of being healthy. Very often, situations arise that if not confronted can infect the body with disease. Paul addressed this in 1 Cor. 5 when the church was allowing one of its members to have an affair with his step mother. Perhaps they avoided dealing with it because they thought it might be too controversial and disrupt unity. In any event, Paul rebuked them for not confronting the individuals as he likened their behavior to "a little leaven (that) leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6).

It is important that leaders know which issues warrant conflict. The old saying goes, "One must choose his battles wisely." Too many churches have crumbled because the leaders went to war over issues that were not central to God's vision for the church. Be careful not to "major on the minors." Some situations that may re-

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understand each other to be able help each other. It takes a willingness to be vulnerable to a small group of people. To be able to open up one must feel comfortable and safe. This could not happen in a large group setting.

The second aspect of TDN is to discipleship. 2 Timothy 2:15 says "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." That's what we do during our home bible studies, divide the word of truth. Each leader will be prepared with a teaching on either a biblical topic or maybe an entire book of the Bible. As they present their teaching to the group, they will open up to the group for questions or comments. This gives people an opportunity to either share something that God has laid upon their heart or to ask that question that they have been wondering about, maybe for a long time. This is especially exciting when there are new Christians in the group. It helps them to learn and at the same time allows others in the group, not only the leader to share from their own understanding of Gods Word.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 says "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron"; This was never more true than it is today. There is so much "spiritual stuff" around on television, in movies and in books but with no biblical basis. There is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding simply because people don't study the Word of God.

We have seen great results from the home group ministry in our church. Some have come to know The Lord, we've seen great movements by The Holy Spirit and some of the group leaders have become leaders in our church. We have also seen life long relationships being formed out of people sharing the love that God has given them with others, bringing all of us closer to Him and each other.

Gerard D'ambrosio is the Deacon overseeing The Discipleship Network Homegroup Ministry in the Mission Church.

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FAITH FOUNDATIONS: The Value of a Life

Rich Langford

Our God is a God of order. He places value on the things He has created, including man. Many times we will come across people who believe their life has no worth and it is important that we are able to convey to them the value that God has placed on their life.

In Psalm 8:4-6 we read, "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor."

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the same passage is quoted and the statement added that when Jesus became man He "was made a little lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:9). We see here, then, that in the order of creation, angels are above humans. Passages describing angels certainly seem to bear this out. They are definitely more powerful than humans. They are able to exist in the presence of God's glory without perishing and, at times, appear rather glorious and fearsome themselves.

While they are created beings and, therefore, like us they are finite, most would agree that they hold a higher station and are of greater value in a one-to-one comparison with a human.

The idea of a life having a value is not unscriptural. Throughout the Old Testament we read of the relative values associated with different animals. Perhaps the best example of this is in Leviticus 4:1-5:13 where we see that bulls are better sacrifices than male goats which are in turn better than female goats or lambs. Female goats or lambs are better than pigeons or turtledoves, which are better than plants.

In Matthew 6:26 Jesus raises the question of our value when He asks, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor

gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Later, in Matthew 10:31, He answers the question, perhaps for those who may not have been sure that it was a rhetorical one. "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." In Matthew 12:12 He again makes reference to the relative value of different kinds of life when He says, "Of how much more value is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

It's clear from all of this that the different living things that God has created have different value. We might have been content with the understanding that we are the second highest order of God's creation, just below the angels, if we didn't also find passages in the scriptures that indicate a somewhat different status.

1 Co. 6:3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels How much

Our lives have been shown to be as precious to God as the life of Jesus Himself by His willingness to pay that price for our redemption.

more, things that pertain to this life?

II Timothy 2:12a If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.

Rom. 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father". 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Some, like Charles H Spurgeon, argue that these passages point to a status above that of the angels. I am not confident that we can go that far with certainty, but I am

comfortable with an interpretation that says that there is at least an equality of status referred to here.

Somehow the value of a human life has increased. This might not be startling news if it weren't for the fact that we are speaking about a value that is established by an unchanging God. He does not make mistakes so He, therefore, does not have to reevaluate anything. How then did He come to revalue human life?

The answer, I believe, lies in the following scriptures:

I Cor. 6:20 For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

I Cor. 7:23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

A rule of economics is that the value of something is determined by how much is willing to be paid for it. Paul reminds us that we have been purchased. That purchase established a new value for a human life. The infinite value of Jesus' life is transferred to us because of this transaction.

Our lives have been shown to be as precious to God as the life of Jesus Himself by His willingness to pay that price for our redemption. Stop, for a moment, and smile at the knowledge of how precious you are.

In addition to being an important concept to convey in counseling, an understanding of the value of a life provides a strong basis for understanding many Christian principles and doctrines. In addition to the obvious applications to Christian ethics, morality, and interpersonal relationships, an understanding of how the revaluation occurred can aid us in understanding theological concepts such as positional justification. In the coming months we

Rich Langford serves as a Deacon overseeing Christian Education Ministries in The Mission Church

QUOTEABLE LEADERS

"The words you speak today should be soft and tender ... for tomorrow you may have to eat them." — unknown

"When a man is wrong and won't admit it, he always gets angry." — Haliburton

"You can tell the size of a man by the size of the thing that makes him mad." — Adlai Stevenson II, 20th-century American politician, presidential candidate

"Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great." — Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), 19th-century American humorist, author and journalist

"The gem cannot be polished without friction." — Chinese proverb

"In a president, character is everything. A president doesn't have to be brilliant... He doesn't have to be clever; you can hire clever... You can hire pragmatic, and you can buy and bring in policy works. But you can't buy courage and decency, you can't rent a strong moral sense. A president must bring those things with him. He needs to have, in that much maligned word, but a good one nonetheless, a "vision" of the future he wishes to create. But a vision is worth little if a president doesn't have the character — the courage and heart — to see it through." — Peggy Noonan, 20th century American author, speech writer for U.S. President Ronald Reagan

"Faced with crisis, the man of character falls back upon himself." — Charles DeGaulle, 20th century French general and president

TO THE TIMOTHY: Sermon Preparation ; Part 2

Pastor Nik Adwalpalker

Last month we began a two part series on sermon preparation. Part 1 discussed the disciplines associated with developing the sermon ideas. Those disciplines were that we identified were as follows: 1) Pray before preaching, 2) Choose the specific passage you want to preach, 3) Keep the main idea the central focus of the sermon, 4) Determine the purpose and measurable results of your sermon.

This month we are going to look at part 2 of sermon preparation: Turning ideas into powerful messages. In his book entitled, "Biblical Preaching," Haddon Robinson states that, "Exegetical study (process of discovering the main idea through careful study of the text) can lie on the page like soggy cereal." In other words, your main idea, left undeveloped will not be able to stand by itself. The main idea needs the support of a sermon body to deliver a powerful, thoughtful and applicable message to the congregation. It's not enough to simply study the passage; we must effectively learn how to communicate that passage in a relevant way to our hearers.

I believe that the heart of today's preacher must cry out to receive a word from the Lord. It's not enough to simply have a polished message with three points and a conclusion. What we need is an anointed word from the Lord for the people of God that will bring healing and impart destiny to our churches. How God longs to use you as a mouthpiece of his love and promised blessing to a lost and hurting generation. Preaching good sounding sermons is not enough anymore. In *Zechariah 8*, there are ten instances where the prophet preached not a word from himself, but a word from the Lord. *Zechariah* only preached what God had directly spoken to him. How much more then, must the Spirit filled preacher of today, living amongst the most wicked and perverse generation in the history of the world, be determined to receive not just a sermon, but only a fresh, life changing word from the Lord?

If you feel like God has given you a word for your church then you must take that idea and crystallize it into a sermon that communicates all that's in your heart. Here are four practical tips from Robinson that will help you to turn the ideas on paper into a word from your

heart to the church.

1) Outline the Sermon.

Robinson says that the process of outlining the sermon is comparable to the building process. "When an architect designs a building, he begins with a concept derived from function (what building is to do) and form (how the

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building will look). To construct the building, the architect turns his idea into a blueprint showing in detail how the concept will translate into steel, stone, and glass." The preacher that has his idea must now fashion his blueprint (outline) together to ensure that his building (sermon) is able to stand.

An outline should be built around the main idea of the passage. If you were preaching a message from *Psalms 24* the main idea might be, "There is a generation of people that are seeking the God of all glory."

The supporting points of the outline might then help us to explain what those characteristics are and how we can apply them in our own lives.

I. The generation seeking the God of glory has clean hands and pure hearts. *Ps. 24:4a*

II. The generation seeking the God of glory acknowledges the Lordship of Christ in every area of their lives. *Ps. 25:4b*

III. The generation seeking the God of glory receives the promised blessing through fervent prayer. *Ps. 24:5-6*

Not all points in a sermon receive equal attention. The main points (Roman numerals, e.g. I, II, etc.) are the fundamental building blocks of the entire sermon and relate back to the main idea giving continuity to the entire outline.

The main points cannot stand alone without support. Thus secondary points (Capital letters) help define and accent the main points.

I. The generation seeking the God of glory has clean hands and pure hearts. *Ps. 24:4a*

A. Having clean hands means that we approach every situation, relationship, and environment with a commitment to maintain biblical integrity.

B. Having pure hearts means that our attitudes, thoughts, and desires are submitted to the Lord's will for our lives.

The outline should be clear so that any individual that looked at it would be able to easily understand what you

were trying to say. I'll never forget the day that when I had the privilege to look over one of Dr. Billy Graham's sermon outlines in a museum. The outline was so simple and clear that I felt as though I could preach it. Remember the people need a word from the Lord not a perfect sermon.

Your outline should be simply stated so that you can say what you were given to say, get out of the way and let the Lord lead the way.

Many preachers feel that outlines are unnecessary because they hinder the flow of the Spirit and keep the minister glued to his notes. However, the properly prepared outline will actually help the preacher to clearly define and communicate what he wants to say. The outline helps give shape and structure to the ideas by arranging them in sequential order. Another advantage to outline is that there is a unity and blending of the points together as they build upon the main idea. Finally, the minister realizes the places in the outline where additional supporting details are required.

2) Fill in the Sermon Outline.

Ezk. 37:4 "Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.'"

Now that you have your skele-

Good illustrators are not story tellers but those who can take a truth from the word of God known in the mind, shape it into word picture, and bring it back to the listeners heart.

ton (outline) it's time to put flesh and breath into your sermon. This is done in a variety of different ways.

Restatement is one way. Restatement basically says the same thing in a different way. Restatement gives clarity to difficult concepts. Have you ever made a statement while preaching and looked out into the congregation only to see a look of bewilderment on the faces of the people. If that happens you may want to begin with, "In other words..." and then restate in a more simple way what you were trying to say in the first place. My main idea from the sermon on *Psalms 24* might be restated (see #1 Outline Sermon above): "God wants a people that are hungry for his presence and serious about seeing His glory." Restatement is also effective when you want your people to remember key points of the sermon (e.g. main idea).

Another way to bring life to the sermon is by explanation and definition. According to Robinson, "A definition establishes limits. It sets down what must be included and excluded by a term or statement. An explanation also sets boundaries, but it may do so by amplifying on how ideas relate to one another or what an idea implies." In other words, explanation and definition give clear meaning and specify what exactly the preacher is trying to reveal to the hearer. Many times preachers use theological terms like sanctification, justification, propitiation etc. and never take the time to explain these terms to the listener. When we define and explain our terms however, the people in the church will be blessed by your willingness to meet them at their level of spirituality and thinking.

You may also want to use quotations in your preaching. Quotes basically communicate ideas better than we can by using other people words. We quote others because they may be in a better position to say certain things than we can. If I were teaching on the subject of prayer I would probably want to quote an authority on intercession like Andrew Murray or Cindy Jacobs. If those resources are not available to you then find a leader you know and respect (local pastor, deacon, leader in your church etc.) and ask him to say something about the issue you are preaching. Please note that quotable leaders should have credentials like experience or expertise.

What are the characteristics of quotable Christians? An individual that is Spirit filled demonstrating a devotion to the Lord.

Finally, there are illustrations. Robinson correctly asserts, "An illustration, like the picture on the television, makes clear what the speaker explains." Illustrations can come from a wide variety of life's personal experiences (e.g. books, movies, news). I believe the best illustrations come from preachers who are good observers. Jesus was the master illustrator and his parables are the greatest examples of how to nail down truth. Jesus combined real life experiences that people faced together with simple objects (water, mustard seeds, treasures) to illustrate powerful messages. Illustrations illuminate the point that you are trying to make. Illustrations need not be lengthy or drawn out. Good illustrators are not story tellers but those who can take a truth from the word of God known in the mind, shape it into word picture, and bring it back to the listeners heart.

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quire confrontation and conflict are: propagation of biblical error, ungodly attitudes or behavior on the part of members, leaders not fulfilling their duties, subversive movements against the leadership, and the like.

Sadly, some leaders avoid dealing with such situations in the name of “persevering unity.” In truth, what they are really concerned about is keeping peace. Peace is good when there is no enemy present—but when the enemy appears, there must be a conflict. Leaders should note that if they avoid confronting these issues for fear of creating turmoil in the short term, it will only result in greater problems in the long run. It is like an infection that goes uninterrupted because it is too painful to squeeze out—eventually it brings gangrene and amputation.

DEFINING UNITY

Jesus defined unity in terms of oneness. “*That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You.*” (John 17:21) While there are many individual churches consisting of many individual members, in God’s eyes there is only one complete church—the body of Christ. “*For as the body is one and has many members...all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ*” (1 Cor. 12:12). The members of the human body all have different functions and abilities but they each work under oneness. Their purpose, their reason for being is to serve together under the control of—and accomplish the purposes of the mind. Similarly, the members of Christ’s body—individuals and churches alike—may have different gifts and unique styles but they also called to oneness—to jointly serve the purposes of the Head, Jesus Christ.

In this sense, unity is both a “oneness of purpose” and a “cooperative partnership.” “Oneness of purpose” is to exist according to the purposes demonstrated by Christ the Head. “*Christ is head of the church...Therefore...the church is subject to Christ*” (Eph. 5:23-24). “Cooperative partnership” is functioning conjointly with the other members (and churches) to accomplish the will of the head. “...*til we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...from whom the whole body, joined*

and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph. 4:13-16)

The challenge to unity is found as each member defines “how” he is going to fulfill his part in the function of the body. This is where disagreement, conflict and division can surface. Unity, however, will prevail when it is expressed in the following notions.

Humility

“I say to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly...

When conflict arises, humble people face it with a spirit of meekness rather than pride. They state their opinions but recognize that they don’t have all the answers. They are open to other perspectives. This allows them to be both reasonable and teachable.

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.” Romans 12:3,10

It has been said, “*Humility is not thinking less of your self, it is thinking of yourself less.*” Humility is the absence of self-assertion and pride. It is being modestly aware of one’s own defects and shortcomings and therefore ranking one’s self on an equal or lower level to one’s peers. Unity is expressed when the member’s of a body relate to each other in a spirit of humility.

Humility places people on equal ground. It is difficult to be united to people who believe themselves better or esteem themselves higher than the people around them—especially when this is being projected by leaders. This breeds distrust, suspicion and ultimately division. Conversely, when we believe that others are esteeming us higher than ourselves, we tend to respond in the same spirit of love and selfless service.

Humility overpowers disagreeable spirits. When conflict arises, humble people face it with a spirit of meekness rather than pride. They state their opinions but recognize that they don’t have all the answers and are open to other perspectives. This allows them to be both reasonable and teachable. In the event that the humble person’s position is rejected, they are not offended because they have no agenda to assert themselves or prove how to everyone how “great” and “wise” they are. Humility allows them the disposition to be more concerned with what is right for the cause rather than what is merely right for them.

Humility cancels out competition. Many individuals are unable to walk in unity because they are trying to com-

pete with those around them—they have an agenda to advance themselves ahead of their peers rather than work together with them. This is true of many churches (and pastors). Self-assertion and selfish ambition have caused them to pull away from others rather than cooperate with them in a spirit of unity. Humility cancels out this competitive spirit by convicting us to see ourselves as equal members of the same body working together for a common purpose.

Forgiveness

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” Eph. 4:32

When Paul called the Ephesian church to unity, he knew it could only be done if there was a culture of forgiveness. While Jesus prayed that the church would be “*as one,*” He also said, “*It is impossible that no offenses should come.*” (Luke 17:1) The only way that fallen human beings can walk together in unity is if they also walk in a spirit of forgiveness. Inevitably, someone is going to be hurt, let down, disappointed or offended. Without forgiveness, the united will become united.

Forgiveness defeats a spirit of contention. There is a spirit that seeks entry into every church and community. It is a spirit that gets people to focus on their differences, conflicts and offenses rather than the common purposes they’ve been called to. The result is a people who are divided by petty disagreements and striving over ridiculous trivialities. In 2 Cor. 13:20, Paul said, “*For I fear lest, when I come...there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions,*

There can be no unity in a body whose members are mostly concerned about their own comforts and interests. Such a culture will cause people to become detached and egocentric.

backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults.” When a community operates in forgiveness, however, this spirit has no stronghold to attach to and the people can overcome the snares set up by the devil.

Forgiveness precludes conflict. Too often offended people feel the need to confront those who’ve hurt them. While this is the proper way to resolve offenses according to Matthew 5 & 18, it can often be unnecessary and excessive. In fact, it can sometimes be a way for the offended party to “get back” at the offender by pointing out their failure and requiring payment in the form of an apology. Proverbs 10:12 says, “*Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins*” and Proverbs 17:9,

“He who covers a transgression seeks love.” The better way is for us to simply forgive one another—to cast away our grudges and need for recompense and cover one another’s failures with love.

Loyalty

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6:9-10

Unity in a body is expressed by the loyalty of its members. Loyalty is a sense of responsibility to promote and protect the interests of certain people, organizations or affiliations even above that of one’s self. Loyal people will not act to promote themselves or their own interests, they understand that they are a part of something bigger than themselves and act to promote and strengthen that.

There can be no unity in a body whose members are mostly concerned about their own comforts and interests. Such a culture will cause people to become detached and egocentric. While loyal people can be counted on to serve the needs of the organization over the needs and preferences of themselves, disloyalty is the opposite. It means one will serve the interests of that which he is a member of only until it interferes with his own personal interests. At that point, loyalty to the body dies at that hand of loyalty to self and unity becomes moot.

Respect

“Honor all people. Love the brotherhood.” 1 Peter 2:17

Unity is expressed when members demonstrate respect for one another. Respect is the display of regard for the worth of another individual. It focuses on the moral obligation to honor the special uniqueness and dignity of others.

Respect treats everyone honorably. Paul said, “...*those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor*” 1 Corinthians 12:23. Unity sees each member as a vital part of the whole body. No one is considered insignificant or unnecessary. Just as the human body needs even an eye lash to function properly, the body of Christ needs every member—no matter how “seemingly little” their contribution appears to be. In the great plan of God, their part is crucial and as honorable as any other.

Respect honors those we disagree with. Unity values everyone’s opinions as being a part of God’s working in the body. Even when we

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Fear of the Lord and Intercession

Roseann Brigante

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.” Is.11:1-3

To consider that Jesus himself would have the *Spirit of the fear of the Lord* upon him and that he would *delight in the fear of the Lord* is to forever change our understanding of what “fear of the Lord” really is. Have we even considered that the fear of the Lord is something the Holy Spirit can bestow upon us as he would wisdom and understanding? Have we sought after it as we would counsel and power? Isaiah closes this prophetic declaration with the fact that Jesus will **delight** in the fear of the Lord. He did not say he would delight in wisdom, understanding, counsel, power or knowledge-only fear of the Lord. Think on this! What is God proclaiming her to US?

In John 8:29 I believe Jesus gives us some insight. “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.” What a statement! By defini-

tion, fear of the Lord is a loving reverence for God that includes submission to His Lordship and to the commands of His word. There is no other way to please God. To be submitted to Him out of a heart of pure love that delights in being obedient to His commands is to ensure His abiding presence in our lives. We become as David—a man after God’s own heart. David loved to please God and was quick to repent and humbly prostrate himself before

By definition, fear of the Lord is a loving reverence for God that includes submission to His Lordship and to the commands of His word.

correction. It’s out of this heart of love and submission to God that everything that pertains to life and godliness flows. God’s divine power is poured out where love and hunger cry out for it. It is where we must **begin** our journey with Him, for “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” Pr. 9:10 (See also Pr. 1:7, 8:12-14, 14:26, 27).

As we cry out to God for the Spirit of the fear of the Lord to fall upon us, I believe He gives us a greater understanding of His nature, His sovereignty, His omnipotence and His jus-

As our understanding of these increase, how much more our fear of Him, of His awesome majesty?

How important then, is out need to get hold of this as we approach the throne of God in intercession? Sobering, isn’t it! Sometimes our intimacy with Jesus gives us the feeling of camaraderie with Him belying the truth of His Lordship. We become so comfortable with Jesus, that it is easy to take Him for

granted and we relate to Him only, excluding a relationship with the Father. This is an incomplete gospel and a dangerous

place to be standing. If Jesus walked in fear of the Lord, how can we ignore the righteous judgments and sovereign will of the Father? How can we hope to move the hand of God over our lives and our churches with so casual a relationship? He is Almighty God, Omnipotent Father, Faithful and True. Without reverence and true love for Him, we will never walk in full knowledge, wisdom, understanding, counsel etc. The word is full of scripture declaring this truth.

Our intercession must understand this powerful precept if it is to

be pleasing to God to release His power into our lives and prayers. I want to challenge you to meditate on this and search out the word of God for yourselves. Proverbs, Chapter 2 is a great place to start, as it is so full of meat on this subject. As leaders, we can ill-afford to half-heartedly understand what God is requiring of us in His command to fear Him. If you’ve studied it before, do it again. As you know, there are always deeper levels of understanding. This is the beauty of the word of God as the Holy Spirit brings greater revelation.

After twelve chapters of wrestling with God and life, the words of King Solomon in Ecc. 12:13-14 sum it all up perfectly. “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” Let us not fear our day of judgment, but rather fear the Lord now where His rod and His staff can comfort and teach us.

Roseann Brigante is the Director of Altar Ministry and Intercession Team

Sermon Preparation;

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3) Prepare the Introduction and Conclusion.

Once you have finished preparing your outline you are ready to begin and end. Many liken the introduction to an airplane taking off and the conclusion to the landing of the aircraft. The takeoff and landing are very important because they determine whether or not the audience will want or be able to apply the truths of the sermon to their heart.

Studies show that the first couple of seconds in a preacher’s introduction determine whether or not people will want to listen to the rest of his sermon. Chances are if you can grab people in the beginning of your message then you’ll be able to hook them for the duration of the message. A great example is the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis. The first sentence of the greatest book ever written, the Bible, is explosive: “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” (Gen. 1:1). Now I’m not saying that God needed to get the attention of our

feeble minds, but it’s interesting to note that the Lord got to the point in a persuasive, powerful and perfect manner right from the start. It’s almost like God said, “I don’t have to start like this but I might as well cut right to the chase, and give it to them straight.” Good introductions command the attention of our listeners.

According to Robinson good introductions also do two other things. First, good introductions surface or touch needs. People have emotions and to a degree we must preach to those emotions. Sermons that begin

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with interesting illustrations or personal experiences allow the congregation to see that you are a real person just like them. They can relax as you touch something inside of them and identify with their needs as human beings. Second, good introductions introduce the body of the sermon. An introduction is like a bridge into the sermon that brings the listener to you,

and the sermon to the listener. In the introduction you will often introduce your main idea in a broad sense. The introduction should help the listener to understand where you are taking them and why you want to take them there.

The conclusion is the last step in written process. Robinson surmises, “*The purpose of the conclusion is to conclude the sermon—not simply to end...He should conclude, and the sermon should produce a feeling of finality. Like a lawyer, a minister asks for a verdict.*”

The conclusion is not simply a recap of the points already covered in the outline. The conclusion is the place where the minister wraps up his thoughts and challenges the people to accept his propositions.

Conclusions may be in the form of a prayer, an illustration, a quotation, or visualization (projecting the congregation into the future with a mental picture). The conclusion, like the introduction, need not be verbose or lengthy. If you are giving an altar call, the conclusion should challenge the people to respond to the message with an encouraging reminder that

the Lord wants to personally apply the truth of word preached to each individual heart.

4) Internalize the sermon.

Once the sermon is all finished on paper, it is important to internalize the truths of the sermon in your spirit. By internalizing, I simply mean taking time each day before you preach and rereading the sermon that the Lord has given to you. I like to practice preach the sermon points out loud so that I can hear what it sounds like orally. Many times things sound differently when we read them out loud as opposed to by ourselves. Sometimes if you preach portions of your message to your spouse or family they can give you helpful suggestions that will aid you on Sunday morning.

The most important advantage of internalizing your sermon is that the Lord, not the notes, becomes the guide. A minister that has internalized his message will not need his notes to lead him at every point because the message is in his heart! When the preacher steps into the pulpit on Sunday morning he will be relaxed, ready and especially

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anointed with a dynamic word. Sometimes the preacher will even feel like the Holy Spirit is whispering the points into their ear.

God is looking for the preacher of today to not be content with a nice sermon, but only with a word from the Lord. It is my prayer that by applying the truths laid out in this two part series on sermon preparation that you will be blessed abundantly as you continue to, *“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”* (2Tim. 4:2)



Nikil Adwalpalker oversees the Youth Ministries in the Mission Church.

Called to Unity; can't

(Continued from page 5)

don't agree with opinions stated, we see them as necessary to get every perspective of the proposal. We believe that each member is called to the same purpose and should be respected as a piece of fulfilling that purpose, even though we may not agree with them on a particular issue.

Submission to Authority

A symphony can make a magnificent sound only as each instrument follows the direction of its conductor. While we understand that Christ is the Head of the church, scripture teaches that this “headship” is expressed through leadership positions imparted to men. Romans 13:1,2 says, *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.”*

Unity comes as the body submits to the vision of its leader(s). Leaders can be likened to the “eyes” of the body. God imparts direction to them and gives them an ability to see. This means that the leader may mobilize the members according to the vision God has given him—even assigning duties that are new and challenging to them. A body who respectfully submits to its authorities is a body that will function healthily and powerfully.



Rev. Gregg Johnson is Senior Pastor of The Mission Church in New York, USA.

Family Focus: An Honorable Marriage; Part 2

Tom Readyoff

This is the conclusion of last month's Family Focus:

Finally, Peter tells husbands to treat their wives as heirs. In Christ, there is no male or female; we are spiritually equal. They should *encourage* their wives to claim spiritual gifts and become involved in church ministries that compliment these gifts. Then **take pride** in what their wife does!

Now why is it important for husbands to honor, respect and treat their wives as heirs of the Kingdom? If husbands do **not** do this, Peter says that their prayers will be hindered. No husband should want his prayers to be hindered. Prayer should result in an intimate relationship with the Lord. As head of tier families, husbands know they must walk in God's will in order to depend on Him for blessings. Anything that hinders that walk must be dealt with quickly. Husbands would do well to ask God to search their hearts when they are in prayer with Him, and to confess any sins that God brings to mind that do not honor, respect or treat wives as heirs of the Kingdom.

Children may also learn from Mary and the relationship her son Jesus had with her. Luke 2:5 reads that Jesus *“was subject to”* Mary and Joseph. Following His example, children also should honor their father and mother. In Matthew 15:4 Jesus reminded the scribes and Pharisees of the Commandment given to Moses to honor their father and mother. And, he added: *“He who curses father and mother, let him be put to death.”* God is serious about honoring parents. Children may say: “I don't curse my parents!” Here again, however, God looks at the heart. When teen-agers ask for the car on a Friday night, or ask to stay up to watch television because they have no homework, and Mom says: “No,” they can become angry and stomp off to their room in a huff. This is not honoring. It may also lead to acts of disobedience such as planning how to get around their Mom's refusal to accede to their requests. Instead, children must learn how to go to the Lord in prayer, asking to have the same submission Mary had to God's announcement that she was to have a child. Believing that Jesus is Lord of their lives should give them the assurance that Jesus understands how they feel! He too was a child and He knew the patience that was required to be

subject to His parents.

The last woman I want to look at is the Shunammite woman found in II Kings 4 starting in verse 8. When Elisha traveled through Shunem, this woman prepared food for him. She was married and affluent. Having extra room in her house she asked her husband if they could make a place there

Husbands would do well to ask God to search their hearts when they are in prayer with Him, and to confess any sins that God brings to mind that do not honor, respect or treat wives as heirs of the Kingdom.

for Elisha to stay when he passed through the town. Her husband agreed. In return, Elisha wanted to do her a favor. Upon learning that she had no children, he prophesized that she would have a son. The son was born and grew up, but then died. The woman went out and found Elisha, but when Elisha told his servant to take his staff and go back to town and lay in on the boy, the Shunammite woman wrapped her arms around Elisha and would not let go until he promised to come himself. And scripture goes on to say that God performed a miracle through Elisha and the boy came to life.

First of all, the Shunammite woman made certain her husband was in agree-

Keep on asking until you receive; keep on seeking until you find; keep on knocking until the door is opened. In other words, a believer should have the determination to obtain God's will and the faith that prevails against all obstacles.

ment with her to make a place in their home for Elisha to stay when he was in town. In so doing she honored her husband and showed respect for his opinions. Secondly, she understood that Elisha was a “holy man of God” (v9). She knew that the power of the Holy Spirit that is now available to all of us, who ask for it, had been given to him. And, when a circumstance occurred that was beyond her control, she went to that power and held on as only a mother can do.

Faith and persistence. Jesus taught about these principals in Matthew 7:7-8 when He said: *“ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”* “Ask”, “seek”, and “knock” are present active verbs. The sense of those passages is, therefore: keep on asking until you receive; keep on seeking until you find; keep on knocking until the door is

opened. In other words, a believer should have the determination to obtain God's will and the faith that prevails against all obstacles.

There are many examples in scripture that illustrate persistence. Elijah prayed seven times on Mount Carmel (I kings 18:42-44). Daniel prayed twenty —one days about a single matter (Daniel 10). Jesus prayed three times in Gethsemane using the same words each time (Matthew 26:36-44). So the teaching of Jesus is readily confirmed.

We *“should always pray and not give up”* (Luke 18:1).

There is a strong word of encouragement in Hebrews 4:16 for all of us: *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* What fantastic assurance! Prior verses say that Jesus walked the earth and faced temptations. He knows what it is like to be a man. So He understands what we are going through. He is sympathetic to our “weaknesses”—be it health, temperament or commitment. So we ought to come to the throne with confidence for two reasons: (1) to receive mercy and (2) to find grace to help us in our time of need. Only Jesus can give us mercy since He voluntarily died in our place. So we can come with confidence without fear of rejection. And, we can plead for grace at the very throne of grace. God's grace will always continue to be available and abundant. He said that His grace was sufficient for Paul (II Corinthians 12:9). It is sufficient also for everyone of us!

May we go to the Lord today, thanking Him for giving us many gifts: the gift of a spouse; the gift of children; the gift of His mercy and grace. Praise Him in your prayer time!

Tom Readyoff is a Deacon overseeing adult ministries in the Mission Church

Check out
Leadership newsletter
online

www.missionchurch.com

The Mission Church
4101 Rt. 52 Holmes NY
12531 USA

www.missionchurch.com

Phone: 845.878.3380
Fax: 845.878.3316
email@missionchurch.com
pastorgregg@missionchurch.com

Place address label here

LEADERSHIP TEACHING NEWSLETTER

A Teaching Newsletter of Pastor Gregg Johnson and The Mission Church Ministry Staff

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A GREAT RESOURCE FOR LEADERS

Leadership Teaching Newsletter is a great new resource for pastors, missionaries and all who are engaged in Christian Leadership. This monthly publication is developed by Pastor Gregg Johnson and staff of The Mission Church and is provided free to all leaders of ministries who strive toward greater effectiveness in the ministry they serve. Leadership endeavors to fulfill the following values:

- TO EQUIP by providing teachings, insights and information to Christian leaders in foreign lands who are unable to access mainstream media.
- TO ENCOURAGE the body of Christ around the world by inspiring the church's leaders to persevere through challenges, adversity and even persecution.
- TO EXHORT men and women in leadership to demonstrate the example of Christ through godly devotion, love of the brethren and commitment to the family.

If you are a leader in Christian ministry and would like to be added to our mailing list, Please contact the Mission Church.

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Understanding the Role of the Anointing; part 3

Mark E. Wright

This is intended to be the third in a series of articles on the anointing scheduled to appear in this and future issues. In Part 1 we discussed reasons why Jesus was anointed and definitions of the anointing. In the following issue was Part 2, were we looked at various types of anointing, especially the resident anointing and the infused anointing. This issue will concentrate on the "Flow Through Anointing".

3. Flow Through Anointing

We are and should be channels of the Holy Spirit. Don't shy away from being a channel of the Holy Spirit because of the New Age use of the word channel. We are not speaking here about the New Age occultic practice of "channeling" wherein they open themselves up to demonic spirits. We are channels for the Holy Spirit to flow through and I am not afraid or ashamed of that. The fact that new agers use the word channeling will not keep me from being a channel for the power of God to flow through. I am not going to change channels, they can change stations because we've got he right one.

The Bible says that in the Father's house are many vessels, some for honor and some for dishonor. We can be vessels of honor for the Holy Spirit to flow through. That is why I said previously that anything that God can do from Heaven, He can

do through you, because it is He who is doing it anyway. We are merely the channel. We can each be channels for the Holy Spirit to flow through and into the person we are praying for.

Remember the woman who had the issue of blood for 12 years? She pressed through the crowd to touch the Holy Spirit and power through Jesus and He could actually feel it going out of Him. Scriptures report numerous examples of this happening to him, sometimes crowds of people at a time would touch Him, draw the anointing out of Him and be healed.

Many of us who pray for the sick or for impartations for other people can feel the Holy Spirit coming in waves passing through us and into the person we are praying for. For example, on our last missions trip to Africa we were praying for the leaders in a meeting in Mukono, Uganda. A line of people were lined up for me to pray for. As I laid hands on them I prayed these words "Come Holy Spirit". As I prayed for the Holy Spirit to come I could feel energy like a force field passing through me going into the person I was praying for. Of the dozens of people I prayed for, everyone fell down on the ground when the power went into them except for one person. I did not have this power in myself, I was being a channel for the Holy Spirit. When I prayed for the Holy Spirit to come, He came and flowed into and anointed and imparted and infused, etc. the person I was praying for. As I

said, I did not have this power in myself. We are not like electric eels that can build up 10,000 volt charge of electricity or Holy Spirit anointing power then at will discharge it into someone. We are merely channels for God to flow through.

I do believe that God gives gifts and there are gifts of healing where people do have gifts of healing power in themselves and can just touch people and impart healing to them, but absent a gift we can each be used as channels for the Holy Spirit. So try just relaxing and being a channel. We cannot shout it into people, we cannot message it into people and we should definitely not try to push people over and try to make it look like something is happening. Just relax and invite the Holy Spirit to come and He will come.

In future issues we'll explain how the anointing can be combined with specific workings of the Holy Spirit, so that when the anointing goes into a person it can heal them or do something else more specific. In the next issue we will examine what we call the "Abiding Anointing" or as some refer to it, the "Hovering Anointing". In the meantime, may your resident anointing grow as you continue to call upon the Lord for fresh infusions and refills and

Rev. Mark E. Wright is a Missionary Evangelist who ministers extensively throughout the world. While in the United States he is a sought out Bible teacher and preacher whose ministry is marked by supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.