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January/February 2003

The APC News

The Magazine of the Associated Presbyterian Churches in Scotland

Kingsview Centre



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OUR INVERNESS congregation's new worship centre was opened in December. The picture above was taken at the opening service of dedication. See report on page 12. From left to right the picture shows Revd Peter Humphris from the nearby Church of Scotland; our pastor Revd Dr Malcolm MacInnes; the main speaker for the evening Revd Dr Sinclair Ferguson from the Tron Church of Scotland in Glasgow; and Revd Robert Clelland, the Baptist minister in the area. It is called the Kingsview Christian Centre and is on Balnafettack Road.

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The Cost of Disobedience

ONE OF THE SADDEST verses in Scripture is in 1st Kings 11:14, when we read of God's dealings with Solomon for his disobedience. It reads: *"Now the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite.....And God raised up another adversary against him, Rezon the Eliadah"*! It is not the first time we read of such things in Scripture. In Judges we read *"the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel"* [Jud 3:12]. How solemn!

Imagine - God raising up and strengthening an unbeliever **against** His people whom He loves! This has great implications for Christians today. Some Christians think that God is never angry with His people - but He is. He is very angry about their sin. God hates to see sin dominate His people and when they continually give place to it, He chastens them sorely.

God is more angry with His people's sin than He is with the sin of the world. He said to Israel *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities"* [Amos 3:2]. God said about Judah *"Thus says the Lord to this people, thus they have loved to wander; they have not restrained their feet;*

therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will remember their iniquity now, and punish their sins" [Jer 14:10]. God told the prophet Isaiah to *"Speak comfort to Jerusalem...for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins"* [Isa 40:2].

God expects Christians to know better than to live a life of sin. He expects His people to live for the glory of God. He expects more from His people than He does from those ignorant of the gospel. Therefore He is more angry with believers for their sin than when unbelievers sin in ignorance.

Those who sin against knowledge will suffer more than those who sin in ignorance. *"to whom much is given, from him much will be required"* [Luke 12:48]! Our Saviour told us that in eternity it will be worse for those who heard the gospel and did not repent than for those who never heard it. *"It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you"* (residents of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum who witnessed the mighty works of God) [Mat 11:22]!

Reading Biblical history has a great advantage. We can read the mind of God behind the events. We are told that in Solomon's case, the

trial he was having in his kingdom was because God raised up an adversary. We do not read in 'The Times' the role of God in the affairs of the world. We simply read the events as perceived by man - limited by his imperfect vision and imperfect understanding. Indeed, we might say limited by his prejudiced, biased and corrupted understanding without any reference or consideration of God at all. In the Bible on the other hand we have infallible Scripture, and we do, from time to time, have the benefit of reading about God 'entering into history' to fulfil His plan and purpose.

Might it not be possible, that if some inspired and infallible writer were to write about today's events, he would record: "And God raised up an adversary against America and the UK - Saddam Hussein. And God raised Up another adversary Osama bin Laden"?

It is a very sad fact that in all wars innocents suffer. In all of God's judgments, innocent people, children included, suffered. In Solomon's case the reason for the war was because of Solomon and the nation's sins of idolatry. But as far as the press and media would be concerned it was because of Joab's sin of massacring the Edomites some considerable time before! Similarly, Rezon's attacks on Solomon would have been seen by the secular press of the day because of what Solomon's father David had done many years before. So

determining why some strange providences occur in life can be very difficult for us humans to fathom out. If God deals with nations by judging future generations (Solomon's son Rehoboam was to handle the problem), then we need to be careful about apportioning blame and responsibility for any war that may take place.

We do know however, that America and the UK have turned away from God and ignored His commandments. Therefore God will deal with us accordingly. There is a cost of disobedience. Sin will be punished. Repentance is what God is looking for. He will be merciful if we repent. But there is little sign of repentance in the land. The Church has little impact. It is not influencing society - something which always takes place when a community serve the Lord.

It was just because the Lord **loved** Solomon and Israel that he sent an adversary against them. God did not want to see Israel suffer more than necessary, so He sent an adversary. Historically, bondage to the enemy brought a cry to heaven from Israel which moved God's heart.

Whatever lies ahead for the UK and America, we deserve judgment. God certainly does not want to see us suffer - but if we persevere in idolatry worse judgment lies ahead.

Repentance on the other hand, will bring relief and blessing with hope for the future. May God bless America and the UK.

An Short Interview with David Dow the Full Time Worker with the Dundee Congregation

How does your role in the church cater for young people?

We run a Sunday Club for children in the P4-P7 age group meets each week at 12.30pm after the morning service. We do not follow a set programme each week as I am sure that presenting the gospel in different ways helps to maintain their interest and keeps them wondering what they are going to do in the coming weeks. We also have a midweek youth group which meets each Wednesday evening. This has proved to be a very popular club with up to 20 boys and girls coming each week.

What other areas of youth ministry are you involved in?

One area of youth ministry comes through our outreach to the local primary schools in partnership with Scripture Union, we have a weekly half-hour lunchtime slot every Thursday afternoon. These meetings are optional for the pupils but are always very well attended with something from 20-40 pupils coming.

Can you tell us about your work with adults?

Our outreach to adults, while perhaps not as extensive is also equally important. Events which

they have shared in, include a day trip to Perth, a special Christmas Service, and an evening with Jimmy Gunn. We have a few folk from the local community who attend our morning service. Our lunch clubs, 1st Saturday in the month, are another way in which we seek to reach out to the local community. We also do door to door mission as well as distribute leaflets usually designed and printed by ourselves. While we are thankful for what God is doing in this community we are aware that there is potential to develop our mission and also to reach out to others with the good news of the gospel.

A full report of David's work will be circulated to all congregations shortly. It is hoped that David will continue working for the Dundee congregation after his contract ends next summer. Towards this end the congregation are actively seeking funding.



Remember the Prisoners? Have we Forgotten?

ARTICLE 18 OF THE United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

That sounds wonderful and fair. However, in some countries this is just not been practised. In Indonesia thousands of Christians are being persecuted and put to death for their faith. In the provinces of Central Sulawesi, Maluku and Aceh thousands have suffered at the hands of the Laskar Jihad and Shari'ah law. In Nigeria also there are thousands of victims where the Shari'ah law has been implemented.

Some states have in their legislation the very opposite of the Human Rights Article 18. For example, Article 306 of the Criminal Code of Mauritania (a north African state lying between Senegal and Western Sahara) says: "Every Muslim guilty of the crime of apostasy, whether by word or action, will be invited to repent over a period of three days. If he does not

repent within this time limit, he is to be condemned to death as an apostate and his property will be confiscated by the Treasury." Christians are being persecuted in direct breach of human rights law.

The faith of Biblical martyrs like Stephen in Acts chapter 7 is still seen in some countries today. "I would rather have the whole world against me but know that the Almighty God is with me, be called an apostate but know that I have the approval of the God of glory" said Mehdi Dibaj from Iran at his defence trial 'for apostasy'.

"You want me to say that I changed my religion because somebody pushed me into it for the sake of money, to get a job, or to have women. But you are lying. You should know that I changed because I found the truth. I will kiss the rope that hangs me, but I will never deny my faith" said Tahir Iqbal from Pakistan when challenged for becoming a Christian. Tahir 'died mysteriously' in a Pakistan jail.

Traditional Islamic law states that apostates from Islam should be put to death, their marriages annulled and their children and property taken away.. In countries like Sudan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Nigeria, converts from Islam have faced death threats,

imprisonment, torture and some die in prison while others just 'disappear'.

As our brothers and sisters are suffering for Christ's sake, the least we Christians in the privileged democratic western world could do, is to write to political and public figures who can have influence in changing the unjust oppression of Christians throughout the world. *"Remember the prisoners as if chained with them"* [Heb 13:3].

When writing be sure to mention that your letter is not intended to be a general attack on Islam or an attempt to single out Muslims or to stir up resentment towards them. Rather it is an attempt to draw attention to a particular problem within traditional Islamic teaching, which is creating untold danger and suffering for thousands of converts around the world.

Always be polite and keep

your letter short. It is important to give the proper title to dignitaries. Here is a list of people you could write to:

The Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

HRH The Prince of Wales
St James Palace
London SW1A 1BS

Mr Iqbal Sacranie
Secretary-General
The Muslim Council of Britain
PO Box 52 Wembly
Middlesex HA9 0XW

Begin your letter with 'Sir', not 'Dear...'. If you refer to the Prince in the text do so as 'your royal highness'. Barnabas Fund can help you frame letters to different groups. Telephone 01672 564 938 or email: info@barnabasfund.org or on their website www.barnabasfund.org

The Truth

WE MUST UNDERSTAND OUR times. What is under seige in modern evangelicalism is not piety, but truth. Many people are praying and talking about revival, but truth, at best, is assumed. Many Christians no longer look to truth to define *who* they are and *what* they do. Tragically this generation has severed truth from life in almost every imaginable way. The preference of a therapeutic model over a truth model is evident. The church of our time is far more interested in 'how it makes us feel' than whether or not it is true. Paul the apostle, made much more of truth than even the messenger - ie, his tone, manner, communication style, or how people felt when they were exposed to his ministry. Paul's ministry was passionately driven by fidelity to truth [2 Cor 4:2, 6:6, 13:8].

John H Armstrong

Are You Thankful?

I AM THANKFUL.....

For the teenager who is not washing the dishes but is watching TV - because that means he is at home and not on the streets.

For the taxes that I pay - because it means that I have a job.

For the mess to clean after a party - because it means that I have been surrounded by friends.

For the clothes that fit a little too snug - because it means I have enough to eat.

For my shadow that watches me work - because it means I am out in the sunshine.

For a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, gutters that need fixing - because it means I have a home.

For all the complaining I hear about the government - because it means we have freedom of speech.

For the parking spot I find at the far end of the parking lot - because it means I can walk and have been blessed with transport.

For my huge heating bill - because it means I am warm.

For the lady behind me in the church that sings off key - because it means I can hear.

For the pile of laundry and ironing - because it means I have clothes to wear.

For weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day - because it means I have been capable of working hard.

For the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours - because it means that I am alive.

And finally...for too much email - because it means I have friends who are thinking of me!

A THANKFUL PRAYER

Even though I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings each morning, thank you, Lord, that I can hear. There are many who are deaf.

Even though I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, Lord, that I can see. There are many who are blind.

Even though I huddle in my bed and put off the effort of rising, thank you, Lord that I have the strength to rise. There are many who are bedridden.

Even though the first hour of my day is hectic, when socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short, thank you, Lord, for my family. There are many who are lonely.

Even though our breakfast table never looks like the pictures in magazines and the menu is at times unbalanced, thank you, Lord for the food we have. There are many who have no job.

Even though I grumble and bemoan my fate from day to day and wish my circumstances were not so modest, thank you, Lord, for the gift of life.
(Author unknown)

Christina Macsween

(1911 - 2002)

WITH THE PASSING last year of Christina Macsween, one of Oban's oldest and best known citizens, many people felt they had lost a true friend.

Christina Macsween was born in the Maryhill district of Glasgow. Her father belonged to Harris while her mother was a native of Ness in Lewis. When the family moved to Connel in 1914 her father's skills in stonemasonry produced a fine family home – now the Ronebhal Guest House.

Christina's reminiscences of her earlier years in Connel evoked a world quite different from that of today. Hers was a happy, secure childhood, lived in a God-fearing atmosphere. Attendance at church

in Oban regularly involved a five mile walk although travel to Oban High School was always by train.

Milking a neighbour's cow provided major entertainment, while the produce of a night's fishing would be distributed among several families. She could remember the first cars that passed through the village. The house was let in the summer, and near the end of her life she was delighted to receive a visit from a member of the famous Huxley family who had spent his boyhood holidays there.

Following teacher training and a period teaching in Sandbank, near Dunoon, Christina returned to Oban High School as assistant to Donald Thomson in the Gaelic Department. Some of her pupils still speak about her. Her affection for them was evident. The war saw her appointed as a billeting officer responsible for accommodating evacuees from Glasgow. It was a challenging mix of cultures, and the newcomers did not always entirely appreciate the manner in which care for them was expressed!

In 1942 Christina married Malcolm Macsween and moved to Portnalong on the Island of Skye where he was a minister. There was no car, no phone, no electricity and no running water. Rural



communities develop their own customs, and the learning curve was steep. Initial difficulties, however, were successfully negotiated and friendships made then lasted for a lifetime.

In 1955 her husband accepted a call to Campbell Street Church in Oban. Christina shared fully in the joys, and stresses, of manse life. They were a devoted couple. When the writer succeeded Malcolm Macsween, following his death in 1978, Christina's warm friendship, wise counsel and unfailing encouragement were greatly valued.

For the last twenty four years she was alone, but the circle of her friends grew. Her son William, an orthopaedic surgeon, and his family were especially important to her, and to the end she maintained the closest contact with each of her six grandchildren.

Young people loved her. It meant much to her to have as her minister in these latter years her nephew Archie McPhail. The monthly Gaelic service in Oban was deeply appreciated. Her knowledge of the language was regularly put to use. This included choosing house names for people she never met, and providing a Gaelic 'Welcome' sign for Tesco's.

Christina's sense of priorities became increasingly obvious during the latter years. She loved people, and needed their company. A woman of wide charity, she had a shrewd, though sympathetic, understanding of

human nature. She would give her last penny, and often spoke with wonder and gratitude of the way she herself was cared for.

Her Christian faith and loving spirit were reflected at the funeral service which was led by members of three denominations. She is survived by her brother Kenneth and sister Catherine.

In some ways Christina Macsween belonged to another age, but the faith and values she represented are relevant in any age.

We are the poorer for the passing of a dear and loyal friend.

Angus Morrison

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Seven Last Words of a Dying Church

WE ARE CREATURES of habit. That can be either a good, or a bad thing. The "What?" and the "Why?" are both important. It is a good habit that you pray regularly, but the Bible teaches that you need the right motive in prayer.

Habits can become our comfort zone, and that is why we need to ask a serious question. "Do I feel comfort in the pursuit of this habit, and I am not really challenged beyond what is familiar?". If your faith feels threatened when the habit is changed you need to inquire about what it is that you really believe.

The New Testament tells about people who were very intent on their traditions, but had no place for Jesus Christ. Their faith stood in the commandments of men, not in the revelation and power of God. There are things that cannot change, and to these the church, and the people individually, must hold tenaciously.

The Person of Jesus Christ, his work as prophet, priest and king, the work of the Holy Spirit in effecting the New Birth, and the ultimate universal acknowledgement of his Lordship are all non-negotiable. These are a few of the "essentials". There are also "non-essentials", and "things indifferent". In these areas there is room for variety in interpretation and

practice. A study of preaching styles in the Acts of the Apostles shows that the preachers did not always follow the same form.

An insistence on uniformity and unchanging continuity may not be the sign of a living and faithful church. If you really trust in Jesus Christ, the essential ingredients will remain with you through all of life's changes. Other things will change and you will still be enriched through fresh experiences of God's rich grace.

You have gone through changes in your eating habits, in your dress styles, and in your interests in life. The one big unchanged factor in these, as in all else, is your personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Real life is having Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Life is having the unchanging Saviour in a changing world. Have a faith that is strong enough to step out for Jesus beyond your comfort zones.

It has been said that the "Seven Last Words of a Dying Church" are "*We never did it like this before*". The people are the church, and it is the people who must change. May God give you grace that your life and your church be changing for the better. "*Semper-eadem= Always the same*" is not the best motto for anyone.

Malcolm MacInnes

Congregational News

DUNDEE

Our minister met a group of teenagers 'fooling around' at a railway station waiting for a train. A girl shouted over to him 'Hey, you're from Dens Road Church aren't you?' 'Yes', he said. She came over to him and spoke - she recognised him although he did not recognise her. She said she remembered him at the church. Her friends, two boys, asked her what was she doing at church and what would she learnt there. She replied 'I learned a lot'. She spoke well of the church and our minister assured her that although she had stopped coming to the Club we were still praying for her.

The girl's name is Jenny and she and her brother Bobby, came to the Clubs we ran at the church. Jenny had to be taken into social care, as her parents separated and she has now largely to look after herself. She is at present living in Fife, but she is not settled there. She is looking forward to being able to work and get her own place.

David and the younger members in the church have been helping Jenny for some months in the past and it was good to know that she had remembered some of the kindnesses shown to her at the church. It was good to see her again at the Sunday Club very recently.

INVERNESS

On 30th November, 2002, a good number gathered for the official opening of Kingsview Christian Centre. David Stewart, MP, an Invernessian, was invited to "cut the ribbon".

The following day, the congregation met for the first worship services, and were pleased to welcome visitors, including friends from the local Church of Scotland congregation who had decided to extend a welcome to us by not having their own regular service and attending the one at Kingsview.

The following Tuesday the Presbytery and Committees had their first meetings in the new premises. We want to thank all our friends who have helped us, both financially and in prayer.

On 10th December, the Rev Sinclair Ferguson preached at the Service of Dedication, from Psalm 27. The title to his message was "A Place to see God". This was a very encouraging evening and we thank God for his goodness to us.

The Deacons' Court have appointed John Lister as Mission Coordinator/Centre Manager, on a part-time basis. We are glad that John has a mind for the work, and we commit him and development

and ministry of the Centre to the Lord. Planning Permission has been granted for the construction of an annexe, and we are looking for funding for this Phase 2 of the project. We hope that the building work will be finished in time for summer mission outreach and the annual conference. The premises are not just for the benefit of the Inverness congregation, but for the whole church and any Christian group that need to use it. Any help you can give us will be very welcome. You will find the Inverness Treasurer's name and address in the congregational details in the APC News.

STORNOWAY

The Macaskill Family of the APC Manse, 36 Newvalley, Isle of Lewis, wish to acknowledge sincerely the

very many prayers and good wishes for George and Rae's recovery. There is little doubt that God has heard these prayers and to Him be all the praise and the glory.

MUTUAL ELIGIBILITY

The APC Assembly in May 2002 adopted an agreement of mutual eligibility with the Free Church of Scotland. The Free Church were not able to adopt the agreement at its meeting in the same month, so the matter of mutual eligibility is not presently operative.

APC NEWS

Last August the editor's computer had no less than 3 disk 'wipe-outs'! Many articles were lost and irretrievable. We therefore regret the loss of some articles which were sent in for publication.

Priorities!

IN 1988, A BRILLIANT young businessman named Greg Simmons who had helped revolutionise American life insurance, had a very important meeting in New York with the Board members of AT & T. The deal was worth more than one million dollars.

Literally at the last minute the presentation had to be delayed until the next day. He told the Board that it was not possible. When persuaded to stay Greg replied that 'Tomorrow is my daughter's fifth birthday. I promised her I would be

at her party.' For this young man, a million dollar deal was not as important as being present at his daughter's birthday party! Many people would think that his priorities were all wrong. Well the sequel to the story is this.....

Just a few months later, this Greg was killed in a fall up on a mountain! That was the last opportunity Greg had of attending a birthday of his daughter.

The pastor of his church said his example of well-placed priorities taught him a lesson he hoped he would never forget. "*Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth*" [Pro 27:1].

The Marks of a Spiritual Leader (Part 2)

By John Piper

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www.desiringGOD.org

Continued from Issue 90, December 2002

The Outer Circle of Spiritual Leadership

Everyone in the church has one or more spiritual gifts. Everyone should be involved in ministry. Everyone should be seeking to lead others to the point where they bring glory to God by the way they think and feel and act. But there are some people to whom the Lord has given qualities of personality that tend to make them more able leaders than others. Not all of these qualities are distinctively Christian, but when the Holy Spirit fills a person's life each of these qualities is harnessed and transformed for God's purposes.

1. Restless

Spiritual leaders have a holy discontentment with the status quo. Non-leaders have inertia that causes them to settle in and makes them very hard to move off of dead center. Leaders have a hankering to change, to move, to reach out, to grow, and to take a group or an institution to new dimensions of ministry.

They have the spirit of Paul, who said in [Phil. 3:13] *"Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and*

straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Leaders are always very goal-oriented people.

God's history of redemption is not finished. The church is shot through with imperfections, lost sheep are still not in the fold, needs of every sort in the world are unmet, sin infects the saints. It is unthinkable that we should be content with things the way they are in a fallen world and an imperfect church. Therefore, God has been pleased to put a holy restlessness into some of his people, and those people will very likely be the leaders.

2. Optimistic

Spiritual leaders are optimistic not because man is good but because God is in control. The leader must not let his discontentment become disconsolation. When he sees the imperfection of the church he must say with the writer of Hebrews [6:9], *"Though we speak thus, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things that belong to salvation."*

The foundation of his life is [Rom 8:28], *"God works all things together for good for those who love*

him and are called according to his purpose." He reasons with Paul that, "He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, will then surely give us all things with him" [Rom 8:32]. Without this confidence based upon the goodness of God manifested in Jesus Christ the leader's perseverance would falter and the people would not be inspired. Without optimism restlessness becomes despair.

3. Intense

The great quality I want in my associates is one of intensity. Romans 12:8 says that if your gift is leadership, "do it with zeal." Romans 12:11 says, "Never flag in zeal, boil in the spirit!" When the disciples remembered the way Jesus had behaved in relation to the temple of God they characterized it with words from the Old Testament like this, "Zeal for thy house has eaten me up" [John 2:17]. The leader follows the advice of Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." When Jonathan Edwards was a young man he wrote a list of about seventy resolutions. The one that has inspired me the most goes like this: "To live with all my might while I live." Count Zinzendorf of the Moravians said, "I have one passion. It is He and He alone." Jesus warns us in Revelation 3:16 that he does not have any taste for people who are lukewarm: "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth." Spiritual leaders must go

out alone somewhere and ponder what unutterable and stupendous things they know about God. If their life is one extended yawn they are simply blind. Leaders must give evidence that the things of the Spirit are intensely real. They cannot do that unless they are intense themselves.

4. Self-controlled

By self-controlled I do not mean prim and proper and unemotional, but rather master of our drives. If we are to lead others toward God we cannot be led ourselves toward the world. According to Galatians 5:23 self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. It is not mere willpower. It is appropriating the power of God to get mastery over our emotions and our appetites that could lead us astray or cause us to occupy our time with fruitless endeavors.

In 1 Corinthians 6:12 Paul says, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything." The Christian leader must ruthlessly examine his life to see whether he is the least enslaved by television, alcohol, coffee, golf, computer games, fishing, Playboy, good food. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:25, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." And he says in Galatians 5:24, "Those who

belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires."

Spiritual leaders ruthlessly track down bad habits and break them by the power of the Spirit. They hear and follow Romans 8:13, *"If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live."* Spiritual leaders long to be free from everything that hinders their fullest delight in God and service of others.

5. Thick-skinned

One thing is for sure: if you begin to lead others you will be criticized. No one will be a significant spiritual leader if his aim is to please others and seek their approval. Paul said in Galatians 1:10, *"Am I seeking the favor of men or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men I should not be a servant of Christ."* Spiritual leaders do not seek the praises of men, they seek to please God. Dr. Carl Lundquist, former President of Bethel College and Seminary, said in his final report to the Baptist General Conference that there was hardly one of the 28 years in which he served the Conference that he was not actively opposed by many people.

If criticism disables us, we will never make it as spiritual leaders. I don't mean that we must be the kind of people who don't feel hurt, but rather that we must not be wiped out by the hurt. We must be able to say with Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:8, *"We are afflicted in*

every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." We will feel the criticism but we will not be incapacitated by it. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:16, *"We do not lose heart."*

Leaders must be able to digest depression because they will eat plenty of it. There will be many days when the temptation is very strong to quit because of unappreciative people. Criticism is one of Satan's favorite weapons to try to get effective Christian leaders to throw in the towel.

I should, however, qualify this characteristic of being thick-skinned. I do not want to give the impression that spiritual leaders are closed off to legitimate criticism.

A good leader must not only be thick-skinned but also open and humbly ready to accept and apply just criticism. No leader is perfect and Jonathan Edwards said once that he made it a spiritual discipline to look for the truth in every criticism that came his way before he discarded it. That's good advice.

6. Energetic

Lazy people cannot be leaders. Spiritual leaders *"redeem the time"* [Eph 5:16]. They work while it is day, because they know that night comes when no man can work [John 9:4]. They *"do not grow weary in well doing"* for they know that in due season they shall reap if they do not lose heart [Gal 6:9]. They are *"steadfast, immovable, always*

abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord their labor is not in vain" [1 Cor. 15:58]. But they do not take credit for this great energy or boast in their efforts because they say with the apostle Paul, *"I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I but the grace of God which was with me"* [1 Cor 15:10]. And: *"For this I toil, striving with all the energy which He mightily inspires within me"* [Col 1:29].

The world is run by tired men, someone has said. A leader must learn to live with pressure. None of us accomplishes very much without deadlines and deadlines always create a sense of pressure. A leader does not see the pressure of work as a curse but as a glory. He does not desire to fritter away his life in excess leisure. He loves to be productive. And he copes with the pressure and prevents it from becoming worrisome with promises like Matthew 11:27, 28 and Philippians 4:7, 8 and Isaiah 64:4.

7. A hard thinker

"Be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature!" [1 Cor 14:2]). It is not easy to be a leader of people who can outthink you. A leader must be one who, when he sees a set of circumstances, thinks about it. He sits down with pad and pencil and doodles and writes and creates. He tests all things with his mind and holds fast to what is good [1 Thes 5:21]. He is critical in the best sense of the word, that is, not gullible or faddish or trendy. He

weighs things and considers pros and cons and always has a significant rationale for the decisions that he makes. Careful and rigorous thought is not contrary to a reliance on prayer and divine revelation. The apostle Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7, *"Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you under-standing in everything."* In other words, God's way of imparting to us insight is not to short-circuit the intellectual process.

8. Articulate

It is hard to lead others if you cannot state your thoughts clearly and forcefully. Leaders like Paul aim to persuade men, not coerce them [2 Cor 5:11]. Leaders who are spiritual do not muster a following with hot air or waves or words but rather with crisp, solid, compelling sentences. The apostle Paul aimed, like all good leaders, at clarity in what he said. According to Colossians 4:4 he asked the people to pray for him, *"that I might make it clear, as I ought to speak."* It is astonishing and lamentable how many people today cannot speak in complete sentences. The result is that a great fog surrounds their thought. Neither they nor their listeners know exactly what they are talking about. A haze settles over the discussion and you walk away wondering what it was all about. If no one rises above the muddle-headedness and verbal chaos of "You know . . . I mean . . . Just

really", there will not be any leadership.

9. Able to Teach

It is not surprising to me that some of the great leaders at Bethlehem Baptist Church have been men who are also significant teachers. According to 1 Timothy 3:2 anyone who aspires to the office of overseer in the church should be able to teach. What is a good teacher? I think a good teacher has at least the following characteristics.

- 1 A good teacher asks himself the hardest questions, works through to answers, and then frames provocative questions for his learners to stimulate their thinking.
- 2 A good teacher analyzes his subject matter into parts and sees relationships and discovers the unity of the whole.
- 3 A good teacher knows the problems learners will have with his subject matter and encourages them and gets them over the humps of discouragement.
- 4 A good teacher foresees objections and thinks them through so that he can answer them intelligently.
- 5 A good teacher can put himself in the place of a variety of learners and therefore explain hard things in terms that are clear from their standpoint.
- 6 A good teacher is concrete, not abstract, specific, not general, precise, not vague, vulnerable, not evasive.

7 A good teacher always asks, "So what?" and tries to see how discoveries shape our whole system of thought. He tries to relate discoveries to life and tries to avoid compartmentalizing.

8 The goal of a good teacher is the transformation of all of life and thought into a Christ-honoring unity.

10. A Good Judge of Character

Jesus knew the hearts of men [Jn 2:17] and he urged us to be perceptive in assessing others [Mt 7:15ff]. Leaders must know who is fit for what kind of work. Good leaders have good noses. They can snoop out barnacles in a hurry, that is, people who are forever listening but never learning or changing. They can detect potential when they see it in a beginner. They can hear in a short time the echoes of pride and hypocrisy and worldliness. The spiritual leader steers a careful course between the dangers of rigid pigeonholing on the one hand and indifference on the other hand.

11. Tactful

Paul said in Colossians 4:5, 6, *"Conduct yourself wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, to know how it is necessary to answer each one."* And the writer of Proverbs said, *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver"* [25:11]. We must remember that leaders are aiming to change

hearts, not just to get jobs done. Therefore, alienating people unnecessarily is self-defeating. Tact is that quality of grace that wins the confidence of people who are sure you won't do or say something stupid.

You can't inspire a following if people have to hang their heads in embarrassment at the inappropriate and insensitive things you say or do. Tact is especially needed in a leader to help cope with embarrassing or tragic situations. For example, very often when you are leading a group someone will say something totally irrelevant, which is recognized to be very foolish by everyone in the group. A tactful leader must be able to divert the attention of the group back to the main course of the discussion without heaping scorn upon the individual.

Another example, which I recall, comes from my experience at Wheaton College. I was present at the chapel service where V. Raymond Edman had a heart attack in the pulpit and fell over and died. Hudson Armerding, who followed him as president, was sitting behind him when Dr. Edman paused in his lecture, took one step to the side, and fell over.

In one of the most beautiful and sensitive demonstrations of tact that I have ever seen, Dr. Armerding quickly knelt beside him as 2,000 students fell silent. Then he stood, led us in a brief prayer committing Dr. Edman to the Lord, and dismissed the students quietly. Dr. Edman died as we walked out. The

tact of a leader must demonstrate itself in forthright confrontation. The person who is unwilling to approach a person who needs admonition or rebuke will not be a successful spiritual leader. Combined with his judgment of people's character, a leader's tact will enable him to handle delicate negotiations and opposing viewpoints. His choice of words will be astute rather than clumsy. (There is a big difference between saying, "Your foot is too big for this shoe" and "This shoe is too small for your foot".)

12. Theologically Oriented

Colossians 3:17 says, "*Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" 1 Corinthians 2:16 speaks of the spiritual man as having the mind of Christ. A spiritual leader knows that all of life, down to its smallest detail, has to do with God. If we are to lead people to see and reflect God's glory, we must think theologically about everything. We must work toward a synthesis of all things. We must probe to see how things fit together. How do war and sports and pornography and birthday celebrations and literature and space travel and disease and enterprise all hang together? How do they relate to God and his purposes?

Leaders must have a theological standpoint that helps give coherence to all things. This will give the leader a stability that keeps him from being knocked off his feet by sudden changes in circumstances

or new winds of doctrine. He knows enough about God and his ways that things generally fit into a pattern and make sense even when they are unpleasant. So the leader does not throw up his hands but points the way onward to God.

13. A dreamer

According to Joel 2:28, in the last days (in which we now live), *"Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions."* This is the positive counterpart to restlessness. We must not only be discontent with the present but also dreaming dreams of what could be in the future. In 2 Kings 6:15-17, Elisha and his servant were surrounded by Assyrians in the city of Dothan. When the servant sees this and cries out with dismay, Elisha prays and says, *"O Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see."* So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Leaders can see the power of God overshadowing the problems of the future. This is a rare gift – to see the sovereign power of God in the midst of seemingly overwhelming opposition. Most people are experts at seeing all the problems and reasons not to move forward in a venture. Many pastors are ruined by boards who think that they have done their duty when they throw up every obstacle and problem to an idea that he brings. That's cheap. Hope and solutions

are expensive. The spirit of venturesomeness is at a premium today. Oh, how we need people who will devote just five minutes a week to dream of what might possibly be. The text says that old men will dream dreams.

How sad it is, then, to see so many old people assuming that their age means that now they can coast and turn over the creativity to the young. It is tragic when age makes a man jaded instead of increasingly creative. Every new church, every agency, every new ministry, every institution, every endeavor, is the result of someone having a vision and laying hold on it like a snapping turtle.

14. Organized and Efficient

A leader does not like clutter. He likes to know where and when things are for quick access and use. His favorite shape is the straight line, not the circle. He groans in meetings that do not move from premises to conclusions but rather go in irrelevant circles. When something must be done he sees a three-step plan for getting it done and lays it out. A leader sees the links between a board decision and its implementation. He sees ways to use time to the full and shapes his schedule to maximize his usefulness. He saves himself large blocks of time for his major productive activities. He uses little pieces of time lest they go to waste. (For example, what do you do while you are brushing your teeth? Could you set a magazine on the towel rack

and read an article?) A leader takes time to plan his days and weeks and months and years. Even though it is God who ultimately directs the steps of the leader, he should plan his path. A leader is not a jellyfish that gets tossed around by the waves, nor is he an oyster that is immovable. The leader is the dolphin of the sea and can swim against the stream or with the stream as he plans.

15. Decisive

In 1 Kings 18:21 Elijah cries out, *"How long will you go limping with two different opinions: if the Lord is God follow him; but if Baal then follow him."* A leader cannot be paralyzed by indecisiveness. He will take risks rather than do nothing. He will soak himself in prayer and in the Word and then rest himself in God's sovereign as he makes decisions, knowing that he will very likely make some mistakes.

16. Perseverant

Jesus said in Matthew 24:13, *"He who endures to the end will be saved."* Paul said in Galatians 6:9, *"Let us not grow weary in well-doing."* We live in a day when immediate gratification is usually demanded. That means that very few people excel in the virtue of perseverance. Very few people keep on and keep on in the same ministry when there is significant difficulty.

Vision without perseverance, however, results in fairy tales not fruitful ministry. My dad once told me that the reason he thinks many pastors fail to see

revival in their churches is that they leave just before it is about to happen. The long haul is hard, but it pays. The big tree is felled by many, many little chops. The criticisms that come your way will be long forgotten if you keep on doing the Lord's will.

17. Lover

Here I am speaking directly to men who are husbands and leaders. Paul said in Ephesians 5:25, *"Husbands, love your wives!"* Love her! Love her! What does it profit a man if he gains a great following and lose his wife? What have we led people to if they see that it leads us to divorce? What we need today are leaders who are great lovers. Husbands who write poems for their wives and sing songs to their wives and buy flowers for their wives for no reason at all except that they love them.

We need leaders who know that they should take a day alone with their wives every now and then; leaders who do not fall into the habit of deriding and putting their wives down, especially with careless little asides in public; leaders who speak well of their wives in public and complement them spontaneously when they are alone.

Talk with her and study her desires. Look her in the eye when you talk to her. Put down the paper and turn off the television. Open the door for her. Help her with the dishes. Throw her a party. LOVE HER! LOVE HER! If you don't, all your success as a leader will very likely explode in failure at home.

18. Restful

We began with the quality of restlessness and we end with the quality of restful. *"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep"* [Ps 127:1,2]. The spiritual leader knows that ultimately the productivity of his labors rests in God and that God can do more while he is asleep than he could do while awake without God. He knows that Jesus said to his busy disciples, *"Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while"* [Mk 6:31]. He knows that one of the Ten Commandments was, *"Six days shall you labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God"* [Ex 20:9,10]. He is not so addicted to work that he is unable to rest. He is a good steward of his life and health. He maximizes the totality of his labor by measuring the possible strains under which he can work

without diminishing his efficiency of unduly shortening his life.

Conclusion

There are no doubt many other qualities which could be mentioned which, if a person has, would make him an even more successful leader. These are simply the ones that came to my mind as I was pondering this subject. One need not excel in every one of them. But the more fully each one is developed in a person the more powerful and fruitful he will be as a leader.

Let me emphasize again that it is the inner circle that makes the leadership spiritual. All genuine leadership begins in a sense of desperation; knowledge that we are helpless sinners in need of a great savior. That moves us to listen to God in his Word and cry out to him for help and for insight in prayer. That leads us to trust in God and to hope in his great and precious promises. This frees us for a life of love and service which, in the end, causes people to see and give glory to our Father in heaven.

The
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"People sometimes romanticise the notion of vocation. Receiving a calling from God is not the same thing as falling into your dream career. A dream career generally promises wealth, power, status, security and great benefits. A calling is often a different story."

John Ortberg

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Revd Donald C Macaskill, 238 Arbroath Road, Dundee DD4 7SB, Tel 01382 451798, Fax 01382-451764 Email: dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk Dens Road Church - 11 Dens Road - 11am & 6.30pm, mid-week meeting confirmed on website. Treasurer: Mr W J Macaulay, 4 Lomond Drive, Carnoustie, DD7 6DN, Tel 01241 853621. www.apcdundee.org.uk

EDINBURGH

Revd Roddy MacRae, 6 Frogston Grove, Edinburgh EH10 7AG. Tel 0131 445 3673. Email: roddy.barvas@blueyonder.co.uk. Viewforth Church of Scotland, 104 Gilmore Place - 12 noon & 6.15pm, Wed 7.30pm in manse. Treasurer: Mr A Cumming, 31 Doune Park, Dalgety Bay, Dunfermline, KY11 9LX Tel 01383 825637. www..welcome.to/edinburghapc

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Services held jointly with the Free Church, High Street, 11am & 6.30pm, Thursday 7.30pm. Contact: Donald MacNicol, 14 Altour Road, Spean Bridge, Inverness-shire PH34 4EZ, Tel 01397 712405.

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LAIRG & ROGART

Revd Alexander Murray, APC Manse, Saval Road, Lairg, IV27 4EH, Tel 01549 402176 Email: amurray@lairg.freeserve.co.uk Lairg Church - 11.30am, 1st, 3rd, 5th Weds 7pm; Rogart Church - 6pm. 2nd, 4th Weds 7pm. Treasurer: Miss Annie J Morrison, Woodlands, Lairg IV27 4DB; Tel 01549 402362.

LOCHCARRON

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LOCHINVER & STOER & DRUMBEG

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(Lochcarron-Lochalsh congregation) Mr. J. van Woerden, 8 Bank Street, Plockton IV52 8TP Tel 01599 544272 email: jan.vanwoerden@virgin.net Plockton 1st and 3rd Lord's Day of month 3 pm

POOLEWE

Services held jointly with Poolewe and Aultbea Free Church - Poolewe 10.45am, Inverasdale 4.30pm, Aultbea 6.30pm. On 4th Lord's Day of month - Poolewe 10.45am and 5.00pm with APC pulpit supply. Treasurer/Contact: K MacLean, Dunedin, 42 Strath, Gairloch IV21 2DB, Tel 01445 712050. Email: kendunedin@aol.com

SKYE

Revd Angus Cattanach, APC Manse, 20 Glamaig Place, Portree IV51 9PJ, Tel 01478 613258 Portree APC Church, Staffin Road - 12 noon & 6.30pm, Thu 7.30pm; C of S, Dunvegan - 12.15 & 5pm. Contact: Malcolm Nicolson, 4 Heatherfield, Portree IV51 9NE Tel 01478 612235.

STORNOWAY

Revd George I Macaskill, APC Manse, 36 Newvalley, Isle of Lewis HS2 0DN, Tel 01851 703217, Fax 01851 703775. Email: g.i.macaskill@btinternet.com 72 Keith Street - 11am & 6.30pm, Thu 7.30pm. Treasurer: Mr W K Macleod, 3 Oliver's Brae, Stornoway HS1 2SS, Tel 01851 703796. www.treetapesministry.org

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VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vancouver: corner 15th Street & Fraser Street - 11am, and 7pm (alternate Sundays) Wed 7pm Contact: Hugh Fraser 001 604 526 0431

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

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Contact: Donald MacLean, Tel 649 524 5747

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