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The Vancouver Congregation

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THE PICTURE ABOVE shows the three new members in our Vancouver congregation which professed faith for the first time at the autumn communion. They are all from the one family - the Epps. Their names are from left to right: Carmel, Lucas and Emi-Lou. We rejoice that the Lord is still working among the young people.

The congregation also had two baptisms at the communion time, when Revd George Macaskill from Stornoway visited the congregation in October. Please remember them all in prayer. •

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Mr D M Fraser,
Publications Treasurer,
'Stratharris',
Daviot, by Inverness, IV2 5XQ
Telephone 01463-772253

Email:
donald@stratharris.freemove.co.uk

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....

Tel No.....

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Editor:

Revd Donald C Macaskill
238 Arbroath Road, Dundee DD4 7SB
Tel 01382 451798

E-mail:
dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk

Hope for the New Year

EVENTS IN THE UK in the past year have not been very encouraging for those who look forward to spiritual revival and blessing. The front page news in many newspapers has highlighted the amount of immorality that goes on in the nation - as much among the elitist groups as among the lower classes.

We can become disconsolate by looking at the press and the media - but if we look at the Scriptures there are many promises of hope. As Paul told the Romans *"whatever things were written before, were written for our learning, and that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"* [Rom 15:4]. We must look at what the Bible says about national and global events and not the media.

Too many people believe 'the end times' are upon us and there is little hope for our age unless the Lord Himself comes to earth. Some Christians see nothing but gloom and quote the book of Revelation as proof. But there is a valid interpretation of Revelation that is full of **positive** and encouraging promises for believers. In order to understand the book, we need to know our Bibles thoroughly, especially the Old Testament. The

Biblical scholar M C Tenney, says there are 348 OT references in Revelation, and unless we know the OT, we will never make sense of the language.

Being a book full of symbols and signs, it must be interpreted by the Bible's own symbolic principles. The book is **not** about space travel, nuclear warfare, the end of the world, the last times, or global pollution. Neither is it about the Antichrist (the word never appears in it!). Many see the book as a doom and gloom prophecy - but it is not. It is about Christ and His church going forth *"conquering and to conquer"* [5:2].

We must remember the book was a **contemporary** book written about **imminent** events, *"things which must shortly take place"* for the *"time is near"* [1:1,3]. Many of the prophecies are written in the **present** tense indicating that the original receivers of the letter were to act immediately. Eg, the readers are asked to *"calculate the number of the Beast"* [13:18], and are told that the Harlot *"is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth"* [17:18]. These statements are in the present tense and makes nonsense if applied to 21st century readers. John expected his contemporary readers to get the

number right because they were there on the spot with all the evidence around them. He would not have expected **them** to discover the number to refer to some 21st century (or later) individual in a foreign government!

Just as the epistle to the Galatians and Corinthians had instructions relevant to their particular situation in time, so the book of Revelation had directions and warnings for its original readers which did not have direct relevance for other readers hundreds of years later. Just as the application and lessons from the history of Galatians and Corinthians are to be learned by us, so there are applications for us to learn from the book of Revelation.

The disasters and judgments predicted in the book, can all be referred to the covenanted nation of Israel because it became apostate. The final judgment came in AD70 when the Romans destroyed the temple. Almost all of the prophecies in Revelation have **already been** fulfilled in the destruction of AD70.

The Hebrew numerical values of the figures 666, compute to make the name Nero Caesar - the early Church recognising the awful atrocities which Nero inflicted on believers. This is no new theory concocted by modern liberals but has been the **orthodox** interpretation from "Irenaeus down to...St Beatus in the 8th century" who connected the Beast to Nero.

The book of Revelation is about Christ standing at the door and knocking, giving a last chance to apostate Israel to repent before it is too late.

We also need to remember the purpose of prophecy. It is **not** 'occultic' (ie, to predict the 'unknown'). Many people feel that the purpose of prophecy is to help us discern who the true prophets and teachers are. The purpose of prophecy is **always ethical** - ie, it is designed to bring **repentance** to the readers and hearers. It is to get a community to change its sinful ways and turn to God as is clearly seen in the example of Jonah.

Yes, Revelation is an encouraging book as it assures us that Christ and His Church will be triumphant. It is not about the triumph of evil or the power of the devil, but it is about Jesus Christ as "*Ruler over the kings of the earth*" and having dominion for ever and ever. It is about the destruction of Satan and his angels and the ultimate victory of the Church.

The victory of course will not be without struggles, setbacks and disappointments, but success is guaranteed. We must not allow the front page news to discourage us from our calling to spread the gospel and to stand up for truth and righteousness.

There will be no problem facing us which the Church already has not overcome and defeated IN His name. As we face a new year, let us draw strength from "*Jesus Christ our hope*" [1 Tim 1:1]. •

Some Thoughts on the World Reformed Scene

By Revd George Macaskill, Stornoway, who has just returned from visiting several congregations abroad

THE "RERFORMED" churches abroad are in a very similar condition as those of their counterparts in the UK.

While churches and denominations, in general, are not expanding or developing, Christianity itself is alive and well. There are more and more congregations consisting of only a dozen or so members. This is particularly so the further one goes into reformed fellowships. Not only are congregations very small, but there seems to be little concern about the smallness of their numbers.

Sadly, the "Great Commission" is not seen as a priority among many reformed people, and it appears that they have been distracted away from this greatest of all tasks by lesser concerns. It seems the church has concentrated on "defending" the faith instead of "advancing" the faith.

Two issues which seem to be occupying the minds of the reformed churches abroad are firstly, paedo-communion (children receiving the Lord's Supper) and secondly, Christian or Home-Schooling.

With regard to paedo-communion, the argument is used that if the Lord's Supper is the New Testament corollary of the Passover, and as children partook of the Passover, why should covenant children not partake of the Lord's Supper? Two short answers may be given.

First, it is by no means clear that children did partake of the Passover, and secondly, the New Testament makes it clear that the preparation necessary before partaking of the Supper requires that a person "examine" themselves - some thing beyond the ability of young children.

The second issue of Christian or Home-Schooling is not so easily answered. Throughout the Western world today, humanistic thought and anti-Christian propaganda dominates the State School curriculum. At the moment, especially in the Highlands and Islands where most of our congregations are, there is not the same onslaught of humanist pressure.

However, the situation is rapidly changing and we could well face the same dilemma as our colleagues abroad, and Christians in

the Highlands of Scotland will need to be prepared to face the challenges if they are to be faithful to their baptismal vows and truly care for the spiritual welfare of their children.

Despite all this, however, souls are being wonderfully saved in many different countries and one article I read in a *secular* national magazine amazingly predicted a world-wide "revival" in conservative Christianity and was appealing to authorities to prepare for it !

Disillusionment with the postmodern mind-set of the West is backfiring on its proponents and its rejection is sending many to look for meaning and hope in life. While the church is not attracting such enquirers, many are examining Christian history and principles in a new light.

The question arises: "Can there be a true resurgence in Christianity without a corresponding increase in the Church?" The answer must surely be: "Only temporarily." Christ has said that He would: *"Build His Church - and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it."* If Christ has sovereignly chosen to use His church as ***the*** organ in the development of His Kingdom, then that should be the greatest news the church has ever heard.

The following five principles are simply thoughts which grew in my mind having discussed the condition of the "Reformed" church worldwide with Dr Andrew Young,

the director of Grace Theological College in Auckland, New Zealand.

FIVE PRINCIPLES THE REFORMED CHURCH NEEDS TO REMEMBER

If the reformed church is to impact the contemporary world it desperately needs to note five things.

1. It is simply not enough to be faithful to the truth

Although faithfulness to the truth is essential for the church, it is not enough to fulfil all the church's obligations.

Many preachers can testify that they have preached the Word faithfully for decades, and have to complain there has been very little evident fruit. In fact there has been a huge drop in the numbers of people hearing the message. In many congregations the gospel is preached over and over again to those who have heard it a thousand times, while thousands in the surrounding houses have never heard it once! Faithfulness to the truth is essential but faithfulness to the Great Commission by reaching the unsaved is also essential.

2. More than Church Services are required

The Lord Jesus Christ *"went about doing good"*. He was interested in

the whole man - both body and soul. Our communities are in desperate need, despite the millions of pounds that governments pour into Social Work schemes.

But even when we concentrate on spiritual matters alone, more than "sermons" are necessary in an age unfamiliar and unaccustomed to the format of a public meeting. The "Great Commission" is not: "Welcome them into your church" but "Go, tell".

In others words, the message is to be brought to the people rather than the people come to the church. One difference in the administration of the gospel in New Testament times is that the commission has changed from "Come see" in the Old Testament to "Go, tell" in the New Testament.

The church has to think of ways in which it can bring the good news to the lost ***on their patch***, rather than expect the unsaved to somehow arrive in church.

3. The Church needs strong leadership

Looking over history, it seems God has used great leaders in both church and state. It seems to be God's way of working since the days of Moses. Almost every Revival has had a figurehead. Just about every religious movement can be traced to have some personality influencing its development.

One feature of today's religious setting is that there are

very few influential preachers who have made any significant impact outside their own denomination or sphere of activity. Of course, God is not tied to work in one way, but it would seem that the means He often chooses to bring revival is by raising up strong influential leaders.

How do we get such people? The Saviour has the answer. When He saw multitudes of people, He had compassion on them and said: *"Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that HE will send labourers into HIS harvest"* [Mat 9:38].

4. There must be intentional evangelism

Evangelism comes to very few of us *naturally*. Most of us have to struggle hard to give out a tract or even speak to a stranger about spiritual things.

It is true that proper testimony and witness is natural rather than forced, yet the church, (as the organ Christ has chosen to use in the building of His Kingdom), must devise organised systems of evangelism. Systems that communicate the gospel in relevant ways to an age that simply does not think it needs God. We no longer live in a God-conscious nation.

There are no easy, simple solutions to this work, but it must be done. We need to remember the unique nature of the Church "It is the only organisation in the world that exists for the sake of its non-members".

5. The Church needs to Concentrate on its own children

It is surprising to discover in some Presbyterian congregations how much effort is put into reaching the lost to the neglect of their own children. Covenant promises do not seem to be pled and prayed for as much as they should. There seems little confidence in God's promises for those brought up covenantally.

Ironically, in some places, reformed Baptists are better at training children in God's ways than some Presbyterians.

There seems to be an idea that true conversions are of the sudden, unexpected, spectacular type, rather than the slow gradual

instruction of the young in the fear of the Lord. Being truly "born again" by the Holy Spirit does not necessarily mean that one has to have a dramatic sudden change in their life.

A survey of God's great men in the Bible, such as Moses, David, Simon Peter, Barnabas, Timothy reveal that they "grew" over a period of time, in the ways of God. Children brought up properly in Christian homes have a tremendous advantage.

There is a stability and maturity that develops in those who are taught consistently from their early years how to live and serve God, which the church needs to concentrate on as it seeks to produce leaders to think Biblically. •

Postmodernism and Tolerance

THE MODERN UNDERSTANDING of 'tolerance' sounds so attractive at first, but is it? D L Sayers, the novelist sums it up well: 'In the world it is called 'Tolerance', but in hell it is called 'Despair'...the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, enjoys nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die'. That is where relativism leads us. It has bred a generation which has nothing to live for, and nothing to die for either...

The philosopher Bertram Russell was surely right when he said, 'It is evident as a matter of logic that since they [the great religions of the world] disagree, not more than one of them can be true'...

We can know the truth. Of course it is arrogant of me to suggest that my particular theory about God is better than any other. But Christianity is not based on a human theory - it is founded on the revelation of God Himself. He was so committed to making it possible for us humans to know Him that He went to the lengths of coming to earth to be born as a man'.

Vaughan Roberts in 'Turning Points'

Death of Healthy Confrontation

EVEN IN CHURCH circles, it is not deemed proper, and certainly not the "Christian-love" thing, to point out that a person's language and behaviour's dishonouring to God. To talk about sin is to talk another language.

Adrian Plaas, a somewhat refreshingly blunt writer, admits that "very early in his Christian life, he was infected with the politeness disease". He soon learned that to say anything negative it had to be said in such a round-about way that the hearer did not get the point anyway. Anything negative has to be said in love. There is no problem with that, since love should control all that we think, say and do.

The problem, however, relates to an anaemic view of Jesus Christ. There can never be too much emphasis on the love of God. All the blessings we shall ever experience flow from that love. Love that is so richly expressed in all that Jesus is for people. Looking at the life and ministry of Jesus, we see someone doing good to others. He displayed loving care that went beyond social expectations, and it certainly went across the religious boundaries. His disciples were surprised to see him talking to a Samaritan woman, and even her perspective on Jewish people led her to think it remarkable. Jesus' contacts with the

"untouchables" of society was, in the eyes of the religious hierarchy of the day, proof positive that he could not be looked on as a discerning rabbi.

But, what Jesus did was always appropriate, and at times his style was "confrontational". He was not just personally having a bad day when he drew verbal swords with some of his critics. There were times when Jesus challenged them. It must have been healthy if he did it. What can we learn from Jesus and confrontation? In Mark 3:5, Jesus was angry and in deep distress because of the stubbornness of people's hearts.

In Matthew 23, from verse 23 onwards, Jesus engaged in a devastating exposure of the inverted priorities, the external shallowness, and the internal corruption of the Pharisees. He concluded that bout with the question which they, as the religious elite, had not even thought about – "*how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?*". Had Jesus got it wrong? No.

We are mistaken if we think that warnings against "sinful living" and "Christless dying" are inappropriate for our society. Human need is ever the same. It is that we, aware of our great need, flee to Jesus Christ as God's one and only way of saving grace. The alternative is Hell.

Malcolm MacInnes, Moderator

Do We Serve God, or Does He Serve Us?

IT IS INTERESTING TO think Biblically of the question above. We are inclined to think of 'God serving us' as heretical. But what do the Scriptures teach?

We often hear people saying they are retiring or giving up their job, in order to serve God. We all know what they mean and such decisions are to be highly commended. The Scriptures teach *"You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve"* [Luke 4:8].

However, there is another side to the question that is not considered enough. It is the problem of not letting God serve us? Mark tells us *"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve"* [Mar 10:45]. As someone else has said 'God is not looking for people to work for Him, so much as He is looking for people who will let Him work for them'.

It is possible for us to belittle God, as if He were needy of our service. The Scriptures teach that pride is one of the great sins of the human race. It is our pride that prevents us from confessing our sin in the first place, and then it is pride that keeps us from coming to Christ for grace and mercy. Our attitude is, we will not have this Man to reign over us. We want to have a part in

the glory - but God will not share His glory with another.

In the parable of the 'Expectant Steward' waiting for the return of his Master, Jesus commended the servant who waited until the Master came back and then was told to sit down and he would be served and attended to by the Master. It was the Master's pleasure to serve the servant. The parable teaches that it is God's glory to serve sinners.

When we focus too much on our unworthiness, we are inclined to forget the joy of the Father in redeeming and blessing His children. God's heart overflows with love and kindness to the needy - and He enjoys dispensing that love to them because it brings glory to His Name. God is never more glorified than when He is saving and giving grace to sinners. *"The Lord is good to all. And His tender mercies are over all His works"* [Psa 145:9]. Sometimes our pride will not allow us to even think that God is being exceedingly good to us. We sometimes resent the idea that we need such grace and mercy.

It is because God delights in giving us good things, that He enjoys hearing us pray to Him. Prayer creates an opportunity for God to be glorified in answering that prayer.

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you - and you shall glorify Me" [Psa 50:15].

Our service to God must be in the strength of the grace which He gives us, else He will not be glorified. This is what Peter emphasised when he said *"If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ"* [1 Peter 4:11]. When we serve the Lord, it is so that the Lord will get the glory, not us.

God delights in hearing our voice in prayer - when we realise that He alone is the source of blessing. He delights to hear us come to Him having discovered that the promises of this world are empty. He delights to see us with the humility to call upon Him and ask Him to bless us.

One of the biggest problems of mankind is our unwillingness to let God into our lives and do with us what He wishes. And He always wishes our good. He wants us to take a humble place before Him so that He can mould us into His true disciples. As a train runs best and is most free when it is on the rails, so we get most fulfillment when we walk in the paths God has laid out for us. We are called to run the race *"that is set before us"* and not what we have mapped out for ourselves!

We are too often afraid to let God take complete control of our lives - we want to be in control of our own lives and plan ahead - instead of living by faith and depending on God to supply all our

needs. We are impatient to wait for His timing forgetting that *"they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength"* [Isa 40:31].

True humility consists in utter dependence on God's grace and mercy to work in our lives - the lives which He gave us in the first place. Our lives are not our own - we belong to God.

There is nothing more important than God's glory. It is even more important than salvation. The salvation of mankind is not the ultimate design of God. He saves people in order to glorify Himself. - the glorification of God is the ultimate design of all His creation.

It is because God is most glorified in dispensing His grace and love, that we understand the importance and significance of God 'serving' us. He created everything for His own glory and pleasure and that includes the salvation of sinners. *"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* [Phil 2:13]. He predestined His people *"according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace"* [Eph 1:5].

Yes, we are to serve God, and glorify Him in doing so, but He also desires that He serve us. He did so in our redemption, in delivering us from the power of darkness. He does so in answering our prayers, when we call upon Him. With his heart, overflowing with kindness towards His creatures, desiring nothing but their good, He is waiting to be gracious to all who come. •

Congregational News

DUNDEE

We press on with our various activities and are thankful for the opportunities we get to 'spread the word' to those around us. Our Sunday Club is perhaps the event which brings most 'unchurched' folk into the building.

On our Saturday Outing to Perth swimming pool, we had interesting conversations with some parents of the children of the Club. We were so pleased that they felt they could 'open up' to us, and some of them asked for prayer.

The Wednesday Public Prayer Time from 10am to 2pm, brings few people, but now and again someone walks in and we have a discussion. David continues to make regular contact in the community.

We have plans for extra services over the next few weeks including Jimmy Gunn coming from the north for a time of fellowship and testimony. This is on Saturday 14 December at 7pm. We hope that other churches will join with us for this evening.

On Thursdays, we still provide some food and other useful and necessary items to the homeless centre the Dundee Cyrenians.

The congregational night for our annual dinner together is to be

on Thursday 12 December. Finally we hope hold a communion on the last Sunday of the year the 29th of December.

INVERNESS

Official Opening of Kingsview Christian Centre

The first part of the development is almost complete. We plan on having two stages in the "Opening" of the project. The first part is mainly for the congregation and the community, although others who come will be welcome.

It will be performed by one of the Inverness Members of Parliament, Mr David Stewart. There will be a prayer, followed by the cutting of the ribbon.

We hope that the Centre will be used by the community, and that some will come to this official Opening Ceremony on Saturday 30th November at 11am. The Inverness congregation's meetings at Kingsview will commence next day, 1 December.

There will be, the Lord willing, a **Service of Dedication** on **Tuesday 10 December** at **7.30pm** at which **Rev Dr Sinclair Ferguson** will preach. We hope that others who have encouraged

and helped in the project will come to join with us in that time of praise and worship.

Sponsor a Chair

A large part of the aim of our new building is to reach the surrounding community with the gospel, but we also hope that the premises will prove useful for meetings involving our wider church fellowship, such as Presbytery and Committee meetings, Conferences and Camps.

The whole project involves considerable financial outlay, and we thank God for his on-going provision, part of which has come

through some of the readers of the APC News.

A large single item is the cost of purchasing chairs. This is where you might help. Can you sponsor a chair, or even two? Each chair costs about **£50**. If you would like to **“Sponsor a Chair”** please send your donation to the Inverness APC Treasurer, indicating that you wish to “Sponsor a Chair”.

If you pay Income Tax, please indicate that also, and the Christian Centre will benefit from reclaiming the tax involved.

The Treasurer is: Mr K. MacDonald, 16 Drumdevan Place, Inverness IV2 4DQ. •

Kingsview Christian Centre

**Balnafettack Road,
Inverness IV3 8TF**

Tel: 01463-716843

Service of Dedication

**Tuesday 10 December 2002
at 7.30 pm**

Preacher: **Rev. Dr. Sinclair Ferguson**

You are invited to join in this celebration

It Can Be Done!

Blending work with Family Life

POLITICIANS AND businessmen are perhaps the most vulnerable of people in our society today, who spend too little time with their families. The pressure of business and politics is great, but it does not justify the neglect of family life.

Bringing up a family is one of the most important responsibilities a person can have. We only have our children for a few years and God has ordained that parents should have the greatest 'input' to their lives and education.

The values, ideals, habits, a child picks up after the first seven years of life, will be very hard to eradicate later on. The early instruction of truth and wisdom will make a lasting impression. It is so vital to train a child in the most important values of life when he is still young and impressionable.

We may be inclined to think this is not really possible in today's world. That is a myth. One of the greatest politicians who did wonderful work for the nation was William Wilberforce. He was the man who was mainly responsible for the abolition of slavery - and he was a great family man. He did not neglect his duties as a father despite the tremendous pressure on him as a Member of Parliament.

In his book 'Hero for Humanity', Kevin Belmonte tells us about the home life of the great Wilberforce. He was 40 years old before he married and had 6 children. And he looked forward to his new role as a father with joy.

We are told that 'At any given moment, one might visit his home and find the master of the house...refreshing himself by throwing a ball'. It was not unusual for him to excuse himself 'from important deliberations with fellow MPs to go out on the lawn and have a race with the children'. During a Twelfth Night party, Wilberforce and his friends played blind man's buff with the children for 2 hours. Although he was very busy he would often scoop up one of his children and take them on a picnic, to see a juggler, or to visit a toy shop. On Sunday, of course, he took them to church usually singing several hymns on the way.

Wilberforce's example influenced his generation. Belmonte writes households 'became places where parents spent more time with their children, educating them, praying with them, reading with them and playing with them'. Wilberforce resigned his seat in the House of Commons in order 'to take a more active role in educating and rearing his children'. He continued

his campaign against slavery - but not at the expense of his family life - the family had priority. One of his sons became a bishop and another a clergyman and they all adored him.

We might think it is impossible to make our families a priority, but Wilberforce is proof that it can be done. We need to realise that God does help those who are determined to put God first, the family next and themselves last. Jesus reminded us to *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you"* [Mat 6:33].

God has revealed to us that instructing our children in the ways of the Lord is one of the priorities for parents.

To have a well ordered life, regulated with God's priorities, means we will not suffer from stress, and we will not likely have a guilty conscience, and a painful heart in our latter years at having neglected to give our children time and attention.

Kevin Belmonte, '[Hero for Humanity: A Biography of William Wilberforce](#)' [NavPress, 2002].

Rest in the Lord

REST FROM the burden of a small god. Why? Because I have found **the Lord**.

Rest from doing things my way. Why? Because **the Lord is my shepherd**.

Rest from endless wants. Why? Because **I shall not want**.

Rest from weariness. Why? Because **he makes me lie down**. Rest from worry. Why? Because **he leads me**.

Rest from hopelessness. Why? Because **he restores my soul**.

Rest from guilt. Why? Because **he leads me in the paths of righteousness**. Rest from arrogance. Why? Because of **his name's sake**. Rest from the valley of death. Why? Because **he walks me through it**. Rest from the

shadow of grief. Why? Because **he guides me**.

Rest from fear. Why? Because **his presence comforts me**. Rest from loneliness. Why? Because **he is with me**. Rest from shame. Why? Because **he has prepared a place for me in the presence of my enemies**.

Rest from disappointments. Why? Because **he anoints me**. Rest from envy. Why? Because **my cup overflows**. Rest from doubt. Why? Because **he follows me**.

Rest from homesickness. Why? Because **I dwell in the house of the Lord forever**.

*Taken from Max Lucado's
'[Travelling Light](#)'*

The Marks of a Spiritual Leader (Part 1)

By John Piper

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www.desiringGOD.org

I DEFINE SPIRITUAL leadership as knowing where God wants people to be and taking the initiative to use God's methods to get them there in reliance on God's power.

The answer to where God wants people to be is in a spiritual condition and in a lifestyle that display his glory and honor his name. Therefore, the goal of spiritual leadership is that people come to know God and to glorify him in all that they do.

Spiritual leadership is aimed not so much at directing people as it is at changing people. If we would be the kind of leaders we ought to be, we must make it our aim to develop persons rather than dictate plans. You can get people to do what you want, but if they don't change in their heart you have not led them spiritually. You have not taken them to where God wants them to be.

Everyone has the responsibility of leadership in some relationships. But my concern in this paper is with the characteristics that a person must have in order to be a spiritual leader who excels both in the quality of his direction and the numbers of people who follow him. Biblical spiritual leadership contains an inner circle and an outer

circle. The inner circle of spiritual leadership is that sequence of events in the human soul that must happen if anyone is to get to first base in spiritual leadership.

These are the absolute bare essentials. They are things that all Christians must attain in some degree, and when they are attained with high fervor and deep conviction they very often lead one into strong leadership. In the outer circle are qualities that characterize both spiritual and non-spiritual leaders. What I would like to try to do now in this paper is simply explain and illustrate these qualities on the inner circle and the outer circle.

The Inner Circle of Spiritual Leadership

1. That Others Will Glorify God

The ultimate goal of all spiritual leadership is that other people might come to glorify God, that is, might so feel and think and act as to magnify the true character of God. According to Matthew 5:14-16, one of the crucial means by which a Christian leader brings other people to glorify God is by being a person who loves both friend and foe. *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid, nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but*

*on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house Let your light so shine before men, **that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.**"*

This text shows that there is an attitude and lifestyle that is so distinctive that when it appears in the arena of fallen humanity it gives valid evidence that there is a God and he is a gloriously trustworthy heavenly father.

When the reality of God's promises to take care of us and to work everything together for our good grips our hearts so that we do not fall prey to greed or fear or vainglory but rather manifest a contentment and a love and a freedom for other people, then the world will have to admit that the one who gives us hope and freedom must be real and glorious.

2. Love both Friend and Foe by Trusting in God and Hoping in His Promises

But how shall we attain to a love that is strong enough to bless and pray for its enemies? The answer given in Scripture (and this is the third level in the inner circle) is that trust in God and hope in his promises leads to love. Galatians 5:6 says, *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love."*

That is, when we have strong faith in the goodness of God it inevitably works itself out in love. Colossians 1:4, 5 says, *"We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus*

and of the love which you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven."

In other words, when our hope is strong we are freed from fears and cares that prevent the free exercises of love. Therefore, a spiritual leader must be a person who has strong confidence in the sovereign goodness of God to work everything together for his good. Otherwise, he will inevitably fall into the trap of manipulating circumstances and exploiting people in order to secure for himself a happy future which he is not certain God will provide.

3. Meditate On and Pray Over His Word

But how shall we sinners come to have this kind of confidence in God? Romans 10:17 says, *"Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ."* And Psalm 119:18 says, *"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."*

These two texts together show us that faith in God is rooted in God's Word. When we hear God's Word, especially the preaching of Christ in whom all the promises of God have their yes, we are moved to trust him, but this does not happen automatically.

We must pray that our eyes be open to the true significance of the Word of God in Scripture. So the spiritual leader must be a person who meditates on the Word of God and who prays for spiritual illumination. Otherwise, his faith

will grow weak and his love will languish and no one will be moved to glorify God because of him.

4. Acknowledge Your Helplessness

But finally, we must ask how a person comes to be willing to spend time with and be open to the Word of God? The answer seems to be that we must acknowledge our helplessness. All true spiritual leadership has its roots in desperation. Jesus commended the man who said, *"God be merciful to me, a sinner."* Jesus said of his own ministry, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners."* This means that the beginning of spiritual leadership must be in the acknowledgement that we are the sick who need a physician.

Once we are humbled to that point we will be opened to reading the doctor's prescription in the Word. And as we read the wonderful promises that are there for those of us who trust the doctor, our faith will grow strong and our hope will become solid. And when our faith is strong and our hope is solid all the barriers to love, like greed and fear, will be swept away.

When we become the kind of people who can risk our lives, even for our enemies, and who don't hold grudges and who devote our energies to do others good rather than seeking our own aggrandizement, then people will see and give glory to our father in heaven.

The implication of this inner circle of leadership is that in order to lead you have to be out ahead of your people in Bible study and prayer. I think there will be no successful spiritual leadership without extended seasons of prayer and meditation on the Scriptures. Spiritual leaders ought to rise early in order to meet God before they meet anybody else.

They will probably want to keep a journal of insights and ideas as they read the Word and pray. They will want to read books about the Bible (for example, books by J.I. Packer and Paul Little and John Stott and dozens of other excellent evangelical authors) and about prayer (for example, the eight books by E.M. Bounds).

They will want to take a periodic half-day retreat with a Bible and a notebook and a hymnbook. If you want to be a great leader of people you have to get away from people to be with God.

Hudson Taylor's Example

Dr. Howard Taylor, in *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (page 234f.) describes an experience that he had traveling with his father, Hudson Taylor, through China. He writes,

It was not easy for Mr. Taylor in his changeful life, to make time for prayer and Bible study, but he knew that it was vital. Well do the writers remember traveling with him month after month in northern China, by cart and wheelbarrow,

with the poorest of inns at night.

Often with only one large room for coolies and travelers alike, they would screen off a corner for their father and another for themselves, with curtains of some sort; and then after sleep at last had brought a measure of quiet they would hear a match struck and seek the flicker of candlelight which told that Mr. Taylor, however weary, was pouring over the little Bible in two volumes always at hand.

From two to four a.m. was the time he usually gave to prayer; the time when he could be most sure of being undisturbed to wait upon God. That flicker of candlelight has meant more to them than all they have read or heard on secret prayer; it meant reality, not preaching but practice.

The hardest part of the missionary career, Mr. Taylor found, is to maintain regular, prayerful Bible study. "Satan will always find you something to do," he would say, "when you ought to be occupied about that, if it is only arranging a window blind."

George Mueller's Example

George Mueller is noteworthy for his great faith in the work of his orphanages. In his autobiography he has a section entitled, "How to be Constantly Happy in the Lord." He explains how for years he used to try to pray early in the morning and found that his mind wandered again and again. Then he made a discovery. He records it like this:

The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord.

The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished . . .

Before this time my practice had been at least for ten years previously as a habitual thing to give myself to prayer after having dressed in the morning. Now I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, while meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. I began, therefore, to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning early in the morning.

The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon his precious word, was to begin to meditate on the word of God, searching as it were into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the word; not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to

intercession, or to supplication; so that though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer. When thus I have been for a while making confession or intercession or supplication or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me that food for my soul as the object of my meditation.

The result of this is that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation and that my inner man almost invariably is almost sensibly nourished and strengthened and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not a happy state of heart.

Now that God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain food for the inner man. As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as everyone must allow.

Now what is the food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the word of God; and here again, not the simple reading of the word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read,

pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.

By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had to pass in peace through deeper trials in various ways than I have ever had before; and after having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials, and the temptations of the day come upon one!

It should be an encouragement to all of us to persevere in the meditation upon God's Word when we read a letter which, in 1897, George Mueller sent to the British and Foreign Bible Society in which he had to excuse himself from attending a meeting in Birmingham. He said, "Will you have the kindness to read to the meeting that I have been for sixty-eight years and three months, viz., since July, 1929, a lover of the word of God and that uninterruptedly.

During this time I have read considerably more than one hundred times through the whole of the Old and New Testaments with prayer and meditation." If we are going to be powerful spiritual leaders we must move in the direction of Hudson Taylor and George Mueller.

To be continued in next issue

Books as Presents for Children

By Catherine MacKenzie of 'Focus Publications'

I WOULD JUST LIKE to take this opportunity to tell you about some of the books that have reached the mark of favourites with me this year. They were all a joy to work on but the real road test is sitting down and reading them with a child. If you haven't enjoyed that experience lately - give it a go. Nieces, Nephews, Sunday school pupils, the kids in Crèche, a neighbour's child, they all appreciate that special time spent with them sharing a book. Make it one where you share God's love with them too.

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Congregational Details

DINGWALL

Revd Dr Malcolm MacInnes, Drumalin, 16 Drummond Road, Inverness IV2 4NB, Tel 01463 223983, Fax 01462 226939 Email: mmacinnnes@btinternet.com Community Centre, Tulloch Street - 6pm, Tue 7.30pm in Free Church Hall. Treasurer: D M Macdonald, Scoraig, 8 Kinnettas Square, Strathpeffer IV14 9BD, Tel 01997 421847.

DUNDEE

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

FORT WILLIAM

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.

HARRIS

Contact: Norman MacDonald Tel 01859 530345. Seilabost School - 12 noon & 6pm Tue 7.30pm. Treasurer: John MacKinnon, 8 Stockinish, Isle of Harris HS3 3EN Tel 01859 530211.

INVERNESS

Revd Dr Malcolm MacInnes, Drumalin, 16 Drummond Road, Inverness IV2 4NB, Tel 01463

223983 Fax 01463 226939 Email: mmacinnnes@btinternet.com Kingsview Christian Centre, Balfafetack Road - Discovery 10.30am, Worship 11.30am & 6.30pm, Wed 7.30pm. Treasurer: Mr Kenneth Macdonald, 'Arnish', 16 Drumdevan Place, Inverness IV2 4DQ, Tel 01463 231364. www.apcinverness.freeuk.com

KINLOCHBERVIE

Kinlochbervie: Conference Room, Harbour Offices, 11.30am; Treasurer: W D MacLeod, 114 Inshegra, Rhiconich, by Lairg IV27 4RH Tel 01971 521388.

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

Lochcarron Village Hall - 11am & 6pm, Wed 7pm; Kishorn Meeting House 3pm on 2nd Lord's Day of month. Treasurer: Mrs Alison Stewart, 13 Kirkton Gardens, Lochcarron IV54 8UQ, Tel 01520 722239 Email: ajs.kishorn@tesco.net

LOCHINVER & STOER & DRUMBEG

Free Church Stoer - 11am; APC Church, Drumbeig - 12.30pm; Free Church Lochinver - 6pm. Treasurer: Mrs E. MacKenzie, Church Road, Stoer, Sutherland, IV27 4SE, Tel 01571 855279.

OBAN

Revd Archibald McPhail, Fernhill, Polvinister Road, Oban PA34 5TN, Tel 01631 567076 Email: amcphail@quista.net Campbell Street Church - 11am & 6.30pm, Wed 7.30pm Treasurer: N Matheson, Carnish, Glenmore Road, Oban PA34, Tel 01631 566259 and D Morrison, Glenstruan, Old Shore Road, Connel, PA37, Tel 01631 710226.

PLOCKTON & KYLE

(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

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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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CLERK of PRESBYTERY

Revd A N McPhail, MA, Mth, APC Manse, Polvinister Road, Oban PA34 5TN Tel 01631-567076 Email: amcphail@quista.net

ASSISTANT CLERK

Revd G I Macaskill, APC Manse, 36 Newvalley, Isle of Lewis HS2 0DN Tel/Fax 01851-703217 Email: g.i.macaskill@btinternet.com

GENERAL TREASURER of PRESBYTERY

Mr Kenneth MacLean,
PO Box 2 Gairloch, IV21 2YA
Tel 01445-712050 Email: kendunedin@aol.com

PUBLICATIONS TREASURER

Mr D M Fraser,
'Stratharris', Daviot,
by Inverness, IV2 5XQ Tel 01463 772253
Email: donald@stratharris.freeserve.co.uk

EDITOR of 'APC NEWS'

Revd Donald C Macaskill
238 Arbroath Road, Dundee DD4 7SB
Tel 01382 451798 Fax 01382 451764
Email: dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk