

Good News Unlimited

January, 1985

Solo Christo—Sola Scriptura—Sola Fida—Sola Gratia



THE ONLY WAY TO A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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Good News Unlimited is published each month by Good News Unlimited, Inc., P.O. Box GN, Auburn, CA 95603, USA.

Subscriptions are free upon request.

Good News Unlimited is a non-denominational organization comprising a variety of gospel ministries. This magazine is dedicated to proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ and his kingdom of grace. It also seeks to keep subscribers up to date on all aspects of Good News Unlimited's ministries—international radio broadcasts, public seminars and congresses, local preaching appointments, publications, **Good News For Kids** (a monthly section in this magazine), cassette publications, etc.

As a nonprofit religious corporation, Good News Unlimited is supported solely by donations from those who believe in its ministries. Gifts are tax deductible in the USA, Canada and New Zealand.

The editor welcomes unsolicited manuscripts; however, they cannot be returned. Please send typed, double-spaced manuscripts, of general interest to Christians of all denominations, to: The Editor, **Good News Unlimited**, P.O. Box GN, Auburn, CA 95603, USA.

Canadian office: P.O. Box 3068, Station D, Willowdale, M2R 3G5, Ontario, Canada.

Australian office: P.O. Box 1603, Hornsby-Northgate, NSW 2077, Australia.

South African office: P.O. Box 11096, Universitas 9321, Republic of South Africa.

New Zealand office: P.O. Box 10 154, Christchurch, New Zealand.

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Editorial

Just recently I read a description of the Model Woman. It was originally given by Ellen Goodman in a commencement address. It went like this: "The Model Woman gets up at six-thirty in the morning and jogs five miles. At seven-thirty she cooks a totally nourishing breakfast for her husband and two beautiful children. By eight-thirty the children have left for school, her husband to his office, and she is on the way to her incredibly demanding job. She is advertising director for a major firm. All day long she attends meetings and makes important decisions. When she finally arrives home, it is quite late because she had to attend a board meeting for a community-service organization of which she is chairman. But she does not get home too late to fix her children a totally nourishing supper. She helps both of them with their homework and has meaningful good nights with each. Yet she still has time to plug in the Cuisinart to prepare a gourmet, candlelit supper for herself and her husband. As the day comes to an end, the Model Woman has a totally fulfilling yet deeply honest sexual relationship with her admirably sensitive husband." (*Who Will Deliver Us?* Paul Zahl, p. 10)

When I read the above description of the Model Woman to a friend of mine he wanted to know what was left for the husband to do. Probably just enough time to slouch on a couch and watch a ball game!

There are elements in the above idealistic picture that a Christian wife would appreciate. There is nothing wrong with having ideals. Every Christian husband and wife ought to aspire to reach the loftiest goals. We can all say with the air force-recruiting television ad, "Aim High."

The above description of the Model Woman seems to me to be rather *performance-oriented*. It concentrates more on *doing* rather than *being*. Of course there are times when it is easier to *do* rather than to *be*. However, one could easily imagine a thousand and one things that could frustrate a wife in her attempt to perform as a Model Woman. And what happens if a wife with such goals fails to achieve the standards set in this picture of the Model Woman? It is when we think of this likelihood that we realize once again why Christ placed so much emphasis on the moral and spiritual quality of selfless, forgiving love.

In this edition, Gillian Ford focuses on one problem that frustrates many wives in their attempt to be a happy, loving wife of an *admirably sensitive husband*. I do not know much about PMS, and Gillian would be the first to admit that she is a long way from knowing all there is to know about this sensitive topic. However, what she has learned she has gladly shared with us and hopes it will in some small way contribute to our daily happiness.

—Noel Mason

THE ONLY WAY TO A HAPPY NEW YEAR

Desmond Ford



I had often wondered what the strange creature was. It looked somewhat like an ostrich but it wasn't an ostrich. It looked like a shrunken giraffe, but it wasn't a giraffe. Often when I jogged in the field, I was tempted to go to the fence and look more closely at the weird animal. Perhaps it was as well for me that I didn't. Even Noel Mason, my good friend, couldn't help me. Like me, he is an Australian. He would have recognized a crocodile, a koala bear, or a kangaroo, but not this strange object. However, David Spruance gave us the answer.

David Spruance, son of missionary parents in Argentina, recognized the creature at once. "It's a llama," he said. "It comes from Peru. If it spits in your eye it can seriously infect you and lead to much trouble." I decided that when jogging, I would

not yield to the temptation of going to that fence and looking that weird creature in the eye.

But there are things that one does have to face up to. There are some things that we can't avoid looking in the eye. Take life itself. Here we are facing a new year. Will it be a happy new year? Perhaps that question is like another one you've often heard: "Is life worth living?" The doctor's response, as he thought clinically, was: "That depends on the liver." He meant the organ of the body, but we do well to understand it as a reference to the liver of life — a living person. The question as to whether life is worth living usually depends on the person. It was Solomon who wrote, "The toil of a fool so wearies him that he does not even know how to go to a city" (Pr 10:15). How should one live in order to have a happy

new year every year? Do we need to look for a new formula?

A New Formula?

Someone once asked Albert Einstein whether he carried a notebook with him in order to jot down his new ideas. His reply was, "No. I don't get many new ideas." He was right. Most of the great ideas that influence our world and our lives in particular are not new. They are old, very, very old. It is because of our stupidity that we keep looking for some new clue to life, a new prescription, a new formula to try and turn dust into gold. But all that we need to know about life and happiness is found in the old, old platitudes.

Perhaps it's not more knowledge that we need, but more motivation to apply that which is already known. Let me

draw on a biographical snippet from Charles L. Paddock in order to illustrate that.

He relates that in his childhood he worked at a large general store at a country crossroads. There in the store in the winter was a large iron stove which was kept red-hot most of the time. Says Paddock, "Many of the not-too-industrious men of the community came to the store almost every winter day and sat around the stove, chewed tobacco, and endeavored to spit into the boxes of sawdust which I placed around the heater each morning." Paddock states that over the years he's never forgotten that these men mainly talked of the lack of opportunities for them. They had no chance to do anything or to be anything. All the good farms had been bought up, and the best jobs had been snapped up by the lucky. Thus they sat, talked, chewed and spat. "At the same time," Paddock reminisces, "Henry Ford was making his first cars in Detroit, Marconi was developing wireless telegraphy and laying the groundwork for radio, and the Wright brothers were crowding every "today" with experiments on a contraption which they believed would fly like a bird. Then, too, there was Edison who had little education but soon was to change the face of the world by his inventions. Paddock tells us that as he swept up the shavings in the store and emptied the dirty old spit boxes, he often thought that if he should make the tombstone to these men he would chisel in an extra word or two to make their epitaph read: "Born, Chewed, Grouched, Died."

The Old Secret

In contrast to these men Paddock also remembered a sweet little boy of about four years of age who deliberated with great care as to what he would buy at the store. His nervous mother urged him, "Hurry up, honey, and spend your money." The boy's response was, "But, Momma, I've only one penny to spend." Had he not found the secret that made the difference between Henry Ford, Marconi, the Wright

brothers, Edison and the men who just sat and chewed and grouched and died?

Someone has said, "I have but one candle, and when that is burned, I am through." We have one brief life and the man who does not stop and deliberate how best to spend it is the worst of fools. For the fool, life will inevitably be like the Peruvian llama — it will spit in his eye and infect him with moral jaundice.

Even men of the world have seen the truth of this. There has been much talk in recent years about the 80-20 principle. That means in essence that eighty percent of what we do only gives twenty percent satisfaction, whereas twenty percent of what we do gives us eighty percent satisfaction and therefore the great need to prioritize and decide what should be done first. Of course these principles about time and success are really drawing from that very old treasure store — the Bible. Scripture is full of the 80-20 principle. It is forever stressing the necessity of prioritizing and of seeing things in a true sense of proportion. A favorite word on the lips of Jesus was "first." He could say, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness...." Or "First bind the strong man...." Or "The *first* and great commandment...." He had an eye for people who observed this priority principle. When everybody else was criticizing that poor woman who out of love's store had anointed him, he said, "Mary has chosen that good thing which shall not be taken from her." How did she come to do that? Jesus said on the same occasion, "But one thing is needful." Mary had a true sense of priorities, she saw things in proportion, and it became automatic for her to apply the 80-20 principle. She made Jesus first. Worship and adoration was the essence of life to her. Are the rest of us as wise? Or are we busily spending our energies, our thoughts, our loves and our talents on the eighty percent of things in life which will only yield a dividend of twenty percent? Perhaps ultimately they will yield no good dividends whatever. So here is the oldest of all platitudes and the truest and the most essential.

First Things First

Let God be God. Either God matters tremendously or he doesn't matter at all. If God be God he must be put first, ever and always.

He must be at the head of that happy new year and of each day and he must be first in every choice. The worship of God must be seen as our first duty and the source of all our fruitfulness and joy.

Many people have thought that worship was just an addendum, an extra. No wonder their lives were chaotic. John Ruskin was right when he said that human progress depends on the finding of something to reverence. It would have been better if he had said Someone rather than something. It's not hard to see why there is so much chaos in our age of trauma, peril and fear. Before August 5, 1945, a chief subject of discussion was the impact of science on religion. But since that date the issue is the reverse. Unless true religion controls science the world may soon be no more. And it's true in our own individual world which is a microcosm of the other. Unless true religion is the controlling factor, our world may soon blow up.

Life Without God

The fact is, the world is a terrible place when viewed apart from God. If you want to see what life is like without God read the writings of Samuel Beckett and the other existentialists. H.G. Wells ultimately came to have that vision and in 1939 he wrote:

In spite of all my desperation to a brave looking optimism, I perceive that now the universe is bored with him (man). He's turning a hard face to him, and I see him being carried less and less intelligently and more and more rapidly, suffering as every ill-adapted creature must suffer in gross detail, along the stream of fate, to degradation, suffering and death.

He was echoing Edward Gibbon who wrote that history is "little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind." Yes, if you want to see a world without God read the writings of Franz Kafka, or Eugene Ionesco. Beckett summed up their message:

How am I, an a-temporal being imprisoned in time and space, to escape from my imprisonment, when I know that outside space and time lies Nothing, and that I, in the ultimate depths of my reality, am Nothing also?

Not only in literature but in the other arts also the hopelessness of

life apart from God is depicted. Francis Bacon, one of Britain's chief painters, chose as his theme the sheer horror of existence. His paintings are often filled with screaming people, prison cages, and gory slabs of beef. Bacon who was a gambler and a drinker lived out the philosophy he so often painted. Read also William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Such writers have seen that matter plus time plus chance equals zero. If man is just the chance offspring of a thoughtless parent order then he has no value.

"We don't like laws. We think they only exist to be broken. We're so foolish we don't see that it is we who are broken."

Nothing has value. If the end of all things is zero then everything along the way is zero. If there's no immortality then nothing has meaning.

The Inevitability of Choices

Let's approach the old platitude from another direction. Our Lord affirmed that "straight is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life" (Mt 7:14). The English historian, Lord Acton, said the same thing when he wrote: "Mastery is acquired by resolved limitation." In other words none of us can do everything and none of us can go everywhere. We just can't do all things equally well. For this reason we have to make up our minds what we want to do, what we can do best. Every decision of life is an act of self-limitation. Desire to do one thing means we also desire not to do many things. Thus in a sense every act is an act of self-sacrifice and here we begin to see that self-sacrifice is not all bad. Indeed, as Henry Drummond once said, all that self-sacrifice really means is the exchanging of something secondary for something primary.

Now most people dodge the idea of God because they think he's going to tell them what they ought not to do. We don't like laws. We think they only exist to be broken. We're so foolish we don't see that it is we who are broken. A man who defies the law of gravity by jumping off a tall building illustrates that. The fact is, there can be no good life

without laws and limits. This is true in every small, individual sector of life as well. Consider the discipline of aesthetics. To quote Chesterton:

Art is limitation; the essence of every picture is the frame. If you draw a giraffe, you must draw him with a long neck. If, in your bold, creative way you hold yourself free to draw a giraffe with a short neck, you'll really find you are not free to draw a giraffe. The moment you step into the world of facts, you step into the world of limits. You can free things from alien or accidental laws, but not from the laws of their own nature. You may, if you like, free a tiger from his bars; but do not free him from his stripes. Do not free a camel of the burden of his hump: You may be freeing him from being a camel.

So, from all this, we can see that without putting God first we'll never know how to organize our lives. Only by his wisdom can we make the right choices. And furthermore he will give us the courage to pursue the right course whereas without him we would likely falter.

Phillip Schaff wrote that the Book of God, the Church of God and the Day of God are a sacred trinity which preserves society. Let us learn afresh to worship. It's not without significance that the longest, most detailed of all the commandments given at Sinai was about worship.

Commenting on Isaiah 58:13-14 George Adam Smith wrote:

Our prophet, then, while exalting the practical Service of Man at the expense of certain religious forms, equally exalts the observance of Sabbath; his scorn for their formalism changes when he comes to it into a strenuous enthusiasm of defence. This remarkable fact, which is strictly analogous to the appearance of the fourth commandment in a code otherwise consisting of purely moral and religious laws, is easily explained. Observe that our prophet bases his plea for Sabbath keeping, and his assurance that it must lead to prosperity, not on its physical, moral or social benefits, but simply upon its acknowledgment of God. Not only is the Sabbath to be honored because it is the holy of Jehovah and

honorable, but making it one's pleasure is equivalent to finding one's pleasure in him. The parallel between these two phrases in verse 13 and verse 14 is evident, and means really this: Inasmuch as you do it unto the Sabbath you do it unto me. The prophet, then, enforces the Sabbath simply on account of its religious and Godward aspect. Now, let us remember the truth, which he so often enforces, that the Service of Man, however ardently and widely pursued, can never lead or sum up our duties; that the Service of God has, logically and practically, a prior claim, for without it the Service of Man must suffer both an obligation and resource. God must be our first resort — must have our first homage, affection and obedience. But this cannot take place without some amount of definite and regular and frequent devotion to him. In the most spiritual religion there is an irreducible minimum of formal observance. Now, in that wholesale destruction of religious forms, which took place at the overthrow of Jerusalem, there is only one institution, which was not necessarily involved. The Sabbath did not fall with the Temple and the Altar: The Sabbath was independent of all localities; Sabbath was possible even in exile....since seven days is a regular part of the natural year, the Sabbath is, so to speak sanctioned by the statutes of creation.¹

Happy New Year? Or shall the year be like that which can spit in your eye and infect you? All depends upon whether we will put God first. Let us together determine to do just that at the beginning of 1985.

1. *Expositor's Bible*, Vol. 2, p. 421-422



DESMOND FORD

Understanding PMS (Premenstrual Syndrome)

Gillian Ford

Since puberty I have suffered from severe PMS. Our search for help included interviews with specialists on several continents, hospitalization and surgery, and research in much technical literature.

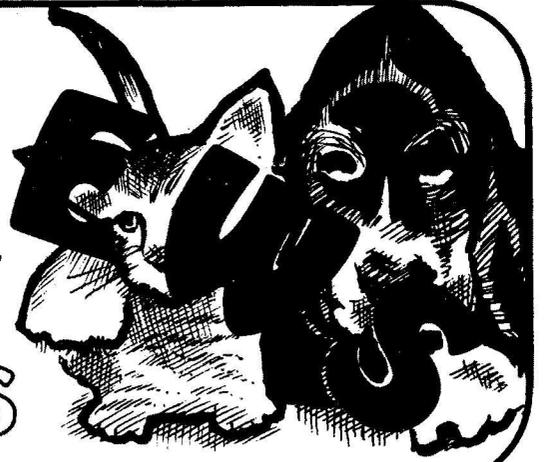
In the providence of God we were led to Harley St. specialist, Dr. Katherina Dalton, who as a result of decades of work in PMS, was able to give me not only hope but help. Since then I have trained as a PMS counselor and in association with physicians I have counseled hundreds of women. The enclosed is a typical expression of one woman after treatment.

We can be
friends even
though we're different

GOOD NEWS

LET'S MAKE A NEW START

FOR KIDS



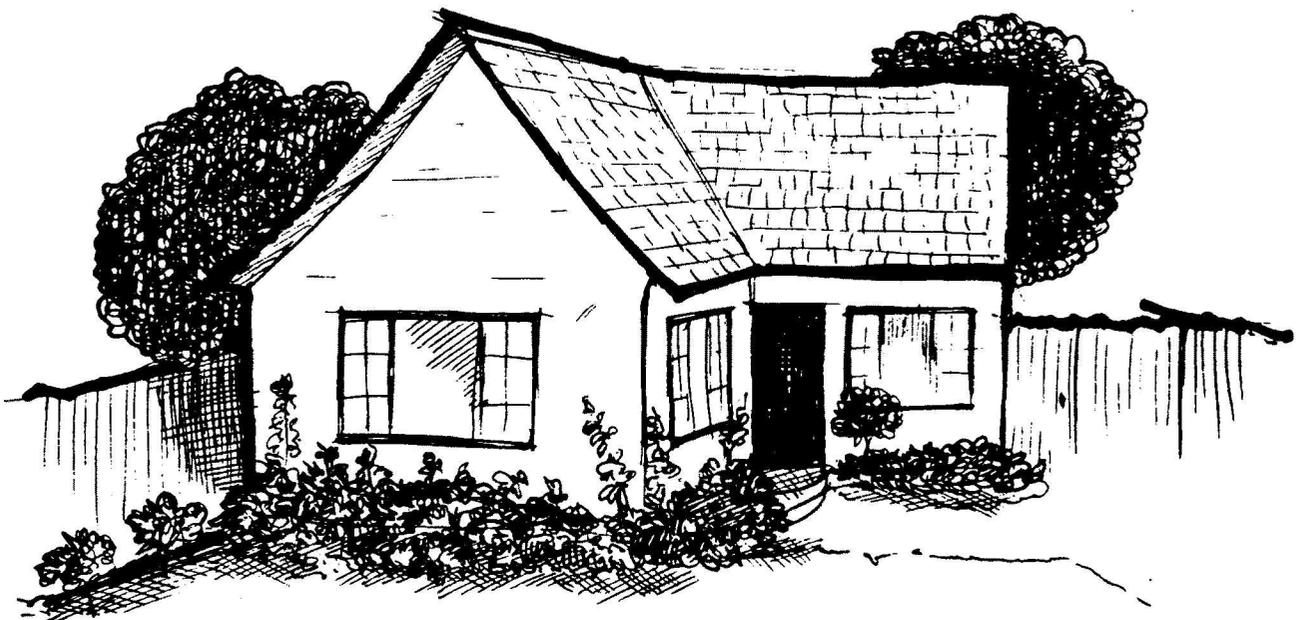
THE TAMING OF SPENCER GILBERT PIGGLY

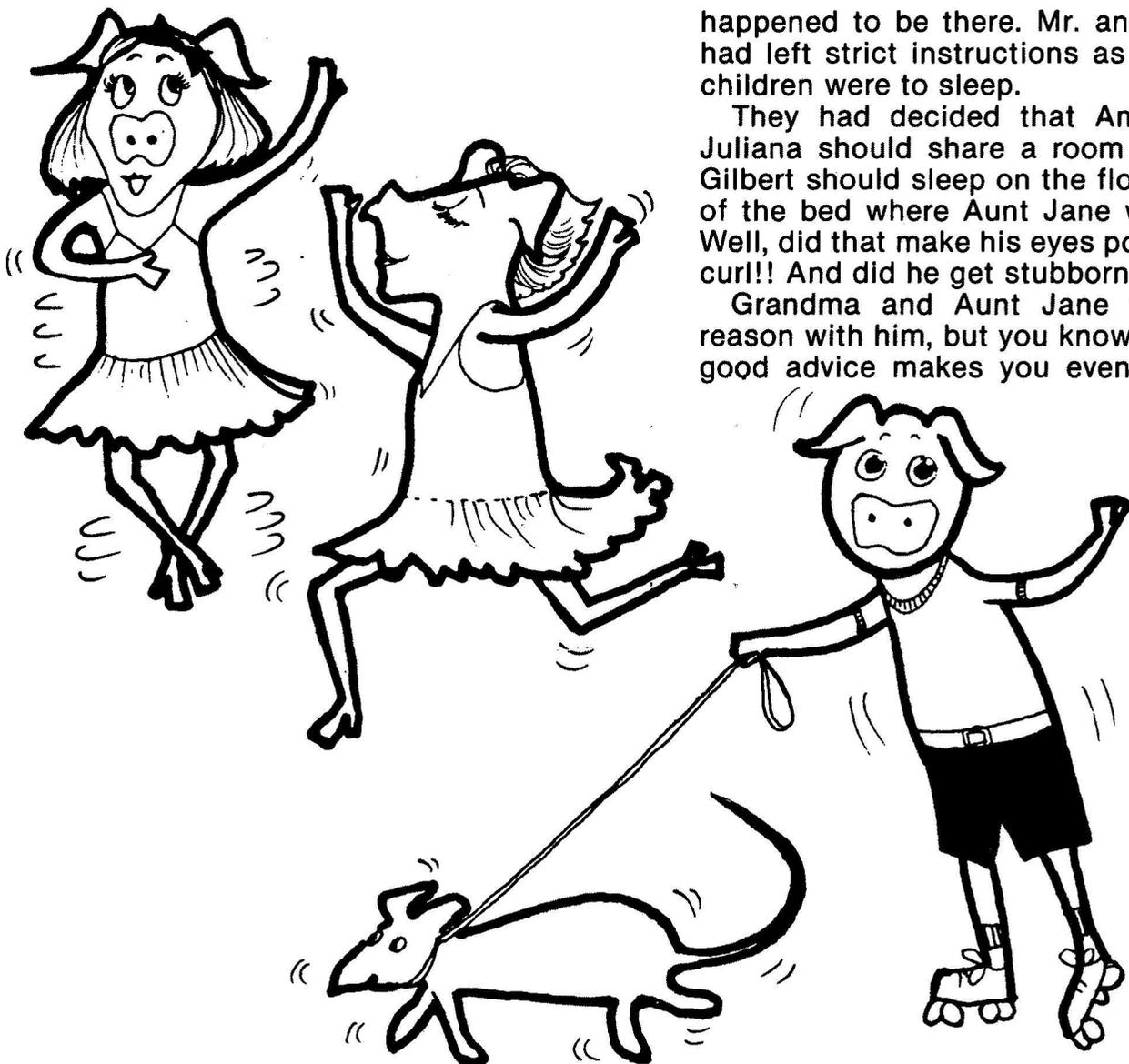
Romans 6
Gillian Ford

In the suburbs of a large southern city, in a beautiful cottage with an English garden, lived Mr. and Mrs. Piggly and their two children. Amarantha, the girl, was the elder child. She had remarkable golden hair, a sweet heart-shaped face, and dancing trotters. How she longed to be a ballet-dancer, an actress, a nurse, a doctor, a great

pianist, a singer, and everything else you can think of as well.

Spencer Gilbert Piggly, our hero, was the younger — rather cuddly type of piglet who loved to kiss his mother and say, “oh darling” to make her laugh. For a boy and a girl, they played amazingly well together — most of the time.





happened to be there. Mr. and Mrs. Piggly had left strict instructions as to where the children were to sleep.

They had decided that Amarantha and Juliana should share a room and Spencer Gilbert should sleep on the floor at the foot of the bed where Aunt Jane was sleeping. Well, did that make his eyes pop and his tail curl!! And did he get stubborn and mean!

Grandma and Aunt Jane first tried to reason with him, but you know yourself that good advice makes you even more angry.

One day, Amarantha's friend Juliana came to stay. They had so much fun, and though they say that two's company, three's a crowd, these three proved the exception. They rode their bikes around the block and hid from grandma and Aunt Jane who were taking a walk. Then they put on skates and took their pet mouse called Noggin for a walk, or was it the other way around? It was all such fun and laughter.

When they got home, Mrs. Piggly was in the kitchen busily making cinnamon bread. She pushed back a wet curl from her sticky forehead. "How nicely you children are playing together," she said. And off they ran into the bedroom squeaking with excitement for they were having so much fun.

It was at bedtime when Mrs. Piggly was out at work and Mr. Piggly had gone to choir practice at church that the trouble started. Grandma was piglet-sitting and Aunt Jane



Then they threatened him. That didn't work either. So then they ignored him for a while.

Can you see Gilbert S. Piggly spread out across the hallway on strike, refusing to go to bed — his arms rigidly crossed, his tail curled like a coil, his eyes burning fire, his snout flaring with passion? He even kicked



the door with his trotters. Poor Aunt Jane got the flutters, but grandma finally got him to bed. Eventually sleep fixed him. "Phew," said Aunt Jane, "that piglet!"

I almost can't stand to tell you for I know that you will cry — but the next morning when the night's mischief came to light, Mr. J.W. Piggly went rather red in the snout and had a few words with Gilbert S. More than that (try to be brave), Mr. Piggly tanned Gilbert's hide, which made him squeal like a pig.

No doubt if this gets reported in the Pig Papers, Gilbert S. will recognize himself and be most embarrassed, so I should tell you that he wasn't always as piggly as this. Most of the time he was a truly darling piglet. As he often said to his mother, "I am sorry. I just can't help myself."

That evening (Gilbert was nearly transformed into an angel that day) Mr. J.W. Piggly called the family together and for worship told them the story of the two mice.

"There were once two mice — one was a Christian and one was not. One was mean and one was not. Unfortunately, the Christian was the mean one. Meany Mouse lived next door to Merry Mouse. Who do you think the neighbors liked best?"

Said Spencer G., "Merry Mouse, I suppose, but it should have been the Christian mouse — oughtn't Christians be nicer than non-Christians?"

Amarantha said, "Maybe he had a headache and that made him mean."

Mrs. Piggly who was cross-stitching said, "Probably Merry Mouse came from a good



home and was born with a nice even nature. Yes, Amarantha, Meany Mouse could have had a headache, or he could be nervous, or he could have had an angry father, or he



could have lost his parents and feel bitter. I'd say that Merry Mouse never felt any need to come to Jesus because he felt he was pretty good as he was. On the other hand, Meany came to him because he often got grumpy and felt guilty about it."

"Yes, he needed forgiving," said Mr. Piggly. "They both did, but one knew it and the other didn't. You have to distinguish between nature and grace."

"What on earth does that mean?" said Spencer G.

"Well, some people are born with a happier nature and have many less battles to fight in life. They think they can manage without God. But there are others who have all sorts of battles because they have strong feelings and impulses and make more mistakes. Often they are the ones who seek God for forgiveness, but after they become Christians they still have strong battles and don't always look as good as the others who may not be Christians."

"Anyhow, daddy," said Spencer G., "you've always taught us that Jesus forgives our sins. Why should Meany worry? Can't he just go on sinning and being forgiven?"

"There's a good chapter in the Bible that tells us all about that," said Mr. W.J., "It's Romans 6. It begins, 'Shall we sin then that grace may abound?' It means if grace is such a good thing, why not sin more and get more grace? But the answer comes back, 'By no means — how can we who died to sin still live in it?'"

Mrs. Piggly said that she had used to believe that Romans 6 taught that Christians did not sin, but she knew it couldn't be so for she had never met any perfect ones.

"Mom was right," responded Mr. W.J., "It doesn't mean that. What Romans 6 is saying is quite simple — it says that we cannot live in sin because we died to it."

"But when did we die to it?" said Spencer Gilbert. "It seems quite alive to me," he added, thinking of the night before.

"We died to sin when Jesus died," said Mr. W.J., "and when he rose, we rose. That's what it says. But you know that you have trouble always being good. Sin is still with us. What it means is that Jesus gave sin its death-blow at the cross, and now it doesn't need to reign."

"That means sin mustn't be the king in our life," said Amarantha.

"But how does it happen — how do we overcome sin?" asked Spencer G.

"Well, Romans 6:11 tells us that we have to reckon, consider or act as though sin is dead — because in our lives it won't appear to be," said Mr. W.J.

"That's why it's so important," said Mrs. Piggly, "to think about what Jesus has done for you. You have to remember when you are tempted to be naughty that your sins — yesterday's, today's, and tomorrow's, went into Jesus' grave. And when he rose you rose as well to a new life. You have to believe it and act it."

"But that's so hard, Mommy," said Spencer G., with a sigh. "Sometimes the badness takes over and I want to be naughty."

Said Daddy, "We all find it that way, son. We have to grow and we have to strive to believe God rather than our own feelings. It will often be a terrible battle to do what we know to be right, and sometimes we will fail. But then, when we do fail, God is faithful and just to forgive us our mistakes. Isn't that good news?"

"It sure is," said Amarantha, with a smile.

"Yes, it sure is," said Gilbert S., "How amazing it is that God puts up with a piggly like me."

"And me," said Amarantha.

"And me," said Mommy.

"And me," said Mr. W.J.

Mr. W.J. continued his story of the two mice. "When Meany Mouse heard that good news, it made such a difference! He'd thought that religion was keeping rules and always failed. And then he found out it was all about love and how he changed. Merry Mouse watched him, and do you know, he too became a Christian. And the neighbors loved them both."

"Mmm," said Spencer Gilbert, "Next time I feel mean and stubborn, I am going to try and remember this story, and ask Jesus to help me reckon the piggly part of me dead."

Good New for Kids is dedicated to promoting the message and spirit of the gospel for children.

It is published by Good News Unlimited, P.O. Box GN, Auburn, CA 95603, as a supplement to its monthly general publication, **Good News Unlimited**.

Subscriptions are free on request.

Editor: Gillian Ford

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Premenstrual syndrome is an unlikely topic for a religious magazine and no doubt some will wonder what on earth it is doing in this one. But since PMS is a problem for approximately forty percent of the menstruating female population (a serious problem for ten percent), since the congregations of our churches are composed mostly of women, since PMS has a tremendous effect on the spiritual life of a Christian woman, and since many of these women are married to men — the subject is worth consideration.

There are many family and marriage counselors, crisis lines and alcohol treatment centers who never take into account the impact on the family of a woman with PMS. Neither do most ministers recognize this problem and its effect on the female portion of their congregations. While in the last two or three years there has been a surge in publicity in the USA about PMS, it is still often treated as a joke, another fad or "scapegoat" for willful misbehavior.

There are many reasons why the subject is often not taken seriously. Women who don't have the problem tend to be very unsympathetic with those who do, ("I have periods, and I'm all right!"); women who have it often deny it (a similar reflex to the way many alcoholics deny alcoholism); the liberated woman won't countenance it ("It will cause discrimination in the workmarket"); many psychiatrists don't believe in it ("There's no such thing as hormonal depression"). And, of course, husbands scratch their heads ("It's that time of the month again") as they head for the nearest motel.

For Christians there is an added set of problems. For the woman who finds herself recurrently fearful, irritable, depressed and unreasonably angry for at least part of the cycle, there is a tremendous load of guilt. "I want to be a good Christian," said Annette. "I pray about it all the time, but it keeps coming back and I find myself so irritable with the children. They get a spanking at least once a month." Prayer doesn't seem to have helped.

Suzanne told me, "My PMS has been getting worse and worse over the years. It used to last only a couple of days. Now I have it for

three weeks out of the month and it has ruined my marriage. For years I didn't know what was wrong and now, even though a cure is in sight, I wonder if I will ever get over the results of those terrible years."

In her book, *The Psychology of Women*, Judith Bardwick observed a very interesting experiment. A large group of women were interviewed more than once without being aware of the reason for the interviews. As part of the procedure, but not stressed, the date of menstruation and the calculated time of ovulation were recorded. Then the conversations of these women before ovulation were contrasted with the conversations that occurred during the week prior to menstruation. The results were interesting. Just before ovulation, the women felt on top of the world. They were coping well and spoke with enthusiasm about happy memories and the good things that had happened in their past. But premenstrually, these women tended to be negative and sad. They recalled unpleasant memories such as accidents and would dwell on such details as the amount of blood and the pain. This was the general tendency of the entire group studied, as it had not been determined whether any in the group had PMS.

Most women have a tendency to change their attitude to some degree, depending on "the time of the month." In some women this is so slight as to be unnoticeable. Others may become irritable for a day or two before menstruation. But still others have a drastic change in personality. Bradwick theorized that this change occurs because estrogen peaks just prior to ovulation, giving a feeling of well-being. Others have postulated that a low level of the second female hormone, progesterone, produced at ovulation through the second half of the cycle, causes the low-mood level in women with PMS.

Who is affected? Probably forty to fifty percent of women experience symptoms of PMS,¹ and probably five to ten percent have severe, incapacitating or life-threatening symptoms. Many of the women who first complain of PMS are in their midthirties. But in some families, there is a history of PMS and those women can begin having

Dear Gillian:

I feel so much better since being on progesterone! It is much more reassuring that I feel like a "normal" person instead of a paranoid, irritable, depressed, out-of-control person. I also get up in the morning with my family — instead of feeling guilty about the sixteen years I used to sleep until 9:00 a.m. I can be with more than one person without thinking they are talking about me.

I have been in the mental ward (once five years ago) and was told I would be there for seven years. In fact, I was so confused I signed myself in for seven years! Then, in 1983, I was in another mental facility for a 72-hour hold! Both times I have had thyroid tests and everything turned out O.K.

I have been on progesterone and thyroid for four and a half months....If I ever was unable to get the medications for this problem I know I would turn into the paranoid person I have been for the past twenty-three years. I'm so pleased that the good Lord answered my prayers.

Sincerely, D.V.

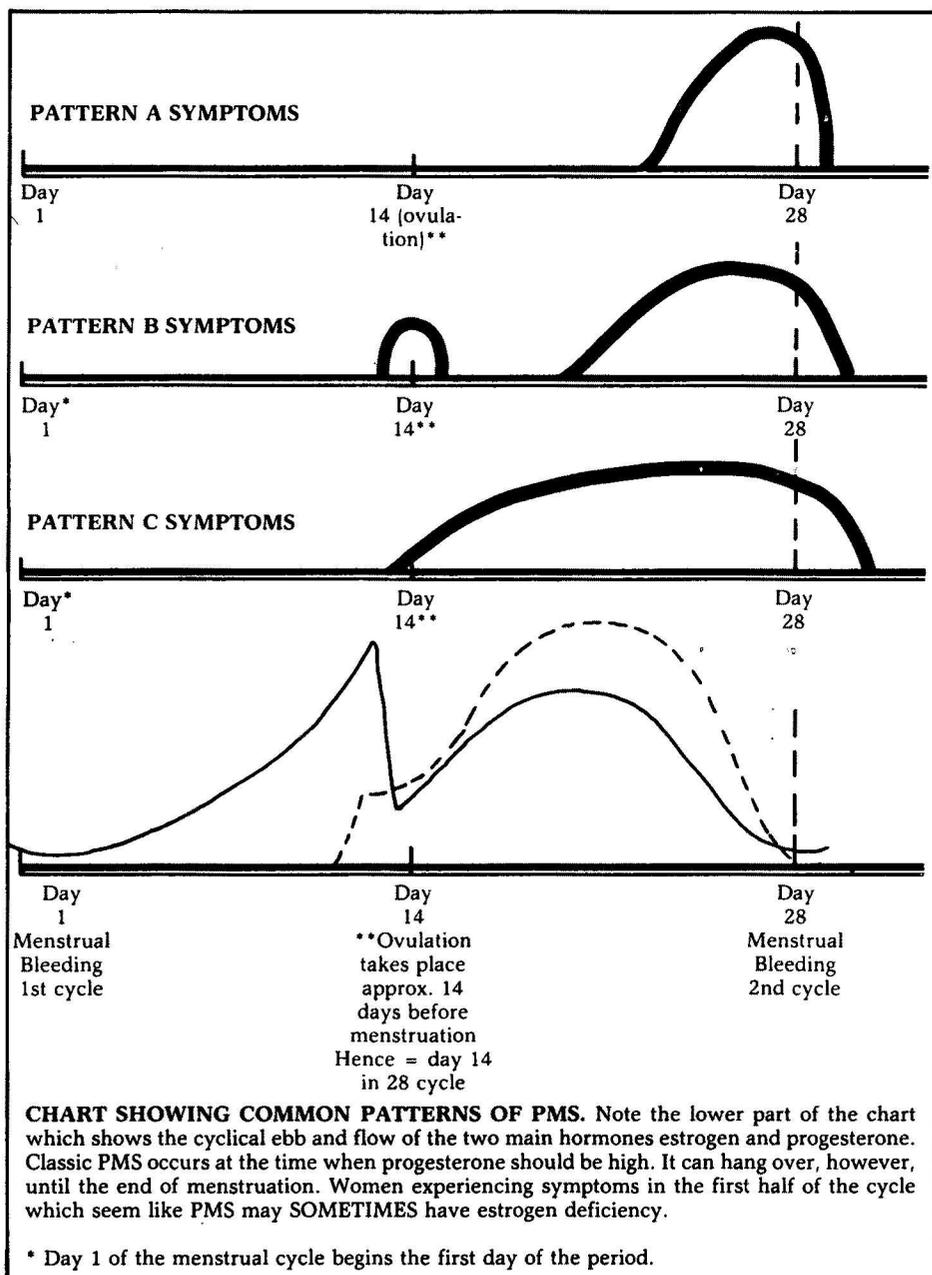


CHART 1

problems as early as one or two years before puberty — and it can last into their sixties!

This means there is a large proportion of women whose self-esteem and the happiness of the people who live with them are affected by this "universal change of mind" between ovulation and the premenstrual week. Conversely, there are also many women who hardly notice these changes. PMS in its worst manifestations is a stranger to them, as alien as it is to a man. It is very difficult for women who have never suffered from severe PMS to understand the incapacitating nature of the symptoms some women endure.

What Is PMS?

To understand the problem better, we need to define it. Premenstrual syndrome is characterized by a clustering of symptoms in the last half of the menstrual cycle and an absence of symptoms at least after menstruation.² There is a range in how long the symptoms can last — some women have mild PMS a couple of days before their periods. In others, it can manifest itself for much longer — up to three weeks out of the month. The latter group have symptoms from ovulation (an average of fourteen days before the flow) until the end of menstruation. These women often walk into my office and say, "I only have one good week a month."

Premenstrual Symptoms

Three common patterns of PMS symptoms have been isolated. These three occur in the second part of the cycle and are illustrated in Chart 1.

There is a plethora of possible symptoms, all of which could be symptoms of nonhormonal problems if they occur singly. But with PMS, there is a clustering of symptoms and that clustering always occurs at the same time in the cycle.⁴ There is also a time when they "go away," and the woman is symptom-free. Thus the TIMING is more important than the TYPE of symptoms. Every woman has a slightly different pattern of symptoms, with different emphases, but there are also some common or predictable patterns.

The symptoms can be categorized as psychological or physiological. Most women fear the emotional more than the physical ones. Often they complain of the PMS triad — irritability, lethargy and depression. Each of these ranges in severity. Thus, the irritability can be mild but in its severest form it may lead to violence (especially when linked with alcohol). I have counseled women who go through the house like a tornado smashing everything movable. I recall one who claimed to have picked up a small truck to throw at her husband, and another who blackened her son's eyes, and so on. Only last week in our support group a woman was telling the others how she had torn out fluorescent lights and thrown them across the room! While violence affects only a subgroup of PMS sufferers, it is not uncommon and many women have a terrible problem controlling their inner violence. They are often verbally out-of-control.

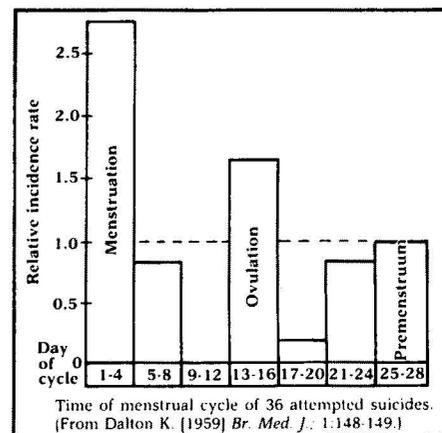


CHART 2

Depression ranges from "the blues" lasting only a day or two a month, to a subgroup of women who experience recurrent suicidal feelings. Some women only *feel* like dying, but I have often interviewed women who have a history of suicidal attempts. However, premenstrual women also tend to be accident-prone and confused, and as a result, often "botch it" and fail in their purpose. One of my patients recently told me of a PMS lecture she had attended. A pathologist had come along out of curiosity because he had done numerous postmortems on female suicides who, on autopsy, were found to be premenstrual. He wondered if there was a connection. Consider Chart 2 below which illustrates the rise and fall of the number of attempted suicides in correlation with their menstrual cycle.

Violence and suicide are two extremes which most PMS women will not experience, but the typical pattern of even mild to moderate PMS is still devastating. Apart from the usual triad of irritability, lethargy and depression, many women experience a type of paranoia in which they become supersensitive to people and situations. They blow incidents sky-

high, out-of-proportion, making the family shrug their shoulders in bewilderment. They may feel they are going insane, as if they have a split personality. These sufferers often confess that they feel "out-of-control."

Very frequently women experience "feelings of flight," which means they want to run away and start something new. In some women this leads to changing jobs or spending sprees. In others, it has more severe repercussions — they want new horizons and seek to be out of their present relationship. Such women may threaten to leave, pack and unpack their things each cycle, or actually walk out, never to return.

Other women can become phobic and have anxiety attacks, often with hyperventilation. This can be very frightening since they may feel they are having a heart attack. Phobic symptoms are a convenient bridge to cross over from emotional to physical symptoms because the two often occur together. The panic often comes because the heart palpitations are so strong that these women may feel they are dying. Panic attacks, along with some other symptoms like migraines may develop in PMS sufferers at times

when they have not eaten for a long time. Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) is an intimate relative of PMS — one almost presumes the other. Other near relatives, often found where PMS is found, are allergies and yeast problems (overgrowth of *candida albicans*).

There are many other physical symptoms possible though many women have few or none of these. But some do have such symptoms as severe headaches or migraines, sometimes asthma attacks and more rarely, seizures. Since the hypothalamus and the central nervous system are involved in PMS, all systems of the body are possible targets for PMS. For instance, while some women may suffer from asthma, others may get tonsillitis or recurrent flu-like symptoms or hoarseness. The skin may be affected. Some women break out in acne, others in hives and occasionally even boils. Some women get recurrent herpes, either oral or genital. This form of herpes is not a venereal disease but an allergy reaction. These are only some of the possible symptoms of PMS. There are many others, but as we have said before, what characterizes PMS is that these symptoms come back each cycle and also disappear for part of the cycle.⁴

One can sympathize with a physician when such women come into the office aching from the crown of their heads to their little toes. Often when they are

PMS is a physical problem. It needs a physical cure with kindly counseling to smooth down the hurricane effect of having PMS.



thoroughly examined and tested, nothing shows up in the tests. Who can blame doctors for thinking these women are neurotic? Yet with a little information, it is very simple to diagnose PMS, especially if women will keep track of their symptoms on a calendar in relationship to the menstrual cycle.

But aside from the physicians, what about you? What will YOU do when you learn that a friend or family member has the symptoms of PMS? What will you tell her? Will you say that she needs to pray more, that if she had more faith she could be healed? When she tells you that she feels as though she is possessed by a demon, will you agree and seek someone to expel it? Will you heap coals of fire on her head, exacerbating the everpresent bleeding sore of guilt, by telling her she should be able to overcome this problem through prayer? Many Christians do this to people who are suffering from all sorts of sicknesses. How often have you heard someone say, "You have some sin in your life — if you dealt with it you'd be healed"? Little do

these well-meaning counselors realize that they make a hard-to-bear burden intolerable.⁵ To a person suffering from PMS who may already be in a suicidal state of mind, such advice may be the last straw.

The woman who wrote the letter at the beginning of this article is a case in question. What would you have said to her when she was locked up in a mental ward? Her Christianity survived her emotional problems, but advice alone would never have cured her. Neither would prayer alone, though it helped her survive and led her to help. The appropriate physical treatment has done for her what counseling and spiritual truths couldn't, since PMS is essentially a physical problem with resulting emotional and spiritual results. It needs a physical cure with kindly counseling to smooth down the hurricane effect of having PMS.

Next month, we'll discuss some practical steps women and their families can take to alleviate their problems. Such people will find it GOOD NEWS!

1. *The Premenstrual Syndrome and Progesterone Therapy*, by Dr. Katherina Dalton (Year Book Medical Publications, 2nd ed, 1984) p. 228.
2. There are other hormonal problems besides premenstrual syndrome which may cause symptoms continually or longer than the usual patterns. These include postpartum depression which remains unresolved for years (often it is resolved within a short time into PMS); estrogen deficiency which particularly manifests itself at menopause but may affect women with PMS as well — especially women who have had tubal ligations some years previously; low normal thyroid levels which can cause constant fatigue and depression in women. More will be said about this in the next article.
3. Taken from my brochure *Premenstrual Syndrome Therapy* and essentially borrowed with changes from Dr. Dalton's book *Once a Month and The Premenstrual Syndrome and Progesterone Therapy*.
4. Again, we are describing classic PMS and some women just do not fit the pattern. See footnote 2.
5. Joyce Landorf who has incurable TMJ (a jaw-joint dysfunction) with incredible daily fourth-degree pain received 150 letters a month telling her that if she had more faith she would be healed.

Questions and Answers

Q. I notice nothing in your article, *Rapping About GNU*, about keeping the ten commandments. Do you believe in the ten commandments?

A. Yes, I do believe the ten commandments as interpreted by Jesus are a good practical guide for every Christian. Jesus' midrash (fresh application) of the ten commandments can be found in Matthew 5-7 (see also ch 12), a sermon which concludes with the thought that whoever listens to, and acts upon the words of Jesus, builds on an unshakeable foundation (Mt 7:24).

However, while I believe the ten commandments as taught by Jesus are a useful guide I do not believe they are an adequate paradigm (pattern or archetype) for the process of sanctification. The ten commandments cannot sanctify, and Christians who make "keeping the ten commandments" the paradigm of Christian life tend to become cold and legalistic. Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, is the sanctifier, not the law. We must

keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (Heb 12:2). We are to behold "the glory of the Lord" and when we do that we shall be "changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not trying to set up some sort of false antithesis between Christ and the ten commandments. What I am saying is that Christ must have the central place in our vision as we pursue holiness.

Some Christians see the essence of sanctification as a battle between the flesh and the spirit. Now the Bible certainly teaches that the flesh wars against the spirit. But once again if a Christian sees the process of sanctification primarily as a terrible, somewhat self-defeating battle against evil passions this will tend to make him a rather morbid, gloomy and guilt-ridden person.

Other Christians read the New Testament and conclude that the essence of sanctification is to be happy and to be always praising God. It's always nice to be near these friendly Christians. But one

does wonder sometimes whether this rather effervescent form of Christian experience is really rooted in reality. We should always strive to be cheerful but there are times when it is more honest to cry.

There is another type of Christian who feels that the essence of holiness is to experience victory over every sin. There is no question that the New Testament teaches that believers can experience victory in their battle against unruly passions. But once again is the conception of "victorious Christian living" an adequate paradigm for Christian life? Certainly not in the absolute sense (see Rom 7:14-25). Sometimes the Lord can teach us more in the experience of defeat than he can in that of victory.

In conclusion we can make too much or too little of many of the elements of Christian teaching. The only thing that will protect us from becoming unbalanced, legalistic and fanatical will be to keep Christ who is the way, the truth and the life, central in our vision not some half-truth.

—Noel Mason

Odds and Ends

A Wandering Aramean

"A wandering Aramean was my father..." (Dt 26:5 RSV). Such was the confession of the redeemed Israelites of old and it is equally appropriate for the children of some Christian preachers today. One of the most precious promises of Scripture to many a wandering evangelist is that of Revelation 3:12, "He shall go no more out." But until the fulfillment of that promise at the Second Coming, the one entrusted with the proclamation of the gospel must claim the comfort of another Scripture which in glory shall no longer have relevance. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns' " (Is 52:7 RSV).

This particular wanderer has slept (or tried to sleep) in approximately 300 different beds in the last seven years or so. These include beds in many states of the Union, in South African cities, and residences in England, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, etc. What makes that passive task worthwhile are the people who own the beds, with the exception of air company stockholders. For example, November 17-20, saw me in Albuquerque, New Mexico, residing with Pastor and Mrs. Capehart, pastor of one of the several Baptist churches in that city. As friends of Gary and Anna King and familiar with our radio broadcast in that city, they invited me to take a series of meetings, not only for their own congregation, but for local listeners to the Good News Unlimited radio program.

It was my privilege to present the gospel eight times while in Albuquerque, the eighth being on a tape yet to be aired over the radio. On the first evening I spoke of the healing balm of the gospel for those under special stress. It was emphasized that experience is not what happens to us but what we do with what happens to us. It is our reactions rather than our actions

that bring us frequently the most pain or pleasure. Those who believe that God is sovereign and that in all things he works for good for those that love him, have a panacea for life's most grievous stresses. It was a great joy to meet listeners to our program, after the service, whom I had not previously known.

The next day I joined with Pastor Capehart on a radio program and listeners phoned in their questions on the topic of stress. One dear Christian lady spoke with concern about her husband's great burdens. I was delighted to meet him the next day at our meeting. He was a businessman under great pressures and she was fearful for his health. It was encouraging to see the hope and the gladness in their faces as we discussed the strength and vitality the gospel offers.

Saturday night was a youth night and the brevity of life and the necessity of choosing Christ in probationary time was emphasized. The next morning's services included an early meeting with a Hispanic congregation and then a short devotional given to adults in their Bible study hour prior to the church service. The church was crowded for our study of John's Gospel, with its presentation of Christ as having sovereign power in all those areas where we are stressfully limited — the areas of quality, quantity, time, space, natural law, accident and death.

That evening the **theme** revolved around the common **problems** of twentieth-century life — debt, health, midlife crisis, PMS and religion. We studied the record in John's Gospel of Christ walking in the court of the women near the treasury of the temple, encountering in quick succession the adulterous woman, the Pharisees, and the man born blind. We underlined some of the key areas of stress for moderns — problems growing out of sex, money, religion and health. The gospel offers invaluable counsel in each area. Only the soul wedded to Christ and preoccupied with his

love can rise above the many temptations of our day whether they be physical, material, psychological or religious.

Approximately 6:00 a.m. the following Friday morning, David Spruance took me to the Sacramento airport to catch a plane scheduled to leave at 7:30. After David left, I learned that because of the excessive fog all planes were grounded and would be so for hours. Just over six hours later I boarded another flight and at 10:30 p.m. touched down at Toronto, Canada. I had missed the night meeting which I was supposed to take, but Dr. Paul Porter occupied the pulpit to the blessing of all his hearers.

The next day witnessed the gathering of a full congregation at the German Lutheran Church of Toronto regularly used by the Good News Unlimited Fellowship. Dr. Porter is the pastor of the group and is greatly appreciated. He and his wife, Desley, are also appreciated for their many personal qualities. Ellen and Frank Juriansz have done much in recent years towards the launching and establishing of the Good News Fellowship and the calling of their present, valued pastor.

It was a crowded church on Sabbath morning that listened to studies on Galatians and Romans. In the afternoon Dr. Porter spoke on the experience of Elijah and pointed out the necessity of relying not purely on our personal feelings and experience but rather upon the God of history who time and again has intervened to deliver his suffering remnant. Next came a study on Gethsemane as the key not only to Calvary but to all Christian living.

About the time that many read this article I will be leaving for Australia and New Zealand. I invite your prayers for the meetings "down under." While airports, planes and motels have long ago lost their charm, the task of announcing the good news that "this man receiveth sinners" will never lose its thrill and sense of privilege.

—Desmond Ford

For more than a year we have been negotiating with Brad and Dee McIntyre about the possibilities of joining the staff of Good News Unlimited. We are happy to announce that Brad will be joining the staff in January, 1985. Look for: "Meet Brad, Dee and Gloria McIntyre" in the February magazine.

Letters

What a Blessing

Sirs:

I heard your program for the first time today. What a blessing!

I was on my way to work so I couldn't write anything down but I am really interested in receiving the information you have regarding PMS. I believe it is put together by Dr. Ford's wife (?) I am anxious to learn more about it and strongly believe in being an informed, intelligent Christian.

I would greatly appreciate your help.

L.M.

San Jose, California

Rich in Insight

Sirs:

Please send me a copy of the book entitled *Jesus and the Last Days*. I have received several other books by Mr. Ford and they are a great comfort and very rich in insight. I truly love to listen to his messages on radio KBMC-FM Eugene, Oregon, whenever I get the chance. God bless you all that have a part in his ministry. Although his program is shorter than some it always seems to speak to my heart even more than many others. I hope that my small check and my prayers will help in some small way to spread the "Good News" to other hungry souls.

B.T.

Oakridge, Oregon

Bless You

Sirs:

I listen to your program on WMIT-FM. I enjoy it very much. I heard your program about women's hormone imbalance. It was so informative. Thank you for preaching on that subject. In fact, bless you. I know you were led by the Lord to preach on a subject like that. Will you please send me the book, *One Woman's Pain*. May I say again, thanks for preaching that message. And thanks for coming on WMIT-FM.

Y.P.

Taylor, So. Carolina

Good News Unlimited

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Anointed Teaching

Sirs:

God shows his love in many ways and you are one of them — your broadcast touched my heart with a beautiful confirmation and joy of the words you shared — I thank the Lord for your anointed teaching! I would love to have the cassette #423. Continued blessings on his ministry!

B.A.

Oxnard, California

Most Enlightening

Dear Mrs. Ford:

Last week I received the two booklets on PMS which your husband, Dr. Desmond Ford, had offered on his Good News Unlimited radio broadcast which I heard on Nov. 14th over our local radio station, KMAY, Riverside. These are such excellent materials on PMS for the understanding of both the man and the woman, that I wish to share it with my grown daughters as well as my teenage granddaughter. I am finding Dr. Ford's broadcasts most enlightening.

E.C.

Riverside, California

Tears of Joy

Sirs:

Thank you for the beautiful card for Christmas, which we received with tears of joy. Thank you for the *Good News Unlimited*. We are sending a small gift for it. We are already supporting two radio broadcasts, and though we enjoy yours so much, we are giving all we are financially able to give.

We are on disability money income and are shut-ins. But we are praying for you, have been and will continue.

We love your beautiful, tender Australian voice telling us of our wonderful Christ.

S.P.

Ventura, California

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