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Beyond The False
Gods Of Method
And Technique

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Editorial

Most people are a bit philosophical at the start of a new year. After all, a substantial chunk of their lives has just slipped away, never to return. The widespread practice of making resolutions at the start of a new year is evidence that many are more thoughtful about their lives at this time.

There are those who allow the old year to depart and the new to come with out making any resolutions at all. Perhaps this is because memory informs them that their resolve of the past did not hold up. In spite of the psychological reinforcement that was sought by making a resolution, they discovered themselves to be the same old persons nonetheless.

The people of Israel were deeply religious. Their lives were measured off in segments of time marked by Sabbaths and feasts. The most important among them was the year festival known as the Day of Atonement. On that day all the ceremonies of the year were culminated. It brought them all to a conclusion and marked the commencement of a new round of sacrifice and ritual. The key feature of the Day of Atonement was its finality—when atonement was made for the entire camp along with the high priest himself and his family. The cleansing was dramatised by the banishment from the camp of the sin-bearing goat.

In the letter to the Hebrews, its author teaches that notwithstanding the climactic nature of the yearly service, it was never really final. This is clear because it had to be made

again the year following. Finality and repetition are contradictory. An action oft-repeated declares itself inconclusive.

This logic is pressed home by the author's question: 'If the yearly service could have perfected the worshipers, would they not have been cleansed once for all?' (Hebrews 10:3). Instead, the Day of Atonement was a yearly reminder of the lingering nature of Israel's sin. There was still no remedy.

The words 'once for all' are repeated throughout Hebrews 10 in connection with the priestly work of Christ. Jesus did something once. He did it so efficiently and thoroughly, that it never needs to be repeated. He absolutely dealt with sin so that 'Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more' (Hebrews 10:17).

New year resolutions are similar to the annual ritual in the Jewish calendar. They are not conclusive. Their effect on our lives is not consummate. For this reason they have to be visited again.

In 1998 we need to be resolute, but we ought not proceed merely on the strength of our resolve. New year resolutions are at best a superficial attack on the disorders of our lives. What we need is grace.

This is what we have in the achievement of Christ. His victory over evil is for us. With it comes forgiveness for every shortcoming. And more—there is motivation, inspiration and strength for service.



R J Allen



Beyond The False Gods Of Method And Technique

Dr Martin Robinson

The church in the West, under pressure to be more effective in its life and witness, has been too easily beguiled by an interest in methods and techniques. Nowhere has this been more evidenced than in that aspect of mission, which we call evangelism.

The influence of North American Evangelical Christianity has been very strong amongst evangelicals throughout the West. During the twentieth century there has emerged a strong strain of pragmatism which has tended to emphasise the importance of finding the right methods. As Andrew Walker observes of evangelicals, 'We are so obsessed with success in terms of what one critic has called the 'numbers game', that we have majored on method, at the expense of theological reflection and sound doctrine.' Walker goes on to note that it was the larger-than-life American evangelist, Billy Sunday, who first introduced the very pragmatic notion of a 'price for a soul' when he charged churches a set amount for the converts that he passed on to them.

Billy Sunday, operating as he did at the beginning of the twentieth century and setting his evangelism in the context of theatrical showman-

ship, was the forerunner of much of the tele-evangelism and other larger scale crusades which have become such a part of some American evangelical Christianity.

This is not to say that good methodology does not have some place in the life and mission of the church. Certainly I am not arguing for the application of bad methods! Moreover, there are many churches which have consistently applied one or other of the various evangelistic methods that are available and have seen some encouraging results over a period of time.

But closer examination often reveals that this 'success' is most often amongst those who are on the natural fringe of church life. These are the people who understand the culture, language and basic concepts of the Christian gospel. The main focus of such methodology is not so much to communicate or explain the fundamental message of the gospel, but rather, to help people who are part of the fringe to appropriate the message for themselves, to see its immediate relevance in such a way that they will make a response.

But when it comes to communicating the gospel message to those beyond the fringe, the application of good methods alone is deeply flawed. Four key objections need to be noted: Firstly, a number of observers have noted that an uncritical commitment to pragmatism



above every other consideration has much more to do with the values of secular Western culture, than with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is hardly likely that one can evangelise a culture with a gospel that stresses very different values, when one is so committed to methods which actually reinforce the values of the culture you are seeking to challenge.

Secondly, not only is the integrity of the message called into question, but there is a danger that the content is actually subtly corrupted. Research from many sources indicates that most people become Christians through personal friendship, such an observation is fine as far as it goes. Indeed, a thoughtful person would expect this to be true. Many important life decisions are confirmed by conversations with those whom we trust, rather than by complete strangers. Such knowledge can cause us to place even greater value on the relationships that we have. However, to reduce this information to a method or a technique is quite another matter. As William Abraham comments: 'Unless we are very careful, such delicate matters of friendship and love will be turned into one more utilitarian means or tool to increase the statistics of

church membership. Before we know what is happening, sacred human relationships will have lost their integrity and the distinctive character of Christian love will have been eroded by an evangelistic orientation that construes them not as ends in themselves, but as means to an end.'

Thirdly, a purely pragmatic appeal to methods and techniques does not always work—even on its own terms. There is no evidence to suggest that anyone has succeeded in reaching large numbers of unchurched people on the basis of a newly discovered method alone. As far as those beyond the fringe are concerned, using methods is not the right method! Something rather more fundamental is required.

Fourthly, those who value the New Testament record, and who point to the account of the spectacular growth of the church in the Acts of the Apostles, underline the astonishing absence of methods and techniques. The missionologist, Charles Tabor, says of the church of the New Testament: 'It did not establish empirical, numerical goals for its outreach. The jubilant references to numbers 3000, 5000, and so on, all represent rejoicing after the fact, not projections for the future. The New Testament church did not display a preoccupation with organisation, methods or techniques, but showed total confidence in the intrinsic power of the message itself.'

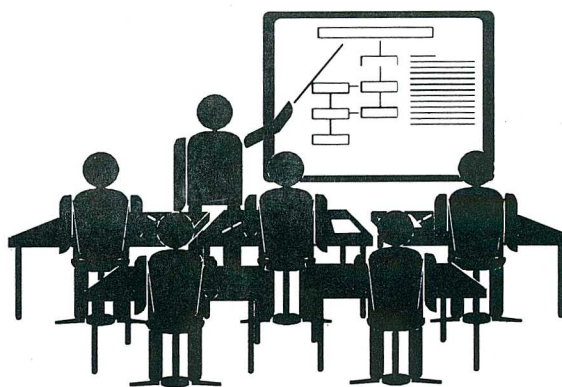
It is this 'confidence in the intrinsic power of the message' that helps us to glimpse what a rather more fundamental response to the unchurched might be.

Nowhere has the debate about whether the use of methods assists, or corrupts the gospel message, been fiercer than that which surrounds the Church Growth Movement. This

movement began with the work of Dr. Donald M'Gavran (an American second generation missionary, who lived in India for much of his life). His serious study of the methods that could be applied to missions began after his formal retirement and were centered at the School of World Mission in Pasadena, California.

M'Gavran's work included a strong polemical edge which often elicited strong reactions from those who objected to what looked like an overconcern with numbers as the sole measurement of success.

But what both the advocates and opponents of the Church Growth Movement often missed was that the real heart of M'Gavran's work was not the use of methods as such. The driving



force behind his work centered on the role of culture, as something which formed an impenetrable barrier to the Gospel.

This concern for the effect of culture arose as a result of his own experiences on the mission field. M'Gavran had been only too aware of the extent to which Christianity in some parts of India, was strongly identified with the culture of the West. The boundary fence of the mission compound was actually an extension of European or American culture. Everything outside the compound was where India really began.

The mission compound signified the place where the West and

East met. This dividing line meant that when an Indian wished to become a Christian he had to change more than just his religion. In many important respects he had to become a second class Westerner, in order to become a Christian.

This barrier of culture deeply disturbed M'Gavran. He could see that this was a situation that prevailed in many missions around the world. Nor was this just a phenomenon which only affected missions outside of the West. The Western world itself is not just one uniform culture, but is composed of a whole mosaic of cultures and subcultures. Viewed in this way, the various subcultures in the West—the subcultures of youth, class, and even of unbelief—have effectively been isolated from the gospel. The insulating effect of culture has been reinforced by the tendency of the church, whether as a whole, or whether, as individual denominations, to become self-contained subcultures which have forgotten how to transcend the barrier of culture.

There is perhaps no clearer example of the tendency of particular denominations to create their own unique subculture than the late Victorian achievement of the nonconformist denominations in England. A whole culture which encompassed institutions such as the Band of Hope, the Sunday School, Mutual Improvement classes for men, and family events known as Pleasant Sunday Afternoons were reinforced by well known heroes: Spurgeon, Haddon, Dale and Clifford. They had their own newspapers, schools, publishing houses and even international organisations. The Liberal party had become their special political expression.

So powerful was this subcul-

ture, that it looked to the future of the twentieth century with a self-confidence bordering on arrogance. Yet by the middle of the twentieth century, the effectiveness of this subculture was as hopelessly lost as was the Liberal party's hold on power. The world outside had changed, but the nonconformist subculture had remained the same, tragically confusing the gospel message with such cultural experiences as 'signing the pledge'.

It is precisely this fatal confusion of gospel with culture that should sound warning bells for Western Christianity today.

The result of the cultural isolation has often been that the Christian gospel has not been rejected so much as that it has never been heard.

The boundary fence of the mission compound was actually an extension of European or American culture. Everything outside the compound was where India really began.

If the church in the West is ever to become a missionary church, it will need to learn how to break out of its own mission compounds, to create the church afresh in the various subcultures of society. This is not really a matter of methods or techniques, so much as learning how to be the church in new ways. The intrinsic power of the message only becomes authentically realised when this process takes place.

*Dr. Martin Robinson is Director of Mission and Theology at The Bible Society in Britain. This article is an excerpt from his book **The Faith of the Unbeliever**. It is reprinted from **On Being** magazine by permission of **On being** and Dr Robinson.*

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WANTING MUCH AND GETTING LITTLE

Mike Nelson

'Lazy men want much but get little, while the diligent are prospering' (Proverbs 13:4).

Many years ago I saw a poster that said: 'Blessed are those that dream great dreams and are willing to pay the price to see them come to pass.'

Thanks to the media and our sports oriented philosophy, we have been saturated with 'success' books and tapes promising us we can become wealthy beyond our wildest imaginations. We are told to 'visualise' whatever it is we want, and to put pictures of our dream home or car on the refrigerator; because if we can see it clearly, it will become ours.

However, if you talked to some of the poorest people you know, you would discover that they spend many hours dreaming of great accomplishments and an abundance of possessions. While a dream is a great thing, many of us might end up singing our way into the nursing home ... *'Only trouble is, gee whiz, I'm dreaming my life away.'*

A few years ago when Jesse Jackson ran for President, one comedian said, 'The biggest problem with Mr Jackson's candidacy is that most Americans do not consider the Presidency an entry level position.' If Jesse had first been mayor of Washington D.C. or served in the house of representatives, his candidacy might have eventually been successful.

When I first left the pastorate, my dream was to be a business speaker and trainer. However, I had not paid the price of first being in the business world. I remember speaking to a group of CEO's in Australia and being terrified. My level of knowledge and experience was so shallow, I could barely carry on a legitimate conversation with them. I had a carefully focussed pre-

sentation which they enjoyed, but today I would be a different man in that setting because I have lived in the corporate world. Today when I speak about customer service, management challenges or sales pressures, I am not quoting a book that caught my attention. I am speaking from experience and that experience creates credibility.

Jesus said that those with a small amount of faith could move a mountain into the sea. I believe I do him no injustice when I suggest that it usually starts with one shovel filled with dirt. To sit back and wait on a mountain to move is a pretty good way to ensure a mountain view for the rest of your life. One of life's greatest challenges is to move past the ideal and to begin to create something concrete.

It is easy to get caught in the trap of reading books and magazines and listening to tapes that promise success rather than getting involved in something that can create success. As my friend, Jay Kesler, once said about the role of parenting: 'There comes a time to put down the latest parenting book and pick up the child.'

As I am living in the twilight zone of the unemployed, the greatest challenge I face each day is to find a way to get active and refuse to become a passive victim. Yes, it is easy to sit and become paralyzed with fear, but it is equally as deadening to sit and daydream of great success when I need to be sending resumes and making phone calls.

Another poster I have long loved declares, 'The smallest good deed is greater than the grandest good intention.'

'Father, help us to be diligent today. Free us from the addictive trap of daydreams and fantasies that could be a refuge from responsibility. Amen.'

Tearing down

The wall

Smuts van Rooyen



'But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace who has made the two one and destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace' (Ephesians 2:13-15).

In this passage Paul deals with an issue fundamental to the church. It can be summarised in six simple words: 'Christ has a plan to unite.' God desires unity for his church; he desires unity for his universe. He has a big plan to reconcile everything in Jesus Christ. It must begin with the church. How will the universe ever be united if the church is not?

We face issues of division over ethnicity. Male and female are divided in some places in the church. There are divisions between church administration and membership—theological divisions. There is a great rift in the heart of mankind. Human beings are desperately divided. They fight, they kill, they prejudge; they

hate. There is a fatal rift between God and his people. It is as if a glass pane has fallen on the concrete and shattered into thousands of tiny fragments.

Yet Paul says God has a plan. He plans to use his church to unite the whole world . . . the whole universe. We are not just talking about people agreeing in church. We are talking about God's plan to call the universe to his supper table.

The background of Ephesians is that Gentile Christians and Jewish Christian are miles apart. If the Christian church is divided, why on earth would non-Christians want to take it seriously? If we cannot get along together, why should they want to join us in our disagreement? So Paul tells how God will make, of two groups, one new person. Here is the crucial line. 'For he himself is our peace.'

It is the person of Jesus Christ; it is Jesus in his person. He himself is our peace. The doctrine of salvation is not our peace. Recently, an editor of a Christian magazine wrote to a church administrator, saying, 'We are looking to you for leadership. We want to nail down what the doctrine of salvation is.' I liked the thrust of his letter but I really don't think we will have unity by agreeing on the doctrine of salvation. There is a dif-

ference between knowing *about* salvation and *knowing* salvation. Paul does not ask us to rally around knowing about salvation. He is asking us to find our unity in knowing salvation itself.

I can ask questions like: Did Jesus die for the sins of everybody, even of unbelievers? Did he die only for the sins of believers? If he died for believers only, then are unbelievers automatically lost? If he died for the sins of unbelievers then why are they not saved even though they don't believe? Are people predestined to be saved? I can tell you that these are hotly contested theological points of view. There is tremendous diversity, even on the plan of salvation in its doctrinal form, but Paul says that Christ himself is our unity.

If someone has a deep appreciation for what God has done in Christ; if someone sees that salvation is by grace alone—without works. If someone sees that . . . then salvation has happened. There is no room left in the heart for boasting. If someone understands that he/she is the thief on the cross, and that Jesus has opened paradise, then I'm not going to argue the details. If someone loves the Lord Jesus Christ, how can I put that person outside the community of faith because we differ on how the plan of salvation works? He him-

self is our peace. He broke down the wall that divides us.

Walls serve a number of purposes. They keep people in and they keep people out. Walls draw boundaries which say, this is mine and that is yours. Walls are defence mechanisms we use to protect ourselves. In the death of Christ, God has broken down the wall that separates believers. Paul says that this wall is the law with its commandments and regulations.

We have a tremendous potential for rejecting each other when we judge each other by our

each other and promote disunity. I think that Ronald Reagan's finest moment was when he was in Berlin close to the Berlin wall. He spoke and said: 'Mr Chairman, tear this wall down.' Jesus says to us, 'Brothers and sisters, tear this wall down.'

When a wall comes down there is an initial sense of vulnerability because the defence is gone. There is a loss of identity because my boundary is not where it used to be. But when a wall comes down it also opens up something new. It is an opportunity to find

sioned two sculptures with the title: 'The Day the Wall Came Down.' One is to be placed at the site of the Berlin wall, the other identical sculpture is to be placed in Washington D.C. They are costing \$500,000 apiece.

Here is what these sculptures look like. On the ground there are these big chunks of the Berlin wall, and coming through the gap in the wall are five horses. They are running at full speed. They have seen the gap. They have seen the freedom. There are four mares and a stallion. The sculpture is 5/6ths actual size and when it is on its platform you really feel that you are involved in a stampede. The first mare has a trajectory low and hard and to the left going through the wall. The second mare is leaping high and straight. The two mares on the right have jostled each other and one up on her hind legs with her front legs on the mare in front of her. Behind the four of them is the stallion, urging them through the wall. There is such a sense of freedom. Their nostrils are breathing free air. They are charging toward something new. They are breaking down the barrier.

Brothers and sisters, tear down the wall! Let's find each other. God has a huge plan in mind. Surely we should be included!

'If someone has a deep appreciation for what God has done in Christ, if someone sees that salvation is by grace alone—without works. If someone sees that . . . then salvation has happened. There is no room left in the heart for boasting. If someone understands that he/she is the thief on the cross, and that Jesus has opened paradise, I'm not going to argue the details. If someone loves the Lord Jesus Christ, how can I put that person outside the community of faith because we differ on how the plan of salvation works? He himself is our peace. He broke down the wall that divides us.'

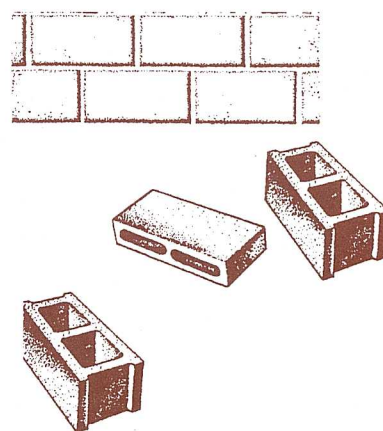
obedience to law. Laws separated Jews and Gentiles. A Jew dressed in a way which said, 'I want you to know that I am not a Gentile.' A Jew would not eat at the house of a Gentile. A Jew would not eat the same food as a Gentile. When a Jew went to worship there was a law that said to Gentiles, 'If you go past this point you will do so at risk of your own life.'

In Ephesians, Paul declares that all these laws making Jews feel special and Gentiles feel rejected, have been abolished. God has abolished the systems of regulation which people use to judge

someone else; to become involved in another culture, to rub minds with a different mind.

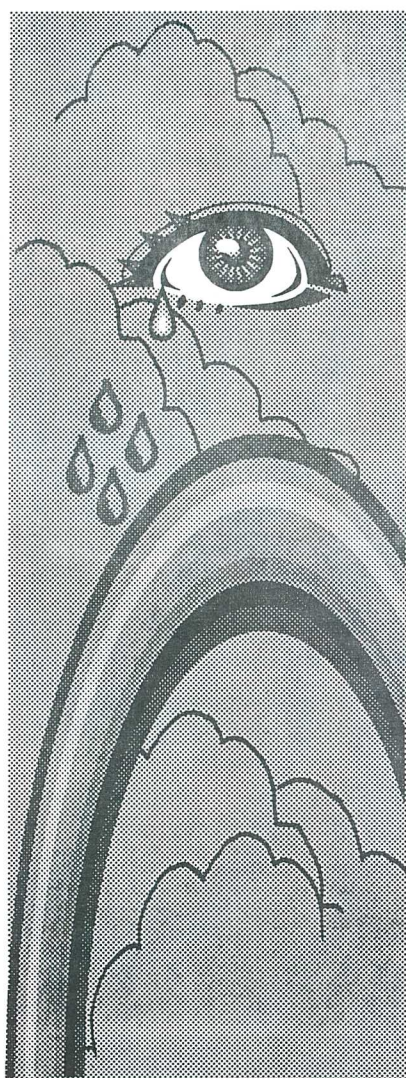
A friend of mine took me to a town in the mountains in the American north west. In this town is a foundry that takes the work of sculptors and artists and duplicates them in limited editions to be sold to the public. Someone will make a sculpture of perhaps Custer, fighting an Indian to the death, and twenty five limited copies will be recast in bronze and then sold.

But here is what is exciting about my visit to this foundry. A rich patron of the arts has commis-



Through Sadness To Hope

Heather Gillett



The detective's voice could not have been more caring and compassionate on the phone, but the news was horrific.

My sister was living in a distant town and I had rung a neighbour of hers, in response to a message delivered to my daughter while I was absent from home. It seemed there had been an incident at my sister's house, and I felt sure the neighbour would know what had transpired. But the neighbour had summoned the detective, who was at my sister's home at the time. He broke the devastating news to me that my sister had taken her own life.

Only those who have experienced a similar event could identify with the horror of such a tragedy in a family. Death from accident or sickness, somehow seems different to a suicide.

After the funeral the days seemed to pass in a flurry of activity and chores, because all this happened over the New Year holiday period and our house was full of family and visitors. At night I would fall into bed exhausted and sleep would come rapidly, but never lasted long. Soon I would be wide awake again and the inevitable thoughts would rise to the surface: Why this? . . . if only that . . . maybe something else. Perhaps if I had said or done something this may not have happened. The mental whirlpool went on and on and it was very difficult to get back to slumber.

One night while my mind was still in this anguish, I realised that there was music going through my head. Momentarily ceasing my mental circling I 'tuned in', as it were, to the music. To my astonishment the music had words to go with it. They were very familiar. *'Sing it softly through the gloom, sing in triumph o'er the tomb. Jesus saves. Jesus saves.'*

Of course I realised immediately that there was a line in between those two lines, with words to say: 'When the heart for mercy craves.' But I only heard the words I most needed to hear at the time. But Oh! What a difference those words made. It was as if a blinding flash of lightning had suddenly illuminated all my thoughts and wiped out everything else. My understanding was immediately turned around.

Joy! Oh joy! Suddenly I saw that all my regrets and recriminations would not save my sister. Only Jesus can save. I began to think positively.

My sister did not pass away as I would have chosen. But Jesus has conquered and triumphed over death. And hadn't my sister recently given her life to Christ? I was now content to leave judgement in His hands and the relief was indescribable. There can be nothing better than peace of mind—and I have experienced it.

We are slow to learn. Not least being myself—and the good Lord knows this well. He had another lesson for me. When my sister died it was holiday season and many of my local church members were away.

It fell to me to help conduct one of our church services. Running late, I was hurriedly selecting hymns from our church hymnal which contains some 700 hymns. Before I had time to think the book fell open in my hands and my eyes lit on some words on the page in front of me. The title was, *'Jesus Saves Jesus Saves.'*

I have recorded this experience in the hope that it will help someone else who struggles with the loss of a loved one, or who struggles with belief in the gospel. Of course the gap that a loved one leaves after their death is never

(Continued on page 10)

HILARIOUS MERCY

RON ALLEN



In Romans 12:8 Paul asks those in the Roman church to exercise mercy with cheerfulness. The word he uses for 'cheerful' is one from which comes the English word *hilarious*. It is a stronger expression than, say, 'service with a smile'. He is asking believers to show mercy in a way that expresses to the receiver, that the giver is having the time of his life.

At first it may seem that Paul is excessive in calling for hilarious mercy. As if mercy could be delivered with a sour face. But, as a matter of fact, it can. People do even good things for many reasons. Much charitable behaviour is done as part of an implicit social contract in which individuals have learned that if they do not want others to be nasty to them, they must practice being nice. In this case mercy is an insurance against unpleasantness.

A philanthropist gives millions of his dollars to hospitals and orphanages. Yet he is an unhappy recluse. A lawyer defends many a well-known underworld identity—not because he wants to advocate their rights, but because he wishes to profit from them. A man is very eloquent, and becomes famous as a Christian evangelist; winning many to Christ. A day arrives when he learns he has throat disease and will never be able to preach again. As a result he not only stops preaching but loses interest in the message of Christ altogether. He finds that what interested him about evangelism was merely the adulation of the crowd.

All around the world, in the

city, country, parliaments, streets and homes, people effect goodness to each other. But Scripture has a benevolence far superior. Paul alludes to it in other places. For example: 'Each man should give what he has decided in his heart.' Not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a *cheerful* giver. Once again the same word is used—*Hilarion*. God loves a hilarious giver.

The apostolic enjoinder, to cheerful mercy is grounded in the truth of God's mercy. Between the quality of his kindnesses and the charities of men and women, there is an enormous gap. God delights in mercy (Micah 7:18). He glories in it. It is for him no unpleasant imposition on his good nature. He does not feel—as we are likely to when for the hundredth time a fellow seeks our indulgence—that this is an irritation. His mercy can never be coaxed from him. It is always free-flowing. Always spontaneous.

God's mercies are indiscriminate. He is as good to those who hate him as to those who love him. According to the parable God enjoys being generous. And so he paid everyone who worked in his vineyard the same wages—no matter that some were very late starters.

The story of The Prodigal Son shows a father who experiences joy not just because his wayward son has come home. The unbridled merriment proceeds well beyond the actual moment of reunion. The father's hilarity cannot be contained. He wishes to continue the celebration for quite some time. He enjoys being merciful. His oldest son is, in contrast,

a real party pooper. He made the glum enquiry as to the reason for all the fun. 'We had to celebrate', was his Dad's reply. 'We had to celebrate.'

It is a thousand times easier to come to God than it is to face the niggardly and measured mercies of men and women.

When we are wholeheartedly generous, we are reminding ourselves and each other, that motive, morality and spirit are greater realities for us than things material. It is not for nothing that Jesus said, 'Let not your right hand know what your left is doing.' The divinely appointed means for us to remember that 'man does not live by bread alone' it is for us to be willingly, gladly, fulsomely, merciful and loving to our fellows. When we so live we are brought into communion with the great Spirit who made the world, and who loves with extravagant joy.

In cheerful mercy we exercise the conviction that life's richest values are to be found not in the things which belong to us, but in that to which we belong. We rate ourselves too poorly if we think life consists in the abundance of what we possess. Refusal to be generous stunts personality. A man had a big heart when he was poor, but lost his pity and compassion when he became rich. The way to keep our spirit intact is to join with God in his ongoing carnival of philanthropy.

Generosity interrupts the destructive cycle of self-ism and thus helps preserve sanity. Pleasure sought for its own sake, begins to fail. Pleasure is enhanced by con-

trasts. Christmas dinner would be dull if turkey and pudding were on the table every day of the year. Delight is possible only as it is interspersed with seasons of self-discipline and sacrifice.

A child is happy eating ice cream because a law of being says that food is good. But if the child eats too much ice cream she will be unhappy because another law rules that she only needs a certain amount of food—and of a certain kind. So in the spirit, a law decrees that happiness comes from participation in God; in his law of joy through sacrifice.

Generosity is an option which is always open to us—acquisition and ownership is not. We are always free to renounce privileges, but not always free to accumulate them. We can never own the world but we can disown it at any time.

Those who see the gift of life with all its material blessings as benefits to be scattered gaily on others, are the happiest people in the world. He who has renounced the world, is the world's most secure person. He cannot lose anything. He has already given it away. The power of renunciation in favour of being generous will take a soul into the gladness of God.

Cheerful mercy is the only principle on which the injustices

of the world can be rectified. The unity and peace of any community, is conditioned on the degree to which its people practice this grace. In Rwanda, where revolution, genocide and catastrophic horrors have been perpetrated on the defenseless populace, what is needed for a cure? What will consolidate the peace in Yugoslavia? What will bring redemption to the ruins of human relationships in our own land? Between father and son, mother and daughter, husband and wife; government and citizenry, business and labour or black and white? Shall we appeal to a strengthening of force, of law and of arms? Of reprisal and retribution? These have never worked and never will. Only free-flowing grace. Only an ocean of good will; a torrent of mercy. Only a flood of forgiveness or a tide of magnanimity will set the stage for a new beginning.

Hilarious mercy indicates a way of relating to God that is far from legalism. This way of doing goodness can only come from a *new Spirit* located within. An interior love of righteousness. Only this kind of ethical dynamic can take us from the stolid, colourless morality that consists in merely refraining from causing harm. What a far cry that is from the business of actively, energetically and joyfully seeking to do good.

The religion of Jesus has precisely this blessed extra; this unique surplus. It was Jesus who said: 'What is so great about loving your friends? Love your enemies.' He introduced the world to the astonishingly liberality of God's mercy. It is a gospel of an oversupply, a plenitude, a 'fat of the land' kindness, a message of mercy 'pressed down, shaken together and running over.' God loves a cheerful giver because that is the way he does it. The mercy of God proceeds from a glad heart. We are beneficiaries of his extraordinary largesse. He gave his only Son to us—royally, majestically, splendidly, willingly and happily.

Knowing God through fellowship with his Son, will lead us also along a path that leads to fullness of joy—because we will become like him.

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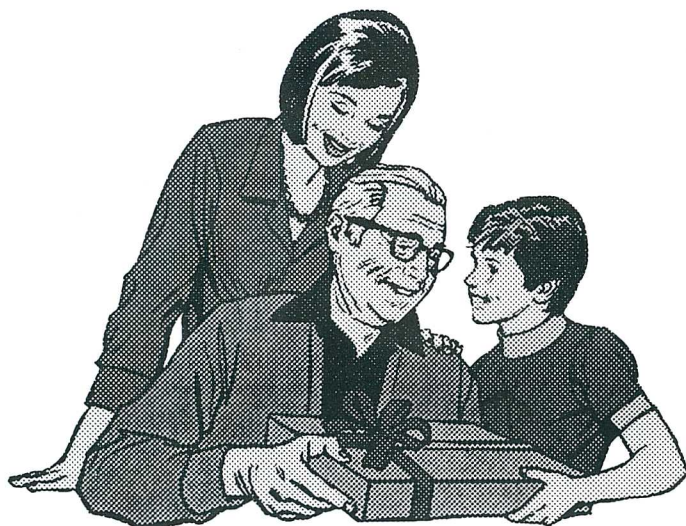
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Through Sadness to Hope

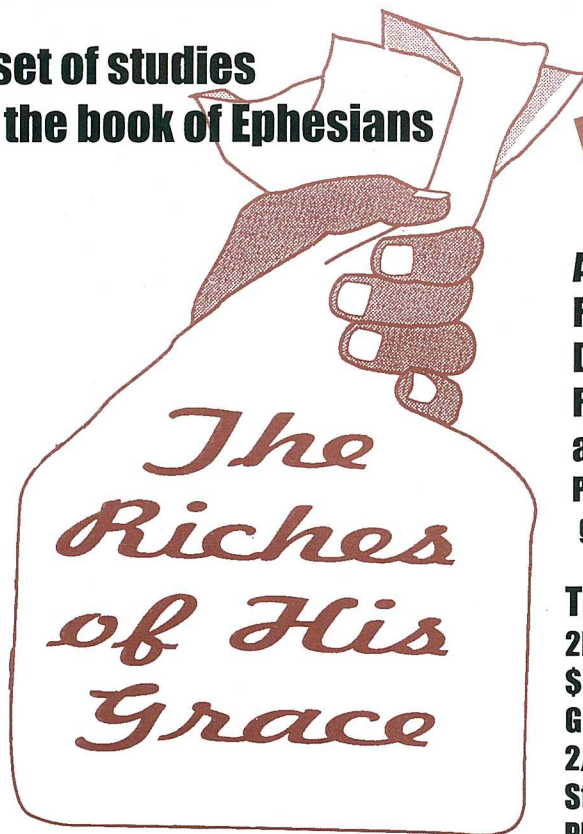
filled, but to come to terms with tragedy is a massive relief.

May I hasten to add for anyone feeling that life is not worth living, that there is another day, when things will be different—for nothing stays the same in this life. How I have wished, in the years since my sister's death, that she could have realised this fact. Having endured many hardships, I can testify to the fact that patient endurance is rewarded. My own life has been completely turned around. I feel sure this would have happened for my sister too. And I do have the Blessed Hope, which is a tremendous comfort.

Editors note: Readers are invited to send their stories of God's working in their life. One page is ideal. Copies will be published at the editor's discretion. Manuscripts will not be returned.



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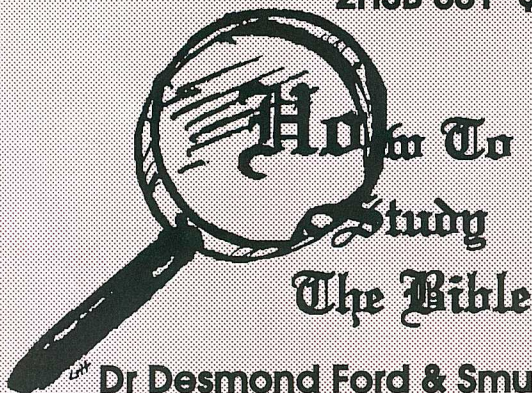
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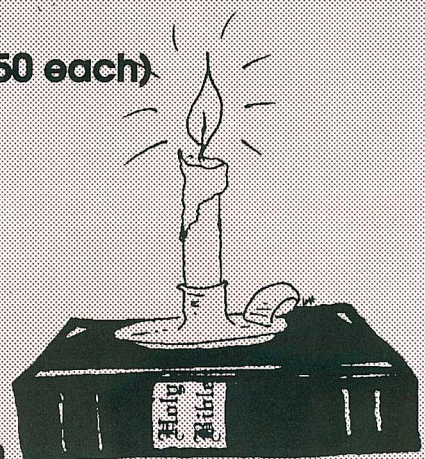
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